

Duterte admits 'purposely' skipping Asean-US meeting
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Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte admitted last night that he "purposely" skipped the meeting between the South-East Asian leaders and US President Barack Obama in Vientiane, Laos last week, China's *Xinhua* news agency reported.

"The reason is not that I am anti-West. The reason is not (that) I do not like the Americans. It's simply a matter of principle," *Xinhua* quoted him as saying in a speech in presidential palace.

During the Association of South-East Asian Nations Summit and Related Summits in Vientiane last week, Duterte's spokesmen said the president failed to attend the Asean-US meeting because he was not feeling well due to migraine attack.

Duterte's first attendance to an international meeting since he assumed the presidency on June 30 was hounded by controversy.

His expletives against Obama prompted the latter to cancel their bilateral meeting at the sidelines of the Asean meeting.

In the same gathering during the East Asian Summit, Duterte veered away from the prepared speech and instead talked about the massacre perpetrated by the American forces against the Filipino Muslims in the southern province of Sulu in 1906, which he described as a human rights violation.

Duterte criticised the US for its supposed human rights violations after Washington raised concern on the reported extrajudicial killings of suspected drug personalities in the Philippines amid the government's war on illegal drugs.

- *Bernama*