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US analysing PM's speech, says envoy

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KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - The United States Embassy in Kuala Lumpur has sent a report to Washington on the contents of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the opening of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit on Monday.

US Ambassador to Malaysia Marie T. Huhtala said the speech was being studied by her office in Kuala Lumpur and her colleagues in Washington.

"We reported it in full and we are studying it. We do not have a reaction yet ...we are still looking at it," she said.

Huhtala was asked if Washington had reacted to Dr Mahathir's speech which called on NAM members to seek justice and freedom from oppression and economic hegemony, and outlaw war.

The Prime Minister spoke of a vision of a more equitable and just world order, free from the belief that killing people is right to solve the problem of relations between nations.

Huhtala was on her first visit to Kota Kinabalu to look at investment and tourism opportunities.

Asked about opposition from Americans on a possible US strike on Iraq, Huhtala said her country practised a strong tradition of freedom of speech and expression.

"Public opinion of possible conflict is mixed in the US and in many countries, there are people who oppose and support it.

"In my experience, if the Government finds it must make a decision to go to war, the American people usually unite behind the Government and support what it is doing.

"There is already a strong degree of support. Many in the US understand about weapons of mass destruction, and that these are dangerous weapons that should not be made available to terrorists."

She said US President George W. Bush had stated that war was the last option as the United Nations Security Council had called on Iraq to disarm. However, Iraq had failed to do so until now.