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Crean-Iraq

CREAN ECHOS MAHATHIR'S CRITICISM

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, Jan 27 (Bernama) -- Australia's Prime Minister John Howard has gatecrashed the possible war with Iraq, Opposition Labour Party Leader Simon Crean said today.

Crean again accused Howard, who also copped severe criticism from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad, of undue haste in sending Australian troops to West Asia to prepare for a possible war with Iraq without United Nations authorisation.

"My problem with John Howard is that, in his undue haste to commit Australian troops, he's gatecrashed the war," he told Melbourne radio 3LO.

"That's not patriotism, that's poor judgment because what he should be doing and particularly if he seeks to use the Australia-US alliance, article 1 of that alliance says issues should be resolved through the United Nations.

"Why isn't Australia pushing that barrow much more strongly," said Crean, adding that he personally believed Howard had made the commitment to go to war together with the US but had not told the Australian people.

"And this nonsense where he says he's deploying the troops, 'but we will make a decision whether or not we go in then' I don't believe," the Opposition Leader said.

"How is he going to say to the Americans once he's over there under their command that our troops won't be used. He's committed us precipitously."

Crean said that Howard's failure to consult the electorate and his own political party on the forward deployment of troops showed he had acted arrogantly.

"This is a prime minister acting arrogantly and not in Australia's national interest," he said.

The United States was right to have a strong view on Iraq, but it should be arguing its position through the United Nations, Crean said.

"When you get a circumstance in which individual countries are determining the direction global solutions take I think it's very dangerous indeed," he said.

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