

By Patrick Suckling

I want to make five key points:

1) The Global Battleground

- Like elsewhere, the terrorist threat in South East Asia is not self contained. The terrorists have chosen the battleground: terrorism is global, and its targets are predominantly civilian
 - we know this from the outrages of September 11, the Bali bombings and attacks around the world: from London to Madrid, to Saudi Arabia and the Philippines
- Australia understands that there has to be a global response to this global problem: defeating terrorism is a collective good, and that therefore it should be a collective responsibility
 - that is why Australia was one of the first countries with troops on the ground in Afghanistan and has just sent more forces there; and why we were one of four countries to contribute forces to Operation Iraqi Freedom, and continue our commitment there.

2) The South East Asian threat

- Australia has some special concerns and responsibilities in the fight against terrorism in South East Asia. I would like to summarise the way in which we in Australia view the terrorist threat in our own region:
 - The first Bali bombings in 2002 on two popular tourist bars killed 202 people – 88 of whom were Australians
 - This was the attack which brought Jemaah Islamiyah to global attention and it has been largely due to JI and the terrorist atrocities it has perpetrated since then which have placed South-East Asia on the front line of terrorism.

- JI carried out the Marriott Hotel bombing in Jakarta in August 2003 and provided logistical and operational support to those responsible for the Australian Embassy bombing in 2004.
- Second Bali bombings on 1 October last year claimed 20 lives including four Australians and showed that the terrorist threat in the region is persistent and evolving.
- JI is very much in the mould of that archetype of transnational Islamic extremist terrorist groups - Al Qaida. Its target is as much mainstream Muslims and secular Governments as it is the West. Its goals are essentially political in nature but projected in a religious guise in the interests of an extremist Muslim cause. Like Al Qaeda, its goals are not negotiable.
- JI's epicentre is in Indonesia but it has a region-wide agenda – its ultimate goal to create a regional caliphate covering Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand.
- It goes where it can operate and train freely alongside other extremist Muslim groups. It has, for example, forged training and logistics links with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the southern Philippines. ASG have previously targeted foreigners, including tourists, for its hostage taking.
- The Philippines has been targeted by international terrorist networks, including Al-Qaida, for funding, networking, recruiting and planning since at least the early 1990s. The difficulties of maintaining central government control over parts of the southern Philippines have contributed to its use for terrorist training camps for jihadists from the region and elsewhere.
- JI has already demonstrated in the Philippines and Indonesia its ability to skilfully prey on localised ethnic and/or religious-based separatist conflicts in the region to pursue its own ends, and could do so elsewhere in the region, notably in southern Thailand.

- To complicate the picture even further, there is evidence that links have been developed between terrorist groups in South Asia, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), and South-East Asia. In 2003 a LeT cell in Karachi, which was found to contain South-East Asian university students being groomed as future JI leaders, was disrupted. Australians, and others from the region have trained in LeT camps.
- These connections show transnational terrorist networking is not one-way. International extremist groups reach into South-East Asia but groups from within our region can also reach out to connect with counterparts elsewhere.

3) Australia's response to the threat

- Australia's counter-terrorism efforts in South-East Asia have been obviously shaped by our understanding of the threat and the respective capabilities of our regional partners to counter that threat.
- Our CT efforts have focussed predominantly on Indonesia and the Philippines, where the terrorist threat is greatest and CT capacities relatively weak.
- In pursuing CT initiatives in the region, we have had to take into account the reality that South-East Asia does not have well functioning regional security frameworks and inter-agency networks. At the domestic level CT efforts are often impeded by poor, or simply non-existent, intra-Government coordination.
- Given this operating environment, our approach has been to pursue tangible results at the operational level - through well-targeted, practical bilateral cooperation, most often driven at the agency-to-agency level, but with whole-of-government coordination. This has especially been the case in relation to the law enforcement dimension of our regional counter-terrorism effort, which has arguably been the area where we have developed the highest level of cooperation and made the greatest progress. The other key areas where we have focused our CT efforts to date have been:

intelligence cooperation, border and transport security, and anti-money laundering and counter financing of terrorism.

- The fact that within 24 hours of the 1 October Bali bombings the Australian Federal Police (AFP) had, following a formal request from the Indonesian Government, begun working with Indonesian police colleagues to investigate the attacks is testimony to the excellent working relationship it has built up with its Indonesian counterpart – POLRI - over the past few years.
- The AFP's relationship with POLRI was largely developed over the period of the close collaboration on the joint investigation with the Indonesian police into the first Bali bombing. The investigation was highly successful – over 40 JI members have been convicted for involvement in the Bali bombings.
- This cooperation has focussed on building capacity so that local police are better equipped to anticipate and respond to terrorist threats and situations. And POLRI has demonstrated enhanced CT capabilities, particularly in its response to the terrorist attacks since Bali.
- The AFP has also developed close cooperation with the Philippines police and on a regional level through the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation – a joint Australia-Indonesia initiative established in 2004 – is helping to develop region-wide CT capabilities and build networks among regional law enforcement agencies.
- Our intelligence, border management, transport security and anti-terrorist financing agencies have adopted a similar approach with their counterparts with some promising results, but mostly starting from a lower base.
- Maritime South East Asia is also a focus of our efforts: we will provide additional port security for the Philippines; assist cooperation among the border control agencies of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei; and expand

maritime security training and exercises and assessment of army watercraft needs for the Philippines

- We welcome recent moves by Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand to cooperate further to enhance maritime security in the Malacca Straits
 - we have shared with regional partners our experience in using the Coastwatch civil-contracted model for maritime surveillance, and offered to contribute further assistance drawing on our expertise in air patrolling
 - other regional maritime security initiatives include measures to promote and enhance: interoperability of Australian and regional maritime forces; maritime surveillance of coastlines and vital shipping routes; regional compliance with international standards and regimes; intelligence and information exchanges; and greater regional capacity and cooperation in all the above areas. The Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) has included, among other things, coverage of non-conventional threats (including terrorism) in recent training exercises.
- Political momentum is vital to successful regional CT efforts. In 2004 Australia and Indonesia established the Bali process through a regional Ministerial meeting which produced a framework for a range of cross-regional CT activity
 - one major initiative under the Bali process has been establishment of the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation
 - JCLEC serves a regional resource to build law enforcement capabilities and bind regional efforts more closely
 - Australia also working closely with other partners in forums such as APEC and ARF to advance counter-terrorism goals.

4) Future Work – Regional Needs

- While much is being done in the region, there remain CT gaps and needs.
- In addition to developing further measures to deliver direct operational support and capacity building in the key areas outlined above, the Australian Government is developing new initiatives that focus on:
 - developing better regional consequence management capabilities in the event of terrorist attacks
 - enhancing regional understanding of the convergence of the threats from WMD: and
 - combating the extremist ideology that underpins the terrorist threat we face in the region by educating and empowering mainstream Muslim voices.
- On the last point, countering the tactics of terrorist groups such as JI is not enough. We need to address key drivers of the problem. These are not poverty, or oppression, or religion – but a belief system, an ideology and clear political objectives.
- We fully recognise that countering the current brand of extremist Islamic ideology is a struggle that primarily must take place within Islam. But we can help by encouraging and assisting mainstream Muslims in our region to enhance their ability to counter extremist interpretations of their faith and discredit violent extremism within their own communities. There are voices in the region already doing good work – but they need assistance to amplify and spread their message.
- While a range of regional interfaith exchanges have already taken place in the region – such as the December 2004 Australia-Indonesia co-sponsored regional Interfaith Dialogue - we recognise the need for more support to regional and national-level Muslim intra-faith exchanges in order for local religious, community and opinion leaders to develop means to more effectively counter extremist messages.

- I would also like to take the opportunity to flag with you our sense of some continuing CT needs and gaps in South-East Asia:
 - there is scope to do more in the area of law enforcement, especially in training – such as supporting JCLEC’s activities
 - Australia and other CT partners are providing assistance in the region to develop the skills of prosecutors and judges and also to draft CT legislation, however much work needs to be done to improve the basics of regional countries’ criminal and procedural codes in order to provide a more thorough legal framework in which to investigate and prosecute and convict terrorists
 - There is also still much practical work to be done in the fields of border security, financial security, transport security, coastal surveillance and CT management at the political level.

- Our CT experience in the region has taught us that, not surprisingly, timely and effective coordination is crucial to the success of counter-terrorism efforts in South-East Asia.
 - One key area is donor coordination between key CT donor partners – both in capitals and on the ground. An example is the recent trilateral dialogue between Australia the United States and Japan – which is the focus of discussion elsewhere at this conference.

5) Need for sustained US commitment

- No other country has the global reach required – whether we are talking about military capability, intelligence capability, or the skills and resources to help other countries improve their own capabilities to deal with terrorism
- And no other country has a greater degree of national interest than the United States in winning this battle and

helping others with it – because of the range of US economic and political interests and the spread of US citizens around the globe

- US commitment remains vital to defeating terrorism in SEA, and we welcome growing US support for Indonesia. The world has a big stake in encouraging the development of a secure, prosperous and democratic Indonesia. It is the world's largest Muslim nation, the world's third largest democracy and the world's fourth most populous country. Indonesia deserves more credit than it has been given for the political reforms that have taken root in recent years, and its CT efforts.
- But again, finally – the challenge of defeating terrorism is not one that the US can do alone. Nor should it be expected to, as I hope Australia's efforts make clear.