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Huhtala-Taliban

U.S. YET TO RECIEVE NOTE FROM M'SIA ON TALIBAN PRISONERS' TREATMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 25 (Bernama) -- U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia Marie Huhtala said today she has not recieved any protest note from Malaysia on alleged harsh treatment of Taliban prisoners at the American naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"I look forward to get the Malaysian Prime Minister's memo and we'll deal with it when we get it," she said when asked by reporters about Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that the Malaysian Foreign Ministry would be asked to send a protest note to the U.S. Government on the matter.

Dr Mahathir made the statement after chairing a meeting of the Umno Supreme Council which voiced out its protest against the "inhumane" treatment given to the Taliban prisoners.

Huhtala said officials in Washington had explained that the U.S. was treating the prisoners in a humane way, including giving them appropriate halal meals.

"The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recently made a visit to them and made some recomendation to the government and we are working closely with the ICRC now," she said after attending a corporate citizenship award presentation by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the America-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce for its Young Enterprise Programme.

Asked why the detained Taliban prisoners were not categorised as prisoners of war according to the Geneva Convention, the ambassador said:

"They are not representatives of the government that we are at war with, so they don't really fall under the definition of prisoners of war.

"We've made that really clear. We don't consider them as prisoners of war. So strictly speaking the Geneva Convention does not apply."

Huhtala said the detainees were some of the "worst members of the Taliban" and were intimately involved in acts of terrorism.

She said it was very important for the U.S. government to interrogate the prisoners in a safe environment.

-- BERNAMA

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