

THE TERROR THREAT

The Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report 2017 published by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) yesterday outlined how the regional situation was getting worse and the serious threat to Singapore. Here are key highlights.



Home Team officers at an Emergency Preparedness Day in Teck Ghee in March. The SG Secure movement aims to sensitise and train the community against terror.

ATTACKS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

- ISIS has been linked to several attacks across South-east Asia. These include: shooting and bomb attacks in Jakarta in January 2016; a grenade attack in Puchong, outside Kuala Lumpur, in June 2016; and twin suicide bombings in East Jakarta last month.

A policeman standing guard at the scene of the twin suicide bombing in East Jakarta last month.



MILITANT STRONGHOLDS

- IS East Asia has strongholds in the southern Philippines, and its recent siege of Marawi City attests to its potential to turn Mindanao into an ISIS wilayat – or province – for South-east Asian militants.
- This year, Malaysian and Indonesian authorities have arrested pro-ISIS militants who have travelled there or plan to travel there.
- Should the group become a regional network like the JI, the terror threat will deepen further, MHA said.



A glass window damaged by a sniper bullet during fighting between government soldiers and rebels in Marawi City.

MORE PLOTS, ARRESTS

- Militants from pro-ISIS group Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD) used low explosive devices in attacks last year, but have begun to assemble homemade bombs using high explosive materials. JI has been training and trying to get weapons.
- There have been more arrests, too. Malaysia disrupted four plots and arrested 85 militants in 2015. This went up to seven plots and 119 militants in 2016.
- Indonesia disrupted nine plots and arrested 65 militants in 2015; this went up to 15 plots and over 150 militants last year.
- Indonesian and Philippine authorities have put pressure on pro-ISIS militants in Poso, Sulawesi and southern Philippines, with some key leaders killed or injured.

The skyline of Marina Bay as seen from Batam. In August 2016, a plot by Batam-based militants to launch a rocket at Marina Bay Sands was foiled.

PLOTS ON SINGAPORE FOILED

- ISIS has demonstrated that Singapore is very much on its radar.
- Last year, the authorities got reliable information that foreign ISIS militants were considering an attack in Singapore in the first half of 2016. The authorities acted swiftly but discreetly to mitigate the threat.
- In August 2016, Indonesian authorities foiled a plot by Batam-based militants who wanted to launch a rocket attack against Marina Bay Sands. They were acting on the instructions of Bahrin Naim, an Indonesian ISIS militant based in Syria.



RESTRICTION AND DETENTION ORDERS ISSUED AGAINST SINGAPOREANS UNDER THE ISA

NUMBER OF CASES ■ Restriction order ■ Detention order

2007-2014



2015-present



THREATS FROM WITHIN

- Singapore faces the risk of an attack by persons radicalised by ISIS propaganda and its call to carry out attacks wherever followers live.
- Two Singaporeans have gone to Syria to fight with their families. More radicalised citizens have also been detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA). Between 2007 and 2014, 11 were dealt with under the ISA. Since 2015, 14 have been dealt with under the ISA so far.
- Two of those recently detained said they were prepared to carry out attacks here on ISIS' behalf. One of them wanted to assassinate the President and Prime Minister, and if he could not, planned to carry out attacks in public places using weapons such as knives.

SINGAPORE IN ISIS' SIGHTS

- Publications and videos by ISIS and other groups have cited Singapore as a target.
- Around October 2016, an Arabic publication circulated online named the Singapore Exchange and a port as potential targets in a wider bid to bring down American and Western interests. Security agencies have worked with both entities to enhance security measures.
- A May 2016 ISIS video named Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines as countries infiltrated by "disbelievers" and threatened action against the "tyrants" in charge.

THREATS FROM RADICALISED FOREIGNERS

- Since late 2015, some 40 Bangladeshi nationals in Singapore were found to have been radicalised. Several were planning to carry out armed violence against the government in Bangladesh.
- All have been sent home except for six who are serving jail terms for terrorism financing offences.
- Since 2015, eight Indonesian domestic helpers here were also investigated and deported after being found to be radicalised. None had plans to commit violence here, but their radicalisation and association with terrorists overseas were of security concern.

THREAT PROGNOSIS

- Even after ISIS is weakened in Syria and Iraq, South-east Asian militants based there like Bahrin Naim and Muhammad Wanndy are likely to keep on instigating attacks in this region. There may also be an increased flow of returning fighters to South-east Asia.
- Also of concern are around 200 terror inmates due to be released from prison over the next two years.

CALL TO ACTION

- The SG Secure movement aims to sensitise and train the community against terror.
- Police have enhanced their capabilities, equipment, and operational preparedness. Security agencies have also stepped up vigilance at key locations, including increased patrols and other measures at checkpoints and along the coastline.
- More police cameras are being installed in public areas, and laws are being amended to put in place security measures for public events, and to protect infrastructure.