

## THAILAND

### ATTACK ON LUXURY HOTEL IN PATTANI

Date: 15 March 2008

Location: Pattani, Thailand

#### Brief Summary of the Attack

In what has been described as one of the bloodiest attacks in recent months, a car bomb detonated on 15 March 2008, in the car park of the luxurious CS Pattani Hotel in southern Thailand. The CS Pattani Hotel is one of the few luxurious hotels that can be found in the southern Thai region. Two smaller bombs were detonated in the hotel's ground floor restroom, and another outside the coffee shop, but caused little damage and no injuries. The larger 20 kg remote-controlled bomb was placed in the back of the vehicle. The bomb had detonated at 7:45pm (local time) 15 metres<sup>1</sup> from the lobby of the popular hotel. Another bomb was later found in the restaurant of the hotel, this was later defused by security personnel.<sup>2</sup> Thus far, two were killed, three others are in critical condition and 15 others sustained moderate injuries. Among those injured included the owner of the CS Pattani Hotel, Senator Anusart Suwanmongkol who had suffered from cuts to his head and face. Both Senator Suwanmongkol's driver and the security guard of the hotel were killed in the bomb blast.

Used in the attack were three fire extinguisher canisters that were stuffed with 10 kg of explosive materials. These canisters were placed in a car parked outside the hotel. According to the police spokesperson, only two of the three canisters had exploded. In addition, three Casio wristwatches were discovered at the scene. The watches were believed to have been used as trigger mechanism for the bombs.

The blast shattered windows as high as the eighth floor of the hotel.<sup>3</sup> The impact from the blast was so severe that 10 vehicles parked nearby, part of the hotel lobby and its windows were badly damaged.<sup>4</sup> The front of the hotel was also severely damaged.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Car bomb shakes Thailand's troubled Pattani province, *Asia-Pacific News*, 16 March 2008, [http://news.monstersandcritics.com/asiapacific/news/article\\_1395563.php/Car\\_bomb\\_shakes\\_Thailands\\_troubled\\_Pattani\\_province\\_Roundup](http://news.monstersandcritics.com/asiapacific/news/article_1395563.php/Car_bomb_shakes_Thailands_troubled_Pattani_province_Roundup)

<sup>2</sup> Kocha, Olam, "Two die in separate blasts in Thailand", *CNN, Com Asia*, 16 March 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/03/15/thailand.blasts/>

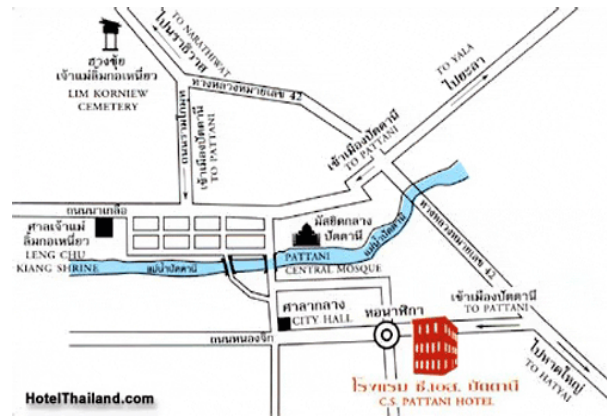
<sup>3</sup> "Car Bomb Kills two in Southern Thailand", *The Associated Press*, 16 March 2008, <http://www.sacbee.com/836/story/788579.html>

<sup>4</sup> Wassayos Ngamkham, Pradit Ruangdit & Abdulloh Benjakat, "Car bomb kills two in Pattani", *The Bangkok Post*, 16 March 2008, [http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/16Mar2008\\_news02.php](http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/16Mar2008_news02.php)

<sup>5</sup> "Bombs kill two, wound 18 in Thai Muslim south", *Reuters*, 16 March 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSBK99342>



(CS Pattani Hotel)



(Location of the CS Pattani Hotel)

## The Target



The CS Pattani hotel is known to be one of the best hotels in Southern Thailand. Known for its tight security, the hotel has often been chosen as the venue for foreign tourists, visiting delegates on conferences and ministers. In fact, the hotel has been referred to by many observers as a "*neutral ground*" given that the hotel has long served as a venue for extensive debate among top government officials, critical Muslim leaders, human rights activists, and local politicians.<sup>6</sup> The attacks cast a shadow on the ability not only of the hotel security but of the Thai security forces ability to provide protection to public places.

In the New Year's Eve bombing in 2007 in Narathiwat, two hotel discotheques were targeted. They were Hotel Riviera and Hotel Marina. A second explosive device was placed in the car parks of both these hotels. In total an estimated 32 people were injured. There were no fatalities.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

## **The Tactic Used**

While the tactical use of a second explosive device is common, the unique nature of the attack on CS Pattani hotel lies in the use of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).

Whilst VBIEDs have been used in the past as a tactic by the militants in southern Thailand, it has not been used in nearly a year. It is the recurrence of this tactic that is of interest. According to Major General Thawatchai Samutsakorn, commander of the Pattani Task Force the use of the VBIED in the form of a car reflects a change in tactic but in his opinion this may not be a significant shift or an escalation of their capability.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst a single incident may not be indicative of a trend towards increasing use of VBIEDs using cars, it is reflective of the heightened capacity of the militant groups in southern Thailand.

## **Implications of the Attack**

Immediately after the bomb blast, security forces in southern Thailand went on high alert and carried out blind sweeps in other sensitive areas in Southern Thailand amid fears that more car bombings would be carried out.<sup>8</sup>

In the context of the latest bombings, there is a need to review the nature and the extent of security in hotels in southern Thailand. Although no foreigners were affected, the southern Thai region has numerous resorts that tourists visit.

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<sup>7</sup> High Alert after Pattani hotel bomb, *The Nation*, 16 March 2008, [http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2008/03/16/pda/headlines\\_30068331.html](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2008/03/16/pda/headlines_30068331.html)

<sup>8</sup> High Alert after Pattani hotel bomb, *The Nation*, 16 March 2008, [http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2008/03/16/pda/headlines\\_30068331.html](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2008/03/16/pda/headlines_30068331.html)