

## Indonesian Cleric Bashir Arrested for Terror Training

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(Adds police spokesman's comment in third paragraph.)

Aug. 9 (Bloomberg) -- Indonesian police arrested radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir in connection with training terrorists, his third detention since a 2002 nightclub bombing in Bali that killed 202 people.



Bashir, 71, was taken into custody in connection with a larger plot to bomb foreign embassies and police headquarters, national police spokesman Edward Aritonang told reporters today in Jakarta. Police are searching for a French national with a Moroccan wife who may be involved, he said.

The cleric's arrest follows a February raid on a training camp in Aceh that led to more than 100 terrorism suspects, Aritonang said. Of that group, 66 have been arrested and will be prosecuted in Jakarta soon, he said. Bashir "was actively involved in the initial preparation for military training with the terrorist group," Aritonang said.

Indonesia has stepped up raids against terror suspects since bombings 13 months ago at Jakarta's JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels killed nine people, including the two attackers. They were the first terrorist attacks by Islamist militants in almost four years in the secular Southeast Asian republic, which has the world's biggest population of Muslims.

"Bashir's arrest is a demonstration that Indonesia has made significant gains in the fight against terrorism," said Rohan Gunaratna, head of the Singapore-based International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research. "Unless the ideologues are arrested, unless the ideology is criminalized, terrorism will persist."

'God's Grace'

"This is God's grace," Bashir said earlier as he was escorted into an office in the police compound in Jakarta, the capital. "It will cut my sin." Bashir said the police move was the result "of the U.S.'s conspiracy."

The Aceh camps were financed in part by Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid, known as JAT, which Bashir established in 2008. The group advocates the full application of Islamic law in Indonesia, according to the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

"It's good police work, no question, but it's also been very stupid missteps and miscalculations on the part of the groups involved," Sidney Jones, senior adviser to the research organization's Asia Program, said by telephone.

Bashir has served two jail terms since 2003, neither on terrorism charges as prosecutors failed to prove beyond doubt his role in attacks using the country's anti-terror laws. He has been affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah, an al-Qaeda linked group blamed for the Bali attack in which 88 Australians were among those killed.

### Top Arrest

Last September, police killed militant leader Noordin Mohammad Top, who was suspected of involvement in every major anti-Western attack in Indonesia since 2002. In March, they killed terrorist leader and suspected Bali bomber Dulmatin and two others.

Bashir is connected to terrorist elements throughout the country, Ito Sumardi, head of the national police crime investigation unit, told reporters today. "We collected data, gathered facts for quite some time," he said. "We've seen an escalation and a rise in disturbances."

The Jakarta Composite Index has gained 21 percent this year, the best performance among Asia's 10 largest markets. The benchmark increased 0.3 percent as of 3:27 p.m. local time.

### 'Deal Breaker'

Terrorist attacks are no longer "a deal breaker" for companies looking to invest in Indonesia, said James Van Zorge, principal of Jakarta-based business consultancy Van Zorge, Heffernan and Associates. Southeast Asia's largest economy may expand 6.3 percent next year, Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo said today.

"The threat of terrorism doesn't have as big an impact as back in 2001 or 2002," Van Zorge said. "In those years, whenever there was a terrorist attack, the word was 'one more attack and we're out of here.' You don't hear that anymore."

--With assistance from Berni Moestafa. Editors: Mark Williams, Patrick Harrington.

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