MANILA, Philippines - Military authorities may not have monitored any security threats to the country, but travel warnings from different governments should "be taken seriously," an international terrorism expert said.

In an interview with ANC, Dr. Rohan Gunaratna said "if there is intelligence that there are any terrorist attacks, it is incumbent upon governments to share that information with the public."

Gunaratna is the head of the Singapore-based International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research. It is one of the largest counter-terrorism research centers in the world.

The United States, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia issued separate travel advisories this week, warning their nationals of imminent terrorist attacks in the country, including Metro Manila.

Malacañang said it is still trying to verify the terror plots. A Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) official, however, said the government has already asked the country’s allies to downgrade the travel warnings.

“Today, terrorism is an international threat...Governments do not only monitor threats in their countries but also in regions where their own nationals travel,” Gunaratna said.

He said different countries, and not just the Philippines, face this threat. “The United States and the UK have faced constant, significant threats,” he said.

Two suspicious packages bound for the US were interrupted in Britain and Dubai over the weekend. These even prompted security officials to inform US President Barack Obama of a "potential terrorist threat."

While it is wrong to single out the Philippines, the governments should still not blame the different governments for releasing their advisories, he said.

Asked how real the threats are, he said “these governments have worked closely with the Philippines in the fight against terrorism.”
He noted “they issued the warnings because they have specific information.”

He said the Philippines has a good source of intelligence networks and it is best to harness these to thwart terrorist attacks.

“The focus is on pre-emption and prevention,” Gunaratna said.

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