

## Terrorism in South-East Asia

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### 1. Introduction:

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a terrorist group in Southeast Asia with operational and ideological ties to al Qaeda, has suffered profoundly. The turning point of JI attacking Indonesia's most iconic hotels on July 17, 2009 and the discovery of a plot to kill the Indonesian president. The bomb explosions rocked the Ritz-Carlton Hotel and the JW Marriott Hotel in the upscale Mega Kuningan District in Jakarta, the nation's capital. The two hotel compounds are closely located, separated by a road and an underground tunnel. Male suicide bombers targeted the JW Lounge at the JW Marriott hotel at 07.47 am and Airlangga Restaurant at the Ritz Carlton hotel at 07.57 am. In addition to the bombers, the near simultaneous attacks killed 1 New Zealand, 3 Australians, 2 Dutchmen and 1 Indonesian and injured 55. The JW Marriott with 30 floors, 297 rooms, 36 suites, 23 meeting rooms and 6 restaurants and Ritz-Carlton - 333 rooms, 4 restaurants and 20 meeting rooms are integral to Indonesia's bustling business environment. Considered the Golden Business Triangle, Mega Kuningan hosts the multinational corporations, embassies and shopping malls. The attack prompted Manchester United, scheduled to play an exhibition football match in Jakarta on July 20, 2009 and had booked rooms at the Ritz Carlton, to cancel their visit to Indonesia.

### 2. The Context:

Asia suffered a series of attacks on the hospitality industry. The hotels attacked in Asia in 2008 included the Kabul Serena, the only five star hotel in Afghanistan and the Islamabad Marriott, another five star hotel in Pakistan. While the Serena was attacked by the Haqqani network, a group operating closely with the Afghan Taliban, the Islamabad Marriott was attacked by the Pakistani Taliban working closely with al Qaeda. In neighboring India, Lashkar-e-Toiba, a Pakistani group not linked to al Qaeda, attacked the Oberoi Trident and the Taj Mahal in Mumbai, India. With the hardening of diplomatic targets, Western luxury hotels have become second embassies.

Unlike the previous wave of attacks on the hospitality industry, the terrorists failed to strike the J.W. Marriott and the Ritz Carlton from the front end. The terrorists infiltrated and recruited Ibrahim, a vendor servicing the hospitality industry. Through the employee entrance, Ibrahim, the florist, facilitated the transportation of the explosives, the pre-attack surveillance, and the bombers into the hotels. With terrorists recruiting an insider, hotels will have to pay attention to both guests and to staff, including contract staff and vendors.

### 3. The Background:

In November, 2001, the J.W. Marriott Hotel opened in the Megakuningan district in Jakarta. After JI attacked Bali and killed 202 including 88 Australians in October 2002, most Western luxury hotels took security measures. Understanding the threat in Indonesia posed by JI, the J.W. Marriott Hotel functioned at threat condition red, Marriott International's highest level of security. This mandated that all vehicles would be screened prior to entry into the driveway, all persons would be screened with walk-through metal detectors and luggage would be screened as well. These are three of about 35 procedures the hotels are required to follow under Marriott International's crisis procedures. Security was so tight that the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia stayed at the hotel for three months, because it was felt that security was better than at his own residence.

The last major attack in Indonesia took place in Bali on October 1, 2005. Twenty people were killed, and 129 people were injured by three suicide bombers. Since then, there had not been any terrorist attacks in Indonesia until the hotel attacks. Although Singapore's International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research warned of likely attacks, most foreign and Indonesian analysts were advising that JI seemed to have lost their operational capability. This all changed on 17 July 2009 when JI struck Indonesia once again.

#### 4. The Attack:

On July 10, a reservation was made through the Marriott central reservation number in Jakarta, requesting a reservation made in the name of Nuri Hasdi for a two night stay at the JW Marriott, checking in on 15 July for a two night stay. The rate quoted was the benchmark rate of USD \$140 a night. On July 15, a male Indonesian arrived at 15:15 hours by Bluebird taxi at the JW Marriott Hotel. The taxi went through the vehicle inspection station and was cleared. It then moved forward and dropped off the passenger. The passenger went through a walk-through metal detector and handed off his luggage – one bag on wheels – for screening. This passenger went through the screening with no alarm and his bag was checked manually with nothing found to be exceptional. He then moved forward to the reception desk to check in.

At reception, the passenger presented identification in the name of Nuri Hasdi, which matched with the name on the reservation. He paid a total sum of USD \$330 to cover two nights lodging with and extra \$50 for incidentals. "Hasdi" then was given a key to room 1808. The desk clerk would normally copy the identification, but she said the copy machine was working slowly and asked the guest – "Hasdi" – to return. "Hasdi" then went to his room.

During the next two days, "Hasdi" displayed the "Do Not Disturb" sign on his door. However, he did allow the housekeeper to remove trash from the room. During the first evening, "Hasdi" went to the front desk and requested a second key to his room. There were a total of seven entries into the room in the two days – 2 of them were with the original key and 5 of them were with the second key. Marriott policy is to check any room with the "Do Not Disturb" sign at least every 24 hours. This is to check the well being of the guest. Because "Hasdi" allowed Housekeeping to remove trash, this requirement was satisfied.

On 17 July at 7:40 am, "Hasdi" came off the guest elevator at the lobby level. He was wearing a business suit with a dress shirt and no tie. He was pulling a luggage bag on wheels and had a backpack which he was wearing to the front of his body. A security officer at the elevator landing watched "Hasdi" as he moved across the lobby. When the security officer noticed "Hasdi" did not stop at reception, but was walking toward the lobby lounge, the security officer motioned to a security supervisor "Dik Dik" who was standing at the entrance to the lobby lounge. Dik Dik interdicted "'Hasdi'" at the entrance to the lobby lounge and asked him where he was going. "Hasdi" replied that he has a package to deliver to his boss, who was inside the room. Dik Dik then asked him for the name of his boss. "Hasdi" then moved quickly past Dik Dik into the room and detonated his device. The Marriott bombing occurred during one of a series of periodic breakfast meetings of CEOs and other prominent (and predominantly expatriate) members of the Jakarta business community hosted by James Castle, the president of "Castle Asia", and advised investors of economic issues in Indonesia. They had been meeting in the lobby lounge of the JW Marriot for the past couple of years every Friday for the morning conference which always started at 7:30 am. They normally had a small buffet breakfast set up on the side of the room and then seated themselves around a large conference table. On the morning of the bombing, there were nineteen people sitting around the table, including Jim Castle. Six people were killed in the bombing and others were injured. A banquet captain, Everett, was also killed. "Nuri Hasdi" was later identified as Dani Dwi Permani, eighteen years old and recently graduated from a private senior high school in Bogor, West Java. Dani rented room 1808 in the JW Marriott.

As the security officers evacuated the hotel, one of them opened the door to room 1808. Inside the room, he saw what appeared to be a laptop bag on the bed with some wires and a blinking red light. He immediately backed off and notified the local police who evacuated the area and removed the device.

## 5. At Ritz Carlton.

At 6:51 am, a florist who worked for an outside contractor, “Cynthia Florist” by the name of Ibrahim came through the employee entrance. He had met a man outside arriving by taxi. Both of them unloaded some boxes and plants from a taxi outside the entrance. They placed the boxes and plants onto a cart and came into the hotel. Ibrahim was dressed in slacks and a short sleeved shirt. His companion was dressed in dark slacks and a pale blue dress shirt. He was wearing a ball cap pulled low over his head and dark glasses. He was looking down as if to avoid the CCTV camera.

At 7:40 am, Ibrahim’s companion was seen by a bellman coming off the guest elevator into the lobby of the hotel. The bellman later stated the elevator came up from the lower lobby, indicating the person did not come down from the guest floors. Ibrahim’s companion then moved across the lobby to the Airlangga restaurant, located on the same lobby level. The restaurant’s hostess greeted him and asked for his room number. Ibrahim’s companion replied that he was staying in room 2701. The hostess remarked that 2701 was not a correct room number and asked for his name to look up his room number in her computer. Ibrahim’s companion replied that he was meeting someone for breakfast and they would pay cash. She seated him and moved off to get him coffee. A moment later, the bomb exploded across the street at the JW Marriott. Several of the customers moved over to the window to see what had happened. This action probably saved them from injury as Ibrahim’s companion set off his device shortly after, killing a Dutch couple. The suicide bomber of the Ritz-Carlton hotel was Nana Ikhwan Maulana, a 28-year-old former resident of Pandeglang, Banten.

## 6. The Investigation:

Indonesia’s elite counter terrorism Unit, Detachment 88, and J.W. Marriott launched parallel investigations into the bombings. Alan Orlob, the Vice President of the Marriott chain was visiting Jakarta during the attack. When the bombing took place, Orlob was staying at the Ritz Carlton. Orlob’s assistance was pivotal to the police investigators. With the information gleaned from the bellman at the hotel, security supervisors at the hotel, Orlob started reviewing the video. It was determined that the bomber had to have come up from the lower lobby. Leading to the lower lobby were three entrances – one from the loading dock, one from the tunnel that connected the two hotels, and another from the employee entrance. The video revealed Ibrahim and the bomber coming in through the employee entrance.

The security supervisors were tasked with reviewing the video in the days prior to the attack. It was felt that there must have been probing by Ibrahim and the bomber, testing to see what the security response would be. On 8 July, the video revealed Ibrahim and the bomber coming through the employee entrance. It also showed them going into the Airlangga restaurant. In parallel, the video of Ibrahim and the bomber of Ritz Carlton was reviewed by police investigator due to the suspicion on Ibrahim involvement. A staff member informed the police that she saw Ibrahim was talking with a man holding a backpack prior to the blast at the florist shop.

Ibrahim, nicknamed Boim, had worked for Cynthia Florist since April 2005, more than four years before the attack. Prior to that, he had worked at the Hotel Mulia, another five star hotel in Jakarta. In his mid-40’s he had a wife and four children. On the morning of the attack, he had left a letter of resignation. In the note, he had informed his employer that he owed some friends money and to pay them out of his last pay check. This letter surfaced at the crisis meeting held during the morning of the bombing. It was felt then that Ibrahim might have been injured in the attack. It wasn’t known until the video was reviewed that Ibrahim was complicit in the attack.

## 7. The Letters

Page 1

Jakarta, July 17, 2009

Dear Ibu Chyntia,

On behalf of me, Ibrahim, I'd like to convey my resignation letter effective on July 17, 2009.

Regarding my debt to the company, I will pay with my July salary.

I do apologize and really thanks to your company.

Ibrahim

Page 2

Jakarta,

Dear all my friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To Pak Wandu, I do apologize for all my mistakes.

Send my regards to all friends in boarding house and also my apology to them.

I'm glad that you pray diligently, please ask other friends to do so.

To Pak Hasan, I also apologize that I have made you fed up, I just want to make you work professionally.

Page 3

Dear all friends in Marriott, Pacific, Tomang, also do apologize for my unpleasant words and attitudes, please do forgive me.

To all Chyntia Florist employee, especially Ibu Chyntia as the owner of the company, I would like to say thanks a lot and please forgive me.

Ibrahim.

## 8. Hunting for Ibrahim

The police moved rapidly hunting for Ibrahim. The police were successful on August 5, when they arrested Amir Abdullah, the terrorist who paid for the room at the Marriott. A week later, on August 7, the police raided in house in Temanggung, Central Java. Three people were arrested after a 16 hour shoot out. The man inside yelled out that he was Noordin Top, the most wanted terrorist leader in Southeast Asia. Police believed that Top was responsible for the attack. The police shot into the house and killed the man. The man was later identified as Ibrahim – the florist. On August 8, police raided a house in Bekasi, West Java, killing two people believed to be preparing to attack the Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono with a truck bomb near his private residence in Bogor, West Java. Funding for the bombings is believed to have been provided from the Middle East. A number of suspects, including a Saudi Arabian national, have been arrested by Indonesian police for their involvement in handling the funds. Furthermore, the Indonesian police arrested Mohamed Jibril, known widely as a prince of jihad. Mohamed Jibril, who maintains a number of extremist websites in Indonesia, is the son of Abu Jibril, the leader of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Mujahidin Council of Indonesia). A charismatic cleric, Abu Jibril, worked closely with Abu Bakar Bashir, the co-founder of JI.

On September 17, 2009, Detachment 88 raided a JI safe house in Solo, Central Java and after an eight hour shoot out killed Noordin Mohamed Top, Ario Sudarso, alias Aji, the principal bomb maker for the hotel attacks, Adib Susilo, a logistician and Bagus Budi Pranoto, alias Urwah, a key terrorist recruiter. Urwah was earlier imprisoned for his role in the Australian Embassy attack in Jakarta but later rejoined Top. Police were led to the house after arresting Indonesian militant Rohmat Puji Prabowo at a marketplace in Solo on September 16. Police also recovered 200 kilograms (440 pounds) of explosive material, firearms including a M-16 assault rifles, laptops and surveillance equipment inside the house. The killing of Top was significant for two reasons: he was the most active terrorist in Southeast Asia and he was also the al Qaeda representative in the region.

## 9. Conclusion:

Indonesia has responded exceptionally well to terrorist attacks but not to terrorist threats. Due to weaknesses in its legislation, Indonesia's capacity to dismantle terrorist support infrastructure is limited. As such, radical clerics such as Abu Bakar Bashir and Abu Jibril continue to preach hatred and radicalize a new generation of terrorists. Furthermore, terrorist fund raising and procurement including training is not criminalized. Indonesia has also failed to designate JI as a terrorist group.

Unlike Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia has failed to prevent many terrorist attacks. In contrast, the Internal Security Act enables Malaysia and Singapore to proactively respond to threats and reduce terrorist intentions and capabilities. In many ways, without appropriate counter terrorism legislation, Detachment 88 has been fighting one hand tied behind its back. On July 14, three days before the attack, Detachment 88 raided a JI safe house in the village of Cilacap. Police recovered bomb making material both from the Pondok Pesantren Al-Muaddib in Mulele and the residence of Bahrudin Latif, the father of the third wife of Noordin Mohomed Top. The bomb making material recovered in Cilacap was almost identical to the devices used to bomb the hotels three days later. From reacting to events, if to win against the terrorism, Detachment 88 should move to proactive and preventive operations. To facilitate this critical transition, Indonesian leaders should re-visit their counter terrorism legislation and give a mandate to dismantle the superstructure facilitating, supporting and enabling terror in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country.