

Security in Government Conference 2008

The Evolution of Australia's Diplomatic Efforts to Counter Terrorism

- . Pleased to address the 2008 Security in Government Conference this morning.
- . I would like to focus my remarks on the evolution of Australia's diplomatic efforts to counter the threat of terrorism, beginning by briefly touching on the nature of the terrorist threat itself.

The evolving nature of terrorism

- . Terrorism is not a new or static phenomenon
- . But the events of 11 September 2001 thrust terrorism to the front rank of the international agenda.
- . The 11 September attacks themselves that brought home to the international community the full menace of the global jihadist ideology that inspired those attacks.
- . **Since that time, there have been some significant counter-terrorism successes.**
- . At the global level, al-Qaeda has been driven from its sanctuary in Afghanistan and its franchise in Iraq while still dangerous has suffered significant setbacks.
- . **But, al-Qaeda remains active and has regrouped in the tribal regions on the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan.**
- . It seeks to forge partnerships with other networks of extremists in the Gulf, the Middle East and North Africa
 - and it continues to spread its extremist ideology, particularly via the internet
- . **In global terms, the South Asia region remains central to current international counter-terrorism efforts today**
 - the international community has a direct interest in ensuring Afghanistan and Pakistan do not again become a base for the export of terrorist activity in South Asia and beyond

- the Taliban continues to utilise links with other groups including Afghan factions, Pakistani militants and al-Qaeda to increase their capability in Afghanistan
- Pakistan is of immense strategic importance in countering the global reach of terrorism and it is important that Pakistan's government follows through on its commitment to combat terrorism
 - : Australia stands ready to help Pakistan with these efforts.
- . **In South-East Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah and like-minded groups have shown a capacity for resilience in the face of successful counter-terrorism efforts against them in recent years**
 - Indonesian authorities with support from Australian agencies following the first terrorist bombing in Bali in 2002 have produced some remarkable counter-terrorism successes
 - : over 400 individuals were apprehended in Indonesia on terrorism-related charges and nearly 200 prosecuted; around 160 remain detained
- . Terrorists in South-East Asia continue to draw inspiration from global jihadist ideology and seek to exploit local conflicts
 - a number of dangerous individuals remain at large and retain the capacity and intent to undertake terrorist attacks
 - This was underlined in July this year when Indonesian authorities apprehended a group in Palembang engaged in planning for terrorist attacks.
- . Another area of ongoing concern is **the potential for terrorists to use chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons** in an attack.
- . The potential consequences of a terrorist attack using CBRN weapons – even the psychological impact of the threat of such an attack – would be serious indeed
 - there are substantial technical difficulties associated with terrorist groups successfully acquiring and using CBRN materials in an attack
 - but we must take seriously the ongoing intent of terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, to seek to do so
- . There is a heightened awareness globally of the threat of CBRN terrorism, and the need to take steps to prevent it under measures

Australia's international CT engagement

- . **The key premise of Australia's international CT engagement is that no country can combat terrorism effectively on its own.**
- . Australia's approach to international CT engagement is based on three pillars
 - **policy dialogue**, to foster international commitment and practical action
 - **operational collaboration** to build a cooperative approach to preventing and responding to terrorist incidents
 - and **practical capacity building** of partner countries' counter-terrorism capabilities.

Policy dialogue

- . Multilateral institutions play a central role in fostering international commitment to counter-terrorism efforts
- . **Australia's engagement with the UN is a key element of our international counter-terrorism efforts**
 - the UN plays a pivotal role in the development and implementation of global counter-terrorism norms, in particular its adoption of successive counter-terrorism conventions and resolutions since 2001
 - the UN has a unique capacity to raise global awareness of the need to condemn and confront terrorism in all its forms
 - Australia had implemented most international instruments on counter-terrorism and has ratified 13 of the 16 UN CT instruments
 - : and is considering the legislative steps necessary to implement the remainder of these instruments
 - Australia welcomed the adoption of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006 and its recent renewal by the UN General Assembly

- : we support and work to promote cooperation between member states to implement the strategy in full.
- . Australia also pursues an ambitious counter-terrorism agenda through regional organisations
 - CT engagement through APEC, ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum as well as the Pacific Islands Forum underpins Australia’s practical CT cooperation efforts in the region
 - : for example, Australia has endorsement to run two workshops under APEC auspices on detecting and deterring cash couriers and bulk cash smugglers, and a workshop on regulating not for profit organisations to prevent misuse by terrorist groups.
- . **Australia also works hard to build commitment and counter-terrorism coordination efforts with bilateral partners**
 - we have concluded 13 Memoranda of Understanding on Combating International Terrorism to provide an evolving framework for bilateral counter-terrorism consultation and practical cooperation
 - : CT MOUs with have been concluded with Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Brunei, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey
 - successful bilateral counter-terrorism consultations held in the Philippines and Indonesia in May this year reaffirmed high-level commitment to combating the regional terrorist threat with two key partners
- . Counter-terrorism issues are also an important element in our dialogue with allies such as the United States and United Kingdom, other regional partners and a range of countries affected by international terrorism.

Operational collaboration

- . Operational collaboration between Australian agencies and their regional counterparts ensures a cooperative approach to preventing and responding to terrorist attacks
- . **These operational collaboration efforts are based on the example of the very effective relationship built between Australian and Indonesian police after the 2002 Bali bombing.**

- . Law enforcement cooperation with Indonesia is among our strongest counter-terrorism assets producing a number of strong counter-terrorism successes
- . The Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation has become the flagship of Australia's operational collaboration with counter-terrorism partners in the region
 - JCLEC is operated jointly by the Australian Federal Police and Indonesian National Police and has built a reputation as a leading centre for international counter-terrorism training and capacity building.
 - It has trained over 3000 regional security personnel.
- . Operational collaboration is not restricted to law enforcement agencies. Counter-terrorism is inherently a whole-of-government activity involving Australian agencies across government including border protection agencies, intelligence agencies and the defence forces.

Capacity building

- . Capacity building to develop the ability of our key partners to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks is the long-term focus of Australia's international counter-terrorism engagement.
- . Australia's efforts to build regional counter-terrorism capacity in South-East Asia are also broad-based, covering a range of sectors including law enforcement, legal capacity, counter-terrorist financing, border and transport security, countering extremist ideology, and preventing terrorists from acquiring and using CBRN materials.
 - We will be seeking to build further on these efforts and make an appropriate contribution to similar efforts in South Asia.
- . **The thrust of Australia's counter-terrorism capacity building efforts to date has been based on ensuring that assistance is properly tailored for the needs of regional partners**
 - Australia's capacity building initiatives must meet the counter-terrorism needs which our key partners identify themselves
 - : one size does not fit all.
 - Our counter-terrorism capacity building initiatives must be sustainable

- And capacity building initiatives are where possible delivered in coordination with other international donors
 - : particularly major partners Japan and the United States, which we work with to deliver a range of programs in South-East Asia under the banner of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue.
- . Around 20 Australian agencies are involved in Australia’s international capacity building efforts
- . DFAT coordinates these international activities by agencies through the International Counter-Terrorism Coordination Group chaired by the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism.
- . The Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism, a position first created in 2003, has played a highly valuable role in the development and implementation of Australia’s international counter-terrorism efforts.
- . I welcome the recent appointment of a new Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism, Bill Paterson
 - he brings a wealth of experience to this role, most recently as Australia’s Ambassador to Thailand.

Countering extremist messages

- . **Defeating terrorism cannot be done by traditional law enforcement and intelligence approaches alone.**
- . **Experience has shown that such efforts also need to be accompanied by measures to support ‘at-risk’ groups including activities to address the factors that may lead people to either become terrorists or support the activities of terrorists.**
- . Countering extremist messages to such ‘at risk’ groups is an important aspect of the approach of Australia and like-minded countries to counter terrorism
- . Australia is undertaking a broad range of activities to counter extremist messages in conjunction with partner governments.
- . Australia works closely with regional governments, NGOs and community groups on a range of initiatives, including
 - support to help mainstream NGOs and community networks promote messages of moderation, non-violence and community harmony

- capacity-building to assist communities to better manage challenges that can lead improve social cohesion and resilience to extremist messages
 - support for messages of tolerance and peace-building
 - support for grassroots-level interfaith activities to strengthen understanding between communities affected by conflict
 - and exchange visits to boost understanding of Australia’s tolerant and pluralist society.
- . These activities are tailored to address the specific issues and concerns of particular communities and to be appropriate to local circumstances.
 - . **Also in this context, Australia works closely with Indonesia, the Philippines and New Zealand as co-sponsors of the Regional Interfaith Dialogue Process**
 - The process brings together leaders of all major regional faith communities to discuss how they might cooperate better to address challenges such as intolerance and extremism.
 - Four meetings have been held to date since December 2004
 - the Prime Minister has announced that Australia would host the next meeting in 2009.

Concluding remarks

- . The threat of international terrorism remains serious and persistent
 - we should expect terrorism to remain a core concern for the international community for some time to come
 - The South Asia region is central to international counter-terrorism efforts today
 - There have been significant counter-terrorism successes in the South-East Asia region but there is no room for complacency
 - : all countries in the region to remain vigilant and engaged.
- . Sadly the need to maintain our whole-of-government approach to Australia’s international counter-terrorism engagement is also unlikely to diminish

- . As the international terrorist threat continues to evolve Australia will need to keep our international counter-terrorism engagement under review to ensure that
 - the international consensus against terrorism is maintained and developed further including through ongoing policy dialogue
 - international counter-terrorism successes are consolidated and built upon in a sustainable and collaborative manner
 - emerging gaps in counter-terrorism capacity among our partners are identified and assistance to fill those gaps are is properly targeted