

Malaysia To Seek Explanations From China, US Over Presence Of Their Warships Near Spratly Islands

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will seek explanations from China and the United States (US) over the presence of their warships in Spratly Islands, during the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Retreat and 3rd ADMM-Plus which kick off in Subang tomorrow.

Malaysia's Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said he strongly believed that the latest development on that particular issue would be brief by his counterparts, General Chang Wanquan from China and US Secretary of Defence Dr Ashton Carter during their meeting.

"I will be looking forward to be briefed on the latest development if it really involved the movement of assets between both sides.

"It is very difficult for me to say anything now because I'm not sure what is the latest development on the issue," he told a press conference today after the final-round inspection of preparations for the ADMM Retreat and ADMM-Plus from Nov 3 to 5 in Subang, near here.

It was reported that the controversy centred on a swath of territory in the South China Sea that contains the Spratly Islands when Chinese officials condemned a US ship's passage near the disputed islands recently.

Asked whether Malaysia welcomed United States' challenge on China over the disputed islands, Hishammuddin said he only welcomed any movement that would not disrupt stability in this region.

China, Taiwan and ASEAN members, namely the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei, have been wrangling over ownership and control of the South China Sea, a resource-rich and busy waterway, in a conflict that has flared on and off for decades.

Hishammuddin said the 10 ASEAN countries should be united as a bloc.

"That is something that I put as my responsibility as long as I chair the ASEAN (Defence Ministers' Meeting)," he said.

On another note, he said the ASEAN countries were closely monitoring the situation in the world, especially on what was happening in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and other parts of the Middle East, and in other countries.

"As our region's stability will also depend on how they conduct themselves in other parts of the world, I don't think that what is happening there cannot replicate here," he said.

ADMM is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN on matters related to defence.

It is aimed at promoting mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding of defence and security challenges, as well as enhancement of transparency and openness.

ASEAN groups 10 countries, namely Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam while its eight dialogue partners in the ASEAN Plus are Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

ADMM Plus meeting will be on "ASEAN - Maintaining Regional Security and Stability For and By the People".

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