

# **MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL DEFENCE POLICY**

## **PREFACE**

Recent development in our region has pointed to a number of new challenges and uncertainties which impact Malaysia's national defence. While Malaysia and the region in general are experiencing political stability and economic growth, current issues particularly non-conventional security issues are beginning to shape and influence the nature of threats to national defence and security. Defence development especially the modernisation of the MAF has been undertaken to address any possibility of threats which could adversely affect Malaysia's sovereignty, independence and integrity.

The primary objective of the National Defence Policy is to protect and defend national interests which form the foundations of Malaysia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic prosperity. To achieve this objective a requirement for a comprehensive strategy has been formulated as the underlying principles for national defence. The overriding principle of this strategy is Self Reliance, the prerequisite for which is total commitment from all sectors.

Malaysia renounces the use of threat and application of force as a means of settling international conflict and advocates and practice the peaceful resolution of disputes. The National Defence Policy illustrates this through the adoption of a defence strategy based on bilateral and multilateral defence diplomacy achieved through regional and international cooperation. In line with this philosophy Malaysia fully supports the efforts of the United Nations and the international community in preserving universal peace and security. As a member of the international community Malaysia has a moral responsibility and duty to ensure a just social and economic world order.

Therefore the MAF has to attain appropriate conventional warfare capabilities. A credible combined structure is important and attention needs to be given to develop the capabilities in all four dimensions of defence namely land, sea, air and electromagnetic.

The other strategic indicators to be considered are interservice cooperation and interoperability; geographical separation of territory and the possibility of a two-theatre conflict situation and the use of external military forces.

The development of defence support elements is an integral component of the effort to achieve defence self reliant. The primary consideration in this issue is the need to develop appropriate strategies to develop the capacity and capability of the local defence industry as well as defence science and technology.

The National Defence Policy reflects the continued commitment towards strengthening national defence and armed forces modernisation. The implementation timeframe for the policy is ten years and the Government will determine the mechanism to control the implementation and conduct periodic evaluation.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **National Interests**

Malaysia regards the defence of national interests as fundamental to its sovereignty and independence. In line with this the principal objective of the National Defence policy is the protection and defence of Malaysia's interests and territories from domestic and external threats.

Malaysia's geographical interests are divided into the following:

- Core areas;
- Offshore economic interests; and
- Strategic waterways and airspace.

The core areas encompass Malaysia's landmass of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak; its territorial waters and airspace above them. These areas must be fully protected and defended to the best of Malaysia's ability from external threats.

The offshore economic areas are the nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf. These areas in the South China Sea are abundant with fisheries and hydrocarbon resources which have contributed significantly to the nation's economy. Malaysia's strategic maritime and airspace lines of communication are as follow:

- The maritime and airspace lines of communication connecting Peninsular Malaysia with Sabah and Sarawak;
- Strait of Malacca and its approaches; and
- Strait of Singapore and its approaches.

The physical separation of Peninsular Malaysia from Sabah and Sarawak by the South China Sea imposes to Malaysia a special interest in sea and air lanes connecting both the land masses. Any threat or obstruction to these sea and airspace lines of

communication could jeopardise the integrity of the two territories and Malaysia as a whole.

The Strait of Malacca is one of the main international maritime routes and services almost the entire East-West maritime transportation. It also hosts Malaysia's major ports and business centres and is the transportation route for eighty percent of Malaysia's exports and imports. Malaysia explicitly regards any encroachment into the Strait of Malacca as a threat to its national interests, defence and sovereignty. Moreover the control of the Straits of Malacca by an external power would adversely affect the economic prosperity of most countries including major powers. The Strait has the potential to become a source of dispute for external powers resulting in it becoming a conflict "hotspot" which could negatively impact Malaysia's security and defence. Malaysia's standpoint is that the Strait of Malacca should be free from external powers' involvement and that it is the responsibility of the littoral States to defend the sovereignty of the Strait of Malacca.

The Strait of Singapore, parts of which falls within Malaysia's territorial waters is the world's most important and busiest waterway. The Strait of Singapore is not only important for international commerce but also for internal trade and sea communications between Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The Strait of Singapore is critical for Malaysia's maritime defence and like the Strait of Malacca is one of the country's strategic sea lines of communications.

Malaysia must have the defence ability to ensure that its primary areas premised on national interests are defended by all possible means. It also needs to defend and enhance its ability to defend its sovereignty over its terrestrial and maritime realms including the EEZ, continental shelf and all strategic sea lines of communication and airspace. Thus the MAF's development has to be based on the defence of these three areas. National defence however extends beyond preparing for an eventual conflict but is a guarantor of sovereignty and independence which providing a catalyst for national development programmes.

## Chapter 2: Regional Strategic Perspectives

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is seeing more countries paying attention to asymmetrical threats as a new dimension in strategic defence. Traditional security issues will continue into the new century but threats such as terrorism and transboundary crime has also attracted attention and is given focus as parts of the national strategic perspective. As such Malaysia's and the region's security environment is shaped and determined by traditional and non-traditional security interests.

### Traditional Security Factors

- **Role of External Powers**

Developments in the Asia Pacific region will continue to be influenced by relations between the United States of America (US), China and Japan. Malaysia acknowledges that the US will remain the predominant power and plays an important role in shaping the regional strategic environment. In accordance with this current Malaysia-US defence cooperation provides the support needed for confidence building and for ensuring that Malaysia's national defence and economic interests. It should be noted that Southeast Asia has become more important to the US after the 11 September 2001 attack. This is evident in the US signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia 1976 (TAC) in 2000. The US is also expected to strengthen its presence through bilateral

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