This document is downloaded from DR-NTU, Nanyang Technological University Library, Singapore.

| | |
|---|---|
| Title | Sustaining the war on terrorism : Singapore's international counterterrorism cooperation |
| Author(s) | Rohan Gunaratna |
| Citation | Rohan Gunaratna. (2013). Sustaining the war on terrorism : Singapore's international counterterrorism cooperation. (RSIS Commentaries, No. 139). RSIS Commentaries. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University. |
| Date | 2013 |
| URL | http://hdl.handle.net/10220/20109 |
| Rights | Nanyang Technological University |

ATTENTION: The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document. Nanyang Technological University Library

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

RSIS COMMENTARIES

RSIS Commentaries are intended to provide timely and, where appropriate, policy relevant background and analysis of contemporary developments. The views of the authors are their own and do not represent the official position of the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies, NTU. These commentaries may be reproduced electronically or in print with prior permission from RSIS. Due recognition must be given to the author or authors and RSIS. Please email: RSISPublication@ntu.edu.sg or call (+65) 6790 6982 to speak to the Editor RSIS Commentaries, Yang Razali Kassim.

No. 139/2013 dated 25 July 2013

# Sustaining the War on Terrorism: Singapore's International Counterterrorism Cooperation

By Rohan Gunaratna

***Synopsis***

*In the fight against terrorism, Singapore has cooperated and collaborated with its regional and international counterparts to deter and disrupt terrorist networks. Since September 11, 2001, Singapore's military, law enforcement, and security and intelligence services have provided steadfast assistance and advice to their counterparts in the region and beyond.*

***Commentary***

SINGAPORE HAS been in the forefront of the global war on terrorism. It believes that international and regional counterterrorism cooperation is paramount in the fight against ideological extremism and its vicious byproduct – terrorism. Singapore has not only cooperated and collaborated with its regional and international partners to deter and disrupt terrorist networks it has shared its resources and knowledge to create a strong regional counterterrorism environment.

Since September 2001 Singapore military, security and law enforcement services have provided steadfast assistance and unstinting advice to their counterparts abroad. Its commitment has been acknowledged publicly and officially across the globe.

**First to uncover JI**

It is a matter of record that Singapore was the first country in Southeast Asia to uncover the existence of a robust al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network. JI was planning to mount attacks in the region and beyond including in Los Angeles. Following a tip-off by a member of the Singaporean Muslim community, Singapore was alerted to the presence of JI. In addition to disrupting terrorist attacks against American, British, Australian, and Israeli targets in December 2001, Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD) informed Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Australia of the existence of JI on their soil. A few months before the Bali bombing in 2002 Singapore identified Amrozi as a terrorist and informed its Indonesian counterpart. Similarly, Singapore informed its Australian counterpart of the existence of a JI network raising funds and recruiting operatives there.

In addition to arresting Fathur Rahman al Gozi, a key JI-MILF-al Qaeda operative, Singaporean intelligence enabled the Philippines to uncover arms, ammunition and explosives. Due to the close collaboration that has traditionally existed between Singapore and Malaysia, the Malaysian Special Branch (MSB) arrested over three

ATTENTION: The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document. Nanyang Technological University Library



dozen terrorists. Similarly, assistance to Singapore provided by MSB and the Special Task Force of Malaysia has been pivotal in maintaining security and stability in the region.

Further afield Singapore also enhanced its sharing of intelligence with Middle Eastern, North American and other counterparts. For instance, Singaporean intelligence identified Mohamed Mansur Jabarah, a Canadian al-Qaeda operative, who was mounting surveillance on western targets in Asia, that led to his subsequent arrest in Oman in 2002.

**Counterterrorism cooperation with US**

Singapore's cooperation with the US in the fight against terrorism has been extensive: ranging from sharing security intelligence, operations, sharing of expertise, resources, training and experience. The two-way collaboration has benefitted both countries. Singapore shared information on Zacarias Moussaoui, the 20th hijacker in the 9/11 attacks and Faiz Abu Bakar Bafana, then detained in Singapore, who testified against Zacarias via video-conferencing, leading to Moussaoui's sentence to life imprisonment in May 2006. The FBI had acknowledged Singapore's assistance in this regard.

As Singapore is committed to the long fight against terrorism, the Ministry of Home Affairs and its partners have shared the methodology for terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement with the US and their partners. For example Singapore assisted the US Detainee Task Force 134 to build their terrorist rehabilitation programme in Iraq.

Singapore's law enforcement authorities also provided assistance in Iraq to train their police. Singapore also provides training courses for US military and police; this includes several courses for the intelligence division of the New York Police Department.

Singapore provides sustained training and education to counterterrorism officers from overseas at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It conducted the first counter-terrorism intelligence course for Detachment 88, Indonesia's elite counterterrorism force and continues a close collaboration with Indonesia. Singapore provides a range of courses on terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement to the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) of Indonesia.

**Counterterrorism engagement across Asia**

Singapore recognises that terrorism presents a tier-one national security threat to the world. As a global transit hub, Singapore recognises its vulnerability to terrorism. As a leading knowledge hub and intelligence centre in the fight against terrorism, the Singapore government and community and academic partners have expanded their counterterrorism engagement across Asia to the world.

Singapore believes in working with its partners to reduce the regional and global terrorism threat. International cooperation and the exchange of intelligence between countries, based on mutual trust, confidence and respect, restrict the space of terrorists to act and contribute directly to prevent terrorist attacks and cripple transnational terrorist networks.

Such cooperation requires continuous dialogue and feedback among partners so that all parties can work together to strengthen international collaboration in the war against terrorism.

*Rohan Gunaratna is Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.*