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No Aussie military targets here, please

AUSTRALIAN troops have no business being in Malaysia, even granting the presence of terrorists here. All things remaining equal, this country has no need for them. The Government has been ahead of the terrorists, unlike some countries we know that have allowed their intelligence services to bungle at the cost of many lives. Recent history bears testimony that this is no empty claim.

Malaysians will recall that the authorities arrested and detained the first group of militants, members of the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, before the 9/11 New York tragedy. In fact, if it had not been for the destruction and mayhem of the World Trade Centre, the Prime Minister would have been pilloried and villified by the Western press because the sensibilities of democrats had been grated: he detained them without trial. But he was proven correct when that threat became manifest elsewhere in a way that left the West confounded and Kuala Lumpur and Dr Mahathir redeemed. The beginnings of a campaign against the latter died but his wisdom was expediently forgotten so that the critics can live the same lie again for another day.

Furthermore, the Australian Prime Minister cannot on his whim alone announce his government's intention to increase the presence of Australian troops in Southeast Asia and expect all the countries in the region to merely demur when that very presence could bring with it the potential for an increase in terrorist attacks. The secondment of US troops in the southern Philippines had caused controversy, demonstrations and bombings. The Bali blasts almost guarantee that the same would occur should unwelcome foreign soldiers be stationed anywhere else in the region.

Yes, tourists are easy targets but an attack on a perceived "occupying" power can win the enemy immense support from unhappy locals and these are bound to be many. Therefore, all told, the risks are too high and it could be that by accepting the Aussie proposal, the region is inviting to itself the kind of menacing insecurity that only successful terrorism can inflict. Malaysia, or any other sovereign country in the region, must be able to police its own backyard. If they can't, they might as well be colonised again.