

10 Arrested in Indonesia Over Terror Attack Plot

July 2008

The Incident

Indonesia's counter-terrorism unit, Detachment 88, has arrested 10 suspected militants, including a Singaporean, in South Sumatra. Eight have been identified as Musa alias Abdul Rahman alias Ifan, Sugi, Wahyudi, Heri, Gandhi, Rohman, Ali and Agus Carang. The other two have not been identified yet but they are allegedly members of *Forum Antisipasi Kegiatan Pemurtadan* (FAKTA, Anti-Apostasy Movement Forum). Police also recovered 22 bombs – 16 of them active – dozens of kilograms of potassium chlorate, other explosive materials and several hand grenades.¹

Police arrested the Singaporean man on 28 June 2008 in Palembang. He has since been identified as Mohamed Hassan Syanudin alias Alim alias Omar alias Taslim alias Abu Hazam, 35. He is the brother of Mohamed Hussain Syanudin, a JI member who was detained under the Internal Security Act in Singapore. Hussain was released in June 2007 on Suspension Directions.² Hassan allegedly trained as bomb maker in Afghanistan with Azahari, a JI bomb expert who died in Malang during a police raid in 2005. Hassan was working as an English teacher in Palembang when police arrested him. He is also believed to be an associate of Mas Salamat Kastari, a leader of JI in Singapore who escaped from a Singapore detention centre in February 2008.³

Following Hassan's interrogation, police began a series of raids. The first of Hassan's associates who arrested was Musa alias Abdul Rahman alias Ifan in Simpang Sekip, Palembang City. Musa had a pistol (Colt) and tried to escape by hitting his motorbike against the police motorbike. Right after Musa's arrest, police also arrested Sugi, believed to be involved in bomb making, at the internet café "Mujahid" in Lorong Banten, Jalan Rajawali. Then, police arrested Wahyudi and Heri in their rented house where they were believed to be housing the bombs.

Police also arrested Gandhi, Rohman and Ali in Bumiarjo village, Block C and Block J in Lempuing District, Ogan Komering III, Palembang. Police recovered one Tupperware-type of bomb. Gandhi was allegedly trained in Afghanistan. In another incident, police also arrested Agus Carang.

The assembling of the bombs had been done in different places. Initially, the men were assembling bombs at Musa's rented house in Talang Ratu, Km. 4.5, Palembang. Then,

¹ "Indonesia busts major Qaeda.JI terror ring", *Bangkok Post*, 4 July 2008.

http://www.bangkokpost.com/breaking_news/breakingnews.php?id=128697

² "Brother of Singaporean terror suspect in Sumatra bomb ring is a JI detainee", *The Straits Times*, 4 July 2008, http://www.straitstimes.com/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/STISStory_254474.html

³ "Indonesia; 12 Arrested over tourist attack plot," *CNN.com*, 4 July 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/07/03/indonesia.plot/index.html>

they moved to the house in Jalan Letna Murot, Talang Ratu. The rented house of Wahyudi was used as storage place of the bombs.⁴ Police recovered the bombs in the attic.

Analysis

The bombs recovered were filled with bullets instead of JI's trademark ball bearings. It is believed that filling the bombs with ammunition would have been more damaging. However, in using Tupperware-type bombs is proof that JI's methodology has not changed dramatically. This is could be due to the success of security forces in clamping down on JI.

The other interesting fact is the arrest of FAKTA members. FAKTA is an organisation that aims to guard Muslims *aqidah* from the danger of apostasy and to bring back the Islam that existed at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and His four companions. Even though FAKTA has been extreme in their ideological views over apostasy, it was believed to be salafi in nature with a non-violent approach. The arrest of some of their members involved with JI may prove a move towards more violent tactics.

Implications

The arrest has foiled an alleged plot to attack tourist places in South Sumatra as well as some places in Jakarta. This is huge setback for JI. However, it also shows that JI is still threat in Indonesia and the region, despite the fact that the police have arrested more than 400 members of JI. Additionally, the arrest of a Singaporean operative has shown that there may be more Singaporean JI members hiding out in the Indonesian islands that are yet to be detected by the intelligence services.

⁴ "Polisi Temukan 20 Bomb di atap rumah," *Kompas. Com*, 3 July 2008.

<http://www.kompas.com/read/xml/2008/07/03/06185677/polisi.temukan.20.bom.di.atap.rumah>