

# TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE THREAT AND RESPONSE

REPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY  
THE INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES  
AND  
OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM  
US DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON D.C.

12-13 APRIL, 2006  
SINGAPORE

# **TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE THREAT AND RESPONSE**

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Ambassador Patricia L. Herbold,  
US Ambassador to the Republic of  
Singapore

### **OPENING ADDRESS**

*The US recognizes that attacks are happening everywhere and terrorists kill indiscriminately. There is a need to strengthen alliances to defeat terrorism.*



Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee,  
Senior Minister of State for Law  
and Home Affairs, Singapore

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

*What the government can do and is doing is to facilitate and to lend support to initiatives that promote better ties between communities. In pursuing this direction, we are mindful of the observation made by scholars that ultimately extremist terrorism is defeated by the community and not by security agencies.*



Ambassador Barry Desker,  
Director, Institute of Defence and  
Strategic Studies, (IDSS),  
Singapore

### **CLOSING ADDRESS**

*Terrorism is a vicious by-product of extremism. As long as we tolerate extremism in our societies, there will be terrorism.*

## SUMMARY

A two-day International Conference on *Terrorism in Southeast Asia – The Threat and Response*, held in Singapore on 12 and 13 April 2006, was jointly sponsored by the US Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, and the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore. Eminent counter-terrorism experts and regional specialists from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Japan, UK, and the United States attended the conference. The conference gave an overview of the current threats faced by the states in the region and the counter-terrorism initiatives in operation. Seven panels of experts discussed the internal and external factors contributing to the rise of terrorist groups and extremist networks in the region. The changing nature of the terrorist groups, the global - local tensions and the ideology, rehabilitation and reintegration of the jihadists were also addressed. The speakers suggested policy recommendations for creating a hostile environment for terrorist groups and their supporters.

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

### DR. ROHAN GUNARATNA

*Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore*

Dr. Gunaratna talked about the changing nature of the threat in the region. He highlighted the presence of both domestic and foreign terrorist groups and cells in the region stating that the terror network in the region is quite robust. He discussed the training camps and training opportunities in Southern Philippines and Indonesia. He said that this 'networked terrorism' is exacerbated by global events like the Iraq war and occupation that are exploited by local groups to foment passions. He emphasized that military means alone would not help in eliminating terrorism and comprehensive strategic counter terrorism would have to include responses at

ideological, financial, legislative, media, educational, informatics and developmental level.

## OPENING ADDRESS

### AMBASSADOR PATRICIA L. HERBOLD

*US Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore*

In her opening address, Ambassador Herbold, highlighted the US objective of strengthening alliances to defeat the global threat of terrorism. She emphasized that democracy is the only alternative to terrorism, which in the current context involves a 'war of ideas.' Southeast Asia is an important part of the world and an important trading partner of the United States. US exports to Southeast Asia were almost USD 50 billion in 2005 and the total US FDI in ASEAN countries is more than in China and Hong Kong together. With burgeoning trade partnerships and bilateral relations between the US and the ASEAN countries, it is in the strategic interest of the United States to support initiatives in this region that aim to eliminate the threat of terrorism.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HO PENG KEE

*Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, Singapore*

In his keynote address, Professor Ho Peng Kee, applauded the efforts of the security agencies in the region that have been instrumental in neutralizing the threat of terrorism. However, he cautioned against any complacency stating that the threat, aided by new developments remains a challenging one in the region. He called for countering the ideology of violent jihad by engaging the community, and empowering the voices of moderate Muslims. He mentioned the significance of the problem in Mindanao in the fight against terrorism and urged US assistance to the Philippine government to look beyond the engagement of MILF towards dismantling the JI infrastructure. He also addressed the concerns of human trafficking and smuggling,

emphasizing, that governments in the region need to work together to break this crime-terrorism nexus. He also noted how terrorist groups are using the Internet to get recruits and spread their ideologies. The Minister emphasized that unless the communities themselves counter the jihadist narrative, security agencies can only achieve limited operational success. The Minister also called for greater international and regional cooperation especially in law enforcement capacity building and intelligence sharing and in responding to the political and economic grievances of the Muslim community. Referring to Singapore's introduction of the biometric passport, the Minister added that to gain a strategic advantage over terrorists and criminals, governments need to implement inter-operable biometric passports regionally and beyond.

## CLOSING ADDRESS

**AMBASSADOR BARRY DESKER**

*Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore*

Ambassador Desker, in his concluding remarks, stated that Singapore faced an enduring threat of terrorism that can be countered only with inter-governmental regional cooperation and through the active involvement of the United States and its allies. He said that the nature of the terrorist threat has dramatically changed in the past five years and what was once a public nuisance is now a priority national security threat. He also emphasized that unless governments in the region address local insurgencies, the situation would continue to be exploited by the global terrorist networks. Conflict management is integral to comprehensive strategic counter terrorism in the region. Ambassador Desker said that greater commitment at the leadership level, educating policy and decision makers and a response proportionate to the threat were essential in dealing with the terrorist threat in the region.

## 1. REGIONAL TERRORIST NETWORKS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

### THAILAND

- The Southern Thailand conflict is essentially an ethno-nationalist movement.
- Since 1902, the Thais have attempted to forcibly assimilate the Malay Muslims in the south into the Thai political structure. Successive Thai governments have sought to build a strong and unified state without any regard for the culture, language and religion of the local community. The language barrier, income disparity, and the discrimination have only heightened the feeling of alienation in the face of overreaction by the government and insensitivity to minority issues.
- The problem is aggravated by the following factors:
  - o The Thai Government's heavy handed response with extrajudicial killings, large scale mass arrests and holding innocent individuals without charge;
  - o Failure to re-establish trust with the Muslim community by adopting fair and transparent policies such as inquiry into police or military excesses and wrong doings, etc;
  - o Deployment of officers with little cultural training and religious sensitivities;
  - o Failure to create mechanisms to allow political grievances to be addressed.
- The Thai insurgency has also received assistance, directly and indirectly from external elements by way of training, indoctrination and resources. The situation could change dramatically if the so-called plight of the Thai Muslims were to be picked up by Al Qaeda and international jihadists, making Southern Thai conflict a rallying point for overall global jihad and a destination for foreign jihadi fighters.

- The insurgent groups in Southern Thailand may not be expected to bring the Thai Government down through terror attacks, but rather to ultimately prevail in achieving a change in Bangkok's policy in respect of the three Southern provinces.
- Major actors in Southern Thailand include: National Revolutionary Front (BRN, Barisan Revolusi Nasional), Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), New PULO, Pattani Islam Mujahideen Movement (GMIP, Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani), Bersatu and Pusaka. However, the group that is most active in Southern Thailand now appears to be BRN Coordinate, one of the factions within Barisan Revolusi Nasional.
- Among the groups, there is lack of clear leadership. Membership across the groups often overlaps.
- Insurgent targeting and tactics have become more sophisticated and coordinated over time. In the new wave of violence, civilians along with government officials and security personnel have been routinely targeted. The insurgents have attacked with bombs using C4, ANFO, dynamite and military ordinance secreted in vehicles, motorcycles and roadside IEDs – detonated by cell phone, timer and remote control along with assaults using M16s, AK 47s and other weapons. A tactic that has generated serious concern is beheading.
- Thailand is not an international jihadist hub at present. The conflict is still very much localized and there is no concrete evidence of the Indonesian Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or other outside groups participating in the conflict.
- Nevertheless, the nationalist-separatist struggle in Southern Thailand is rapidly transforming into a politico-religious conflict. Insurgent ideologues are increasingly politicizing and mobilizing the

target audience, using religion rather than nationalism.

- The character of the insurgent campaign is changing from guerrilla warfare into urban terrorism. In the past, the insurgents targeted military, police, and government officials. Today, the targets are mostly civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- The military lack good training in urban operations. The security agencies have also failed to establish intelligence dominance in the South.

## CAMBODIA

- Cambodia has not historically been a hot-bed of Muslim jihadist activity given its rather small Muslim population of about 500,000 out of a total population of approximately 12 million. Islam in Cambodia has been rather benign in form, intermixed with Hindu and Buddhist influence.
- Cambodian Muslim youths go to Kelantan in Malaysia and to Pakistan to study Islamic teachings, and Thai authorities have noticed an increase in the number of Cambodian Muslims entering Thailand on their way to the South. Recently, life sentences were handed out by the Cambodian court against three Islamists on charges of plotting attacks against the British Embassy in Phnom Penh.
- While Cambodia, given its small Muslim population, will not be subject to Taliban-like control by a group of jihadists, it is appropriate to consider the country as 'the wild West'. With poor governance and lax border control the country could become a place where radical teaching, covert training, planning and recruitment occur. The community could easily become a safe haven for regional and international terrorists.

## PHILIPPINES

- The insurgency in the Philippines is a domestic phenomenon with deep historical roots and an unsuccessful integration of the Muslim population into the Christian-dominated state. The conflict in Mindanao is largely due to the imposition of the mainstream culture/religion on the minorities and due to uneven government policies. There is also a sense of perceived repression from the Central Government. The Bangsamoros feel that their rights as a minority in the country are not fully recognized and they have been deprived from political participation and economic advancement.
- The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and the Rajah Suleiman Movement (RSM) are three major actors in the Philippines. Currently, organizational distinctions have blurred within these groups, and new alliances have come into being. The MILF and ASG, for instance, have had a relationship of convenience in which one group taps into the resources of the other and vice versa. The key leaders of ASG and RSM are also related by kinship apart from ideology.
- The ASG has been recognized widely as a bandit group. However, the group also comprised of leaders who were more ideologically attuned. The leader of ASG Khadaffy Janjalani had a hard time in making the group more ideologically oriented due to the presence of leaders who were driven by financial motives, such as Commander Robot alias Galib Andang. With Galib Andang and several other leaders either arrested or dead, the present leadership is trying to reinvent the group into a jihadi organization.
- Christians are not the direct targets of ASG violence. But since a majority of the Filipinos are Christians, it is inevitable that they become victims of the ASG attacks. The threats from ASG should not be underestimated, as the group is more capable than is widely perceived. It is also enhancing its capabilities to launch new types of attacks.
- Even with factionalism within the group, the MILF leadership remains strong and in control. The group controls a large territory with hard-line commanders in charge. However, with the gradual decline of resources and war fatigue among the community, the dividend from peace would appear to be more attractive for the group and its supporters.
- MILF's links with other groups appear to be at the level of its field commanders. There is continuing cooperation at the training and operational levels among the JI structured factions in Indonesia and the ASG, MILF and the RSM in the Philippines. There are tensions, however, as the agenda of different groups become more difficult to fit together.
- RSM, a relatively new actor, now helps these groups to expand their theatre of operations beyond Southern Philippines. This was evident from the Valentine Day attacks in Manila. RSM has an advantage over other groups because its members are familiar with the environment in Luzon and can blend into the surroundings without much difficulty.
- In addition, the New Peoples Army (NPA) significantly undermines governance in a large part of the country. The NPA has a presence in most of the Philippines. It is believed that the Philippines government's priority now is to reach a peaceful settlement with the MILF so that they can commit resources to fight the NPA.
- In the Philippines, the main problem is that the government has not been able to put in place robust counter-terrorism mechanism. There is no budgetary allocation by the

government for intelligence and law enforcement even though a multi-agency Anti-Terrorism Task Force has been set up to fight against terrorism. There is also little cooperation among different government agencies.

## INDONESIA

- Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) is the most dangerous group after Al-Qaeda, its role model. The group is heavily influenced by Al Qaeda's ideology and modus operandi.
- JI emerged out of the Darul Islam Movement due to disagreement among leaders about the political objectives to pursue. After bombings in Bali and Jakarta there was dissatisfaction among the group members about pursuing Al Qaeda's global jihad agenda. However, there is no agreement yet to return to the old Darul Islam struggle, i.e., establishment of Islamic law in Indonesia.
- JI now functions in a decentralized manner with a significant degree of fluidity in its membership. This horizontal structure provides JI with ample opportunities to tap into a vast network of jihadists, or other Islamist militant groups, that operate on the same ideological premise. The radical Islamists have become increasingly ideologically driven and group affiliations have become less significant.
- With its broader agenda JI has tried to win over groups with local agendas, into the umbrella of radical global Islamist movements. This is often done through the provision of financial and technical assistance. Cooperation of local groups with JI has often led to the former to conduct more deadly attacks on targets.
- Structured and unstructured factions of the JI are also working with the MILF and the ASG in the Philippines. This relationship is largely tactical rather than long-term and ideological.
- Indonesian radical Muslims have responded to the war in Iraq by organizing protests and openly voicing their opinion against the US and its allies.
- Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's release in June 2006 would have a symbolic impact on the radicals in the region and especially on the JI members. He has significant influence and control over the political faction of JI. His release would be exploited by Islamist groups and could embolden the jihadists in Indonesia. However, Ba'asyir's influence over terrorist operations is very limited even prior to his arrest. With the formation of Tandzim Qaedatul Jihad by Noordin Mohd Top, Ba'asyir's influence over operations would continue to be limited.
- In the long run, there is a high possibility that the political faction of JI, also commonly referred to as the JI mainstream, would pose the greater danger. Although the JI mainstream places a high emphasis on proselytization, they also provide military training to their members and most of its senior figures are Afghan veterans. Over time, their consolidated strength would be greater than the decentralized and ad hoc factions such as the one formed by Noordin Top.
- The failure of the Indonesian government to ensure that an adequate punishment is meted out to Ba'asyir, has once again, proved the weaknesses in its legal system when dealing with terrorists who kill innocent civilians.
- JI poses a greater danger to the region as compared to other groups like in the Philippines and Southern Thailand. This is mainly because of the resilience of its ideology. Individuals such as Imam Samudra and Noordin Mohd Top distort and manipulate certain concepts of the Islamic teachings to win new recruits. This compounded with historical events such as the persecution of Darul Islam figures and



the sense of injustice and repression as a result of the policies of the central government has become the rallying point for committing violent acts.



## 2. MARITIME TERRORISM

- The maritime milieu now represents the ‘ground zero’ of asymmetric threats such as terrorism, piracy and organized crime with the emergence of low intensity maritime operations (LIMO) capabilities of asymmetric non-state actors.
  - However, terrorism involving maritime assets is historically rare and constitutes only 2% of all international events in past 30 years. This was primarily because operating at sea requires specialist skills and equipment and resource constraints tend to make terrorists tactically conservative. Fixed land targets offer higher visibility and greater ease of access.
  - Nevertheless, concern is growing that terrorists may increase their focus on vulnerable targets at sea and in ports. Among the groups, there appears to be a greater awareness of general vulnerability of shipping and shipping infrastructure. Oceans are beyond sovereign control; there is ineffective national coastal and harbor surveillance and increased reliance on congested chokepoints. There are now conditions that could lead to more adroit exploitation of maritime environment, such as the growth of off-shore industries (especially in energy sector) and proliferation of companies specializing in maritime sports.
- Maritime attacks, arguably, offer an alternative means to achieve terrorists’ goals and offer large-scale economic destabilization, mass casualties and environmental damage.
  - Possible modes of attack include use of commercial containers to smuggle weapons and CBRN materials, detonation of a seized LNG carrier as a floating bomb. The terrorists may use a small, high-speed boat to attack an oil tanker or offshore energy platform and may also directly target a cruise liner or passenger ferry to cause mass casualties.
  - The ASG members in the Philippines have maritime capability, as it is inherent in the population of the region. Most members of the ASG come from the lineage of Tausug and Yakan tribes with a long history of maritime tradition. The ASG operates speedboats, mostly wooden craft with minimal freeboard, multiple outboard engines, and shallow draft. The boats are stealthy, fast, and able to easily navigate reefs and swamps. Many are armed with machine guns and capable of outrunning the naval vessels.
  - The Malacca Straits - a key maritime trading corridor- is seen to be vulnerable to terrorist attacks due to profusion of targets and relatively high rates of piracy. There is considerable apprehension that terrorists might mimic pirate tactics to hijack a commercial vessel or a cruise-liner and use it as a floating bomb near a port city. They could also sink a big ship in a choke point in the Straits of Malacca, to disrupt global trade and commerce. Targeting of passenger liners

has now become a matter of serious concern as security both at the boarding points and at sea, is quite rudimentary. The bombing of Superferry 14 in February 2004 is a case in point.

- The incidents of piracy in Indonesian waters declined in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami of December 2004, which damaged the coastal fishing villages, or kampongs in Aceh, from where the attacks were being launched. But there is a possibility of its resurgence if the post-peace accord resettlement fails to rehabilitate the locals adequately.
- **Preventive measures:**
  - o Establishment of national maritime surveillance and policing units;
  - o Building capabilities of the maritime policing units with equipment and training;
  - o Creation of mechanisms to collect and disseminate information pertinent to maritime security such as the IMB Reporting Centre in Kuala Lumpur and the proposed Information Sharing Centre in Singapore;
  - o Bilateral and multilateral arrangements such as 'Eye in the Sky' initiative and agreements on 'hot pursuit.'
  - o Extra-regional initiatives with the involvement of both the littoral as well as user states. This involves providing armed escorts for vessels transiting the strategic straits and initiatives such as the Japanese-sponsored Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP).
- Along with implementing measures to secure the seas; it is also essential for the governments to work together to degrade the land capabilities of the terror groups. Since all operations 'at sea' have a strong umbilical cord with the facilities on land or events

ashore, maritime counter measures to deal with threats of terrorism need also to be focused on land instead of just at sea.

### 3. THE LOCAL-GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

- Newly emerging societies in the post-colonial era are confronted with the need to build effective state structures and cohesive national identities. However, state consolidation in social systems fragmented with ethnic, linguistic, and religious divide, could not escape resistance, including internal armed rebellion. In multi-ethnic societies such as in the Philippines and Thailand, minority concerns over their share in the political space and control over resources often contribute to ethno-political conflicts.
- Southeast Asia provides a topography that makes it easier to conduct terrorist operations, with features such as thousands of small islands, very large, difficult-to-patrol coastline, and some large land areas that are only tenuously under the control of central governments. Major terrorist training camps are located in the region's jungles, as for example, those run by the MILF, in the Philippines.
- Al Qaeda was able to absorb local groups into its struggle by providing funding and training. After the Afghan jihad, Muslims from Southeast Asia returned and fed local conflicts. In addition, the members of different groups in Southeast Asia share very personal contacts and connections. Financial support from the Middle East and other countries continues to flow into the region. Information on weapons and tactics is available on Islamic and other web sites on the Internet.
- The Middle East has become the principal provider of ideological inspiration to Southeast Asian terrorist groups. The local groups have also developed a common cause

with domestic Islamic political parties and global jihadists.

- In Southeast Asia, media - print, audio-visual, and especially the Internet - has now emerged as the principal medium to disseminate jihadi ideologies, and as tools for recruitment. For example, Al Qaeda documents and training CDs have been found in Thai Islamic schools. There has been a proliferation of jihadi Websites in Southeast Asia in recent months. Books written by radical ideologues in local dialects are also increasingly in circulation. This has fueled further radicalization among the Muslim community in Southeast Asia.
- Iraq, now the epicenter of terrorism after Afghanistan, would provide the new generation of jihadists. Muslims in Southeast Asia and, especially Indonesia, have expressed strong resentment against the occupation of Iraq.
- However, there appears to be a shift to local conflicts by groups like the JI and the ASG. These groups demonstrate commonality of interest with the global jihad agenda. At the same time there is a tendency to exploit local grievances so as to keep their local support base focused. The issues such as the Palestine problem and the occupation of Iraq are being used as rallying points for jihad against the West. However, the groups are also invoking traditional local grievances. These include tensions between Malaysia and Singapore concerning water supply and the bridge across the strait connecting both the countries, and plight of Muslims in Southern Thailand, to attract the attention of their local supporters.
- In the global- local tension, the impact and influence of groups with global agendas over those with local agendas appear to be declining in Southeast Asia. This is because the global agendas are incompatible with the local agendas, which tend to be more focused

on bread and butter issues and domestic politics.

- Nevertheless, ideological extremism and robust terrorist support and operational infrastructure would continue to threaten the regional security environment in the foreseeable future.
- Many local groups perceive the US and its Allies as primary enemies. There is increasing antipathy towards the US involvement in anti-terrorism measures in Southeast Asia especially after the war in Iraq.
- In the global-local tension that has emerged, the construction of the 'other' has become very blurred making the possibilities of conflict resolution at the local level more difficult.

#### 4. REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF JIHADISTS AND INSURGENTS



- There is no single profile of terrorists in terms of age groups, financial, and social backgrounds, and psychological make up.
- Ideology or ideas have a very powerful way of shaping a person's moral cognition, enabling the person to adopt a pseudo-personality. Hence, the cause, derived from

the ideology, legitimizes the violent acts for the terrorists

- In addition, the terrorist groups also exert a powerful influence over their members. The sense of belonging and exclusivity diminishes the individual's personal and moral judgment. This is the power that can make violence against the perceived enemy not just acceptable but necessary.
- The construction of the 'other' and a 'black and white' view of the world lead to a very polarized thinking. This allows the terrorists to distance themselves from their opponents. It makes it easier for them to kill innocent people, with apparently little or no sense of remorse or guilt.
- Given the alienated and uncompromising worldview of the radicals, weaning the mainstream Muslims away from their influence through political concessions, amnesties or other personal incentives could not be enough. The best chances for success is to engage them in dialogue, show them how they are being manipulated by perverted or corrupt interpretation of the religious texts and to convince them that there could be better alternatives to acts of violence.
- *Rehabilitation*, in very broad terms is the process of helping a person to revert to his former self, independence, and quality of life. For the Islamist terrorist detainees, rehabilitation takes on particular importance as it seeks to change the offender's behaviour and way of thinking. It liberates the offenders from the trap of extremist ideology and restores their personal self and independence.
- **Preventive measures:**
  - o The terrorists' negative thinking processes and worldview, e.g., their tendency to think in a binary mode, needs to be eradicated.
  - o There is a need to counter the myths surrounding the misunderstood Islamic concepts, e.g., glorifying suicide bombing as a form of jihad in the name of God, and the concept of allegiance and non-allegiance.
  - o It is necessary to engage religious scholars to provide counters to the extremist propaganda using the same texts which the radicals misuse. This should also be disseminated among the wider community through appropriate channels.
  - o In the rehabilitation and reintegration process the government must give the target group hope that there are other non-violent means available to resolve the conflict.
  - o Not all terrorists and insurgents have the same level of commitment. Good intelligence can provide opportunities for exploitation. The support of the community is important.
  - o Any amnesty or surrender policy should be carefully administered and publicized to avoid counter propaganda.
- The Malayan insurgency between 1948 and 1960 should be a lesson for the states in the region in how to deal with insurgents and terrorists and what mistakes to avoid. The policy during the Malayan insurgency included the weaning away of the supporters of the communist insurgents, and a psychological warfare to induce large-scale surrenders.
- Attempts made by Singapore and Yemen demonstrate that there is hope of reforming or rehabilitating the terrorists. In Singapore, the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), officially formed in April 2003, has served as an expert resource group to assist the Muslim community. It promotes an appropriate understanding of Islam that addresses the misconceptions and misinterpretations of the religion as propagated by the JI members. RRG has played an important part not only in

counseling the JI detainees in Singapore, but also their direct family members and the community at large. The government of Yemen took similar measures to rehabilitate detainees in the country linked to terrorism. Both the governments have been fairly successful. In the past, similar experiments in Egypt with the members of the Al Gama al-Islamiya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad were also successful in integrating a large number of their members into the mainstream society. At that time, the Egyptian Government played a critical role in the ideological revision.

- However, there are problems associated with reintegration. The nature of authority in Islam is ambiguous and decentralized. Globalization has also undermined the authority of the religious scholars. Those scholars associated with the state are inevitably looked at with suspicion and are consequently rejected.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

### 5. A BLUEPRINT FOR REDUCING TERRORIST THREAT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

- In Southeast Asia, insurgency and terrorism overlap and global terrorists often exploit the local grievances and local resentments to spread the ideology of hate and violence. The

resilience of the terrorist groups in the region comes from robust networking among the groups.

- There is however, no single ‘all-encompassing’ ‘big answer’ on how to respond to terrorism. A range of policy instruments would be required in an effective strategy against terrorism. These would include tactical counter-terrorism measures such as military force, intelligence, criminal law enforcement, and strategic initiatives at the political, socio-economic and ideological level. Since each of the initiatives also has their drawbacks and limitations, a balance must necessarily be maintained in pursuing each of the approaches.
- Governments in Southeast Asia are facing a number of challenges in establishing a common front against terrorism. Countries in the region continue to be sensitive about sovereignty and non-interference norms. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation among the states through the ASEAN initiative.
- There should be an improved coordination between the law enforcement agencies of the different countries in the region. This involves looking beyond one’s borders and exchanging information to understand the dynamics of modern terrorist networks. Usually, information and intelligence sharing can be arranged at a threshold, which does not clash with jurisdictional issues and does



not come in conflict with politically sensitive sovereignty and non-interference norms. A common terrorism database would be most useful in the exchange of intelligence and information.

- However, the success of any counter-terrorism strategy is not in terms of the number of terrorists killed or captured alone. Use of force is appropriate to neutralize the immediate threat. But the use of military force alone could create new resentments and new grievances. Its indiscriminate use would give the terrorists reason to validate their actions and in turn increase their pool of recruits, supporters and sympathizers. The ideal counter terrorism policy would be a combination of hard and soft policies.
- The fight against extremism and terrorism is a “war of ideas or values.” The radical ideology must be countered and discredited. It is necessary to isolate the terrorists, diminish the underlying conditions of violence, and employ public diplomacy to counter the propaganda of the radical extremists. This also involves changing the minds and winning the hearts of the wider Muslim community.
- The challenge to radical views that supports acts of terrorism is likely to succeed only when it comes from deep within the Islamic tradition. Moderate Muslims therefore have a big role to play in countering the radical jihadist ideologies. The governments need to assist moderate, progressive Muslim leaders and intellectuals to negate the appeal of radical Islam. Inter-faith dialogues would be very helpful in breaking the resilience of the jihadist propaganda.
- The governments need to address the grievances in the local context. Lack of legitimacy, control over economy and lack of legitimate means for political expression are the areas that terrorist groups exploit. Enforcing the rule of law and supporting

social and economic upliftment would diminish the appeal of extremist views and make it difficult for the terrorist groups to flourish and sustain. At the same time, non-violent alternatives to resolve local conflicts should be promoted. A secure environment and greater opportunities for people would help the conflicting parties reach political settlements faster.

- Lack of effective legislation constrains governments’ ability to counter the threats of terrorism. At the political level, this stems from the inability of the national leadership in making a compelling case against terrorism. It is therefore necessary that a broad-based public discourse on the illegitimacy of terrorism as a tactic, regardless of the legitimacy of the cause, be shaped. Governments need to adopt appropriate counter terrorism legal regime incorporating global best practices to interdict terrorists and make their operations difficult.
- Given the fact that radicals in certain areas are misusing Islamic educational institutions, it is necessary to ensure that the states provide universal education based on a curriculum that promotes tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions. Religious education has thrived in most of the under-developed regions, where states lack the organic capability to provide minimum levels of education to all its citizens. These states need to be assisted, both financially and technically, to promote inclusive educational system without, however, affecting the religious sensitivities in the concerned states.
- The source of recruitment can be nipped through the active engagement and education of the communities. This is important, as terrorists draw sympathizers and supporters from the community, who protect them from the authorities and provide them with safe houses.

- The gap between research, policy-making, and law enforcement should be bridged and the latter should appreciate the importance of quality research through adequate fieldwork to develop an understanding of the context of the conflicts in the region.
- Building national resilience by not overreacting after a terrorist attack is very important. A speedy normalization process would defeat the immediate aims of the terrorists of disrupting normal life.

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Compiled and Edited by: Swati Parashar and  
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# C O N F E R E N C E P R O G R A M M E





# PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

## DAY 1

- 8:30AM **Current Threat**  
Rohan Gunaratna, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore
- 9:00 **Opening Address**  
Ambassador Patricia L. Herbold, US Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore
- 9:15 **Session One: Overview of Terrorism Issues in Southeast Asia**  
Moderator: Amitav Acharya, Deputy Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Rohan Gunaratna, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Zachary Abuza, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts
- 11:00 **Session Two: Terrorist Groups and Networks in Southeast Asia; Impact of Iraq on Southeast Asian Groups**  
Moderator: Hekmat Karzai, ICPVTR, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Badrus Sholeh, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia  
Anthony Bubalo, Lowy Institute, Sydney, Australia
- 12:30 **Keynote Speech**  
Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs and Law, Republic of Singapore
- 1:45 **Session Three: Regional Terrorist Networks**  
Moderator: Karen Law, ICPVTR, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Rohaiza Ahmed Asi, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Herman Joseph Kraft, University of the Philippines

## DAY 2

- 8:30AM **Session Four: Emergence of New Jihadist Hubs in Thailand and Cambodia?**  
Moderator: Rohan Gunaratna, Head, ICPVTR, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Jeffrey J. Blatt, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (S/R) - Universal Surveillance and Apprehension Team, (UNISAT)  
Perapong Manakit, Deputy Head of Psychological and Public Relations, Southern Border Provinces Commission, Thailand
- 10:15 **Session Five: Maritime Terrorism: Terrorist Threat and Response**  
Moderator: Arabinda Acharya, ICPVTR, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Peter Chalk, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California  
Rommel C. Banlaoi, National Defense College, Manila, Philippines
- 12:45 **Session Six: Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Jihadists**  
Moderator: Kumar Ramakrishna, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Mohamed Bin Ali, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore  
Anthony Bubalo, Lowy Institute, Sydney, Australia
- 2:30 **Session Seven: Strategies for Reducing the Terrorist Threat in Southeast Asia**  
Moderator: Mike Poore, CENTRA Technology, Inc., Arlington, Virginia  
Zachary Abuza, Glen Buscu, Anthony Bubalo, Rohaiza Ahmad Asi, Peter Chalk, Mohamed Bin Ali, Rommel C. Banlaoi, Perapong Manakit, Jeffrey J. Blatt, Herman Joseph Kraft, Badrus Sholeh
- 4:00 **Closing Address:**  
Ambassador Barry Desker, Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore

## ABOUT ICPVTR

The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, (ICPVTR), is the first centre to be established at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with practical knowledge, essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically motivated groups.

### ICPVTR CORE OBJECTIVES

- Conduct sustained research and analyses into terrorist, guerrilla, militia, and extremist political groups, and their support bases.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of international, state, and societal responses in managing the threat of political violence.
- Provide high quality instruction and training for serving officers and future leaders engaged in combating terrorism and other forms of political violence.
- Advise governments and inform societies affected by political violence on how to manage the current and evolving threat.

### ICPVTR CORE PROGRAMS

#### DATABASE

The ICPVTR terrorism database - Global Pathfinder - is a one-stop repository for information on the current and emerging terrorist threat. The database consists of terrorist attack, group, personality, and camp profiles, as well as primary and secondary documents. The primary documents include the Al Qaeda registry papers from Afghanistan, the originals of which are preserved in the Centre.

### CAPACITY BUILDING

In addition to teaching the counter terrorism module at Masters level at IDSS, ICPVTR threat specialists conduct foundation, advanced, and specialized courses for Singaporean and foreign law-enforcement, military, and intelligence personnel through on-site training and attachment programs. Together with its partners, ICPVTR is developing an international counter terrorism course in 2007.

ICPVTR launched its off-shore counter terrorism capacity-building interventions in 2005. The Centre is assisting in the establishment and initial operation of the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies in Kabul, Afghanistan, and in developing its capabilities in conflict analyses and management techniques.

### STRATEGIC COUNTER TERRORISM

ICPVTR's strategic counter terrorism projects include ideological, legislative, educational, financial, media, informatics, and developmental initiatives. These strategic projects seek to create an environment hostile to terrorist groups and unfriendly to terrorist supporters and sympathizers. ICPVTR seeks to build a norm and an ethic against politically motivated violence especially terrorism.

## ABOUT IDSS

**The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)** was established in July 1996 as an autonomous research institute within the Nanyang Technological University. Its objectives are to:

- Conduct research on security, strategic and international issues.
- Provide general and graduate education in strategic studies, international relations, defence management and defence technology.
- Promote joint and exchange programmes with similar regional and international institutions, and organise seminars/conferences on topics salient to the strategic and policy communities of the Asia-Pacific.

Constituents of IDSS include the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) and the Asian Programme for Negotiation and Conflict Management (APNCM).

### RESEARCH

Through its Working Paper Series, *IDSS Commentaries* and other publications, the Institute seeks to share its research findings with the strategic studies and defence policy communities. The Institute's researchers are also encouraged to publish their writings in refereed journals. The focus of research is on issues relating to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and their implications for Singapore and other countries in the region. The Institute has also established the S. Rajaratnam Professorship in Strategic Studies (named after Singapore's first Foreign Minister), to bring distinguished scholars to participate in the work of the Institute. Previous holders of the Chair include Professors Stephen Walt (Harvard University), Jack Snyder (Columbia University), Wang Jisi (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), Alastair Iain Johnston (Harvard University) and John Mearsheimer (University of Chicago). A Visiting Research Fellow Programme also enables overseas scholars to carry out related research in the Institute.

### TEACHING

The Institute provides educational opportunities at an advanced level to professionals from both the private and public sectors in Singapore as well as overseas through graduate programmes, namely, the Master of Science in Strategic Studies, the Master of Science in International Relations and the Master of Science in International Political Economy. These programmes are conducted full-time and part-time by an international faculty. The Institute also has a Doctoral programme for research in these fields of study. In addition to these graduate programmes, the Institute also teaches various modules in courses conducted by the SAFTI Military Institute, SAF Warrant Officers' School, Civil Defence Academy, and the Defence and Home Affairs Ministries. The Institute also runs a one-semester course on '*The International Relations of the Asia Pacific*' for undergraduates in NTU.

### NETWORKING

The Institute convenes workshops, seminars and colloquia on aspects of international relations and security development that are of contemporary and historical significance. Highlights of the Institute's activities include a regular Colloquium on Strategic Trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the annual Asia Pacific Programme for Senior Military Officers (APPSMO) and the biennial Asia Pacific Security Conference. IDSS staff participate in Track II security dialogues and scholarly conferences in the Asia-Pacific. IDSS has contacts and collaborations with many international think tanks and research institutes throughout Asia, Europe and the United States. The Institute has also participated in research projects funded by the Ford Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. It also serves as the Secretariat for the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), Singapore. Through these activities, the Institute aims to develop and nurture a network of researchers whose collaborative efforts will yield new insights into security issues of interest to Singapore and the region.





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