

14 JAN 2004

US-Aid

US SENATOR'S AMENDMENT ON MILITARY AID TO M'SIA THROWN OUT

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, Jan 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is expected to receive the full amount in military aid for training programmes of US\$1.2 million without any conditions once the United States Congress publish the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill into law on Jan 20, an analyst said here Tuesday.

Senator Mitch McConnell's amendment to the senate version of the bill to make it conditional on Malaysia to guarantee religious freedom, particularly to Jews, before it can receive military aid under the International Military Education Training Programme (IMET), was apparently thrown out by his colleagues in both houses when they met in conference last month to sort out their differences over the final version of the bill.

The move to impose conditions on Malaysia in the bill was a knee-jerk reaction to then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's controversial remarks about Jews at last October's Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Putrajaya.

Dana Dillon, a Southeast Asian analyst at the Heritage Foundation, told Bernama: "We felt it was an over-reaction to Dr Mahathir's words. It would have been more appropriate for the senate to condemn the language rather than punish the whole country for words expressed by the prime minister."

"Malaysia is a good ally of the US and has helped a great deal in the war on terror. They (McConnell and his supporters) made their point by having the amendment in the first place," said Dillon.

Dillon said the final bill "removes obstacles for the new prime minister" to move forward in stronger US-Malaysia relations.

-- BERNAMA

SH KHY RM