

**Ex-envoy: Obama drunk on Najib's Kool-Aid**  
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The reason why Barack Obama is soft on Malaysia is because the United States president blindly accepts what Prime Minister Najib Razak tells him, said former US ambassador to Malaysia John Malott.

"Obama believes what Najib tells him. He has drunk Najib's Kool-Aid.

"He truly believes that Najib wants to reform his country but is being held back by conservative elements within his ruling party," said Malott in opinion piece which appeared on Asia Sentinel yesterday.

Malott said people familiar with the issue disclosed that Obama does not want to put pressure on Najib on issues of human rights and democracy, including during his visit to Malaysia in April last year, as he thinks it may make the prime minister's efforts tougher.

It is for the same reason that when Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim was jailed, the condemnation came from a mid-level US official.

Malott said US officials have confided that Obama "likes" Najib and the US president enjoyed meeting and talking to the Malaysian prime minister.

He said the New York Times rightly pointed out that Obama's golf match with Najib in Hawaii last December was rare as other world leaders do not usually enjoy such level of relationship with the US president.

"Obama is not the first person whom Najib has fooled. The 'international Najib' is impeccably dressed in expensive suits and speaks great English.

"He is courtly, polite and soft-spoken. He talks of his dreams to reform Malaysia and move it forward," said Malott.

**Malaysia now 'more repressive'**

The former diplomat added that Najib has also fooled the world about leading a global movement of moderates and his plan for political reform in Malaysia.

"Most of the world, however, fails to understand the gap between Najib's international rhetoric and his actions at home.

"That is because few people around the world, other than the Malaysian diaspora, follow developments in Malaysia.

"They only know the 'Good Najib' and not the Najib surrounded by scandal, from 1Malaysia

Development Berhad to Scorpene submarines to the Mongolian translator who was murdered by Najib's personal bodyguards," said Malott (left).

In fact, Malott said Malaysia under Najib had become more repressive and his silence on the extremists had made racial and religious tensions worse.

"I am very sure that the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is reporting the situation accurately.

"The problem is that few people at the senior levels in Washington pay attention to Malaysia, and lower-level officers no doubt find it hard to counter the ideas about Najib and Malaysia that seem to be well-entrenched in Obama's mind," said Malott.

### **'But Queen E wasn't fooled'**

One leader who did see through Najib, said Malott, was Queen Elizabeth II who wore yellow when the prime minister met her in 2011.

The meeting was just a week after Malaysian police fired chemical-laced water and tear gas on thousands of Bersih 2.0 protesters, whose trademark colour is yellow.

"No one thinks it was an accident. Even the flowers in the vases behind her were yellow. The Queen had sent a clear message," he said.

Therefore, Malott said it is surprising that in 2015, Obama still did not understand the reality of what is happening in Malaysia.