

Legal concerns raised over US anti-terror pact
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Malaysia today said legal concerns were holding it back from joining a US-led global anti-terror initiative aimed at preventing trafficking in weapons of mass destruction.

US President George W Bush established the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in May 2003 as part of his administration's response to the Sept 11, 2001 attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people.

But Malaysia has baulked at joining the initiative for legal reasons, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak told a maritime security conference organised by the US Pacific Command.

"We are still studying it. There are some items in the Proliferation Security Initiative which the legal side are not so comfortable with," said Najib, without giving details.

The PSI calls for the interdiction of vessels and airliners suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction or related materials and allows for on-board searches.

The aim of the PSI, which has more than 70 member or observer nations according to Najib, is to stop militants and rogue states getting hold of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

"Malaysia is certainly concerned over proliferation of weapons of mass destructions and its components and supports the ideals of PSI," Najib said.

"Malaysia, however, has some reservations with regards to certain aspects of the initiative which we feel do not conform to accepted international norms," he added.

Najib, also the defence minister, said Malaysia had been participating as an observer in PSI exercises for the past two years, and described defence ties with the US as "good."

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