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US seeks to improve ties, says new envoy

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The United States' new ambassador-designate to Malaysia, Marie T. Huhtala, today expressed her Government's wish to further improve bilateral ties with Kuala Lumpur.

Huhtala, who replaces ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe, arrived here late this morning with her husband, Eino A. Huhtala, and briefly met the Press briefly at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Reading out a prepared statement, the former deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Bangkok, said Washington and Kuala Lumpur shared ties that were broad and co-operative in many areas.

"Our relationship rests on a common interest in regional stability and prosperity.

"Our two nations co-operate closely on law enforcement matters and our armed forces enjoy a cordial relationship," she said.

Touching on the Sept 11 terrorists attacks on New York and Washington, Huhtala extended condolences to the families of Malaysians who are among the 5,000-plus victims.

She said the US was also deeply appreciative of the condolences from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his sharp condemnation of terrorism.

"I look forward to working closely with the Government in the international effort to prevent further acts of terrorism," she said.

She added that she would be travelling around the country to understand Malaysians better.

Huhtala, however, did not take questions from the media but promised to meet the Press after having presented her credentials to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

She is expected to have an audience with Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah after he returns from Singapore.

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