



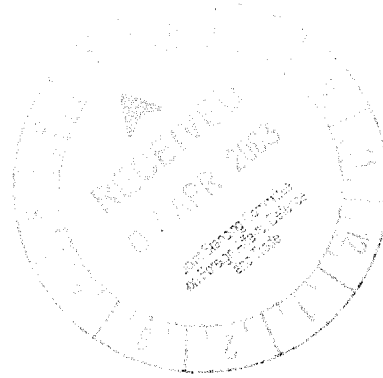
Submission No 2

Watching Brief on the War on Terrorism

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**Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade**

Watching Brief on the War on Terrorism

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Introduction

Please accept this late submission. Only last week I read the article about your Committee's brief in the Parliamentary magazine *About the House* and was motivated to lodge this submission.

In that article I was angered by the ineffectiveness of the quoted comment of Robert Cornall, Department Secretary to the Attorney-General's Department, that, "Our current emergency management responses are pretty good". (This quotes only the opening sentence of that statement but the whole statement was in this vein).

This entirely inadequate and non-strategic response is of concern to me and assumes that the only strategy is a reactive response after a terrorist event.

Having just read Rohan Gunaratna's book, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, which sets out a strategic and longer term response to terrorism, the following is taken entirely from that book's preface.

I strongly recommend Committee members to read this excellent aware book. The headings and some of the editing is mine.

Context

A year after the US and coalition forces intervened in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, Al Qaeda remains a serious threat to its enemies. Its intentions to strike at its enemies has not diminished. As well, Al Qaeda has a high capacity to replenish its members.

They are continuing to develop targets overseas, especially soft ones with a twin focus on population centres and economic assets.

Al Qaeda is hell bent on waging universal jihad and is rapidly developing alliances with non-Islamist Muslim groups.

Al Qaeda has had a head start of ten years. Due to efforts since 9/11 it is likely that the remaining Al Qaeda echelon – Osama Bin Laden and Dr Ayman al-Sawahri and even the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar – will be captured or killed. Nonetheless, Islamist terrorism will outlive Al Qaeda and Islamism as an ideology will persist for the foreseeable future.

Although the primary threat posed by Al Qaeda is inside the US but more than ever to allies of the US.

While Al Qaeda is not deserting the Pakistan-Afghanistan border its leadership is actively and aggressively giving its members new terrorist tasks. They are gravitating to lawless zones in Asia and the Middle East, widening the perimeter of the conflict. They are co-ordinating their activities with two dozen Islamist groups worldwide with a membership and support base of tens of thousands of Al Qaeda to prepare and execute operations against targets in the west and Muslim countries friendly to the west.

A decentralised Al Qaeda working with Islamist and other groups worldwide is a force multiplier. In the years ahead, Al Qaeda – which has a long history of providing experts, trainers and funds to other groups – is likely to operate effectively and efficiently through its associates. Al Qaeda is now heavily dependent on these associate groups and this has manifested in the globalisation of its terrorist strategy.

In South East Asia there are about 400 trained Al Qaeda and JI members and about 2 dozen violent, active Islamist groups. Outside Pakistan and Afghanistan, S-E Asia is the home of the single largest concentration of Al Qaeda and associate members in any

given region. The presence of 240 million Muslims, emerging democracies, corrupt governments, weak rulers and lax security is turning S-E Asia into a new centre for Al Qaeda activity.

Just as it has penetrated existing Islamist networks around the world, Al Qaeda has penetrated JI, which has overt networks extending from southern Thailand to Australia. among the groups it has infiltrated and influenced are Kumpulan Mujahidin in Malaysia, Laskar Jundulla in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation front in the Philippines. In the region, Al Qaeda has created a vision and mission for its Islamist allies to create a caliphate comprising southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Cambodia and Mindanao.

Historically, S E Asia has featured prominently in all Al Qaeda's operations, including 9/11. Indonesia and Thailand deny the existence of a terrorist network.

The lack of zero tolerance terrorism policy in the region and beyond has facilitated the spawning and sustenance of a robust terrorist support and operational network. The responsibility of Bali must be shared by Indonesia, its immediate neighbours and Australia.

First, when the JI network was discovered in December 2001 Indonesia permitted the continued operation of a fully fledged JI infrastructure. It failed to sustained target the terrorist operatives and assets.

Second, despite the USS intelligence community having provided strategic intelligence, including the threat to "bars, cafes, or nightclubs", there was a failure on the part of regional governments to gather their own intelligence either by technical or human means.

Third, the Australian government should have invested sufficient resources in its immediate neighbourhood to help dampen Islamism, and to use the JI infrastructure in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to penetrate the network. Despite a dozen training camps from Mindanao in the Philippines to Afghanistan, the government's assessment and operational agencies did not believe that the threat was "significant" until the Bali bombings happened.

The threat to Australia

Developments in S-E Asia have increased the threat to Australia and NZ. Even before the Bali bombings, a number of indicators suggested there was an increased terrorist threat to Australia. They include Bin Laden's and some Australian Muslims' angry reaction to Australia's high-profile participation in the US-led anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan in October 2001; Bin Laden's claim in early November 2001 that Australia had conspired and led a crusade against the Islamic nation to dismember East Timor in November 2001; the lobbing of a grenade from a motorbike into the garden of the Australian International school and the hurling of large firecrackers into the Australian embassy in November 2001; the plan by an Arab Al Qaeda suicide bomber to use an explosives-laden truck to destroy the Australian High Commission in Singapore in early 2002; and revelations from Al Qaeda and Taliban detainees and prisoners interrogated in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Camp Delta and the US that Australian Muslims who had been trained in Camp Al Farooz in Afghanistan and elsewhere had been assigned terrorist operations against Australian targets.

JI was aware the vast majority of people to suffer from the Bali bombing would be Australians (in early November 2002 Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the bombings). This was confirmed on 12 November 2002 in an Al Jazeera broadcast where Bin Laden singled out Australia as "the one we have warned before against taking part in the war in

Afghanistan ... she disregarded the warnings until she awoke to the sounds of the explosions in Bali. Then she falsely claimed that her people are not targeted'.

Before Al Qaeda targeted Australians overseas, Al Qaeda established a support network in Australia using JI. At the invitation of JI Australia, Abu Bakar Bashiyar its founder leader and its operational commander, Hambali visited Australia a dozen times. JI's penetration of local Muslim groups led to a significant increase of propaganda within Australia aimed at politicising and radicalising Australian Muslims. Bin Laden gave an exclusive interview to his Australian supporters that was published on a website in Australia. JI also raised funds in Australia and funds were transferred from Australia to JI in Malaysia and Indonesia. Australia features prominently in JI's regional structure.

During the past decade, Australia has become the home of several foreign terrorist groups – Palestinian Hamas, Lebanese Hezbollah, Chechen mujahidin, Kurdish Workers Party (Turkey), Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (Spain), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka), Babbaar Khalsa International (India), International Sikh Youth Federation (India), and dissident factions of the IRA. These groups disseminate terrorist propaganda, recruit members, raise funds and procure technologies from Australia and perpetrate terrorism elsewhere.

Traditionally the Australian government has monitored these groups but has not disrupted their propaganda and fund raising infrastructure. As a result, several terrorists and their supporters and sympathisers, have infiltrated Australian society, including its universities and even media organisations.

Another reason the terrorist threat is rising in Australia is that several terrorist groups in its immediate neighbourhood – Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia – have stepped up their activities at home and abroad. Also, half a dozen groups with links to Al Qaeda perceive Australia as an enemy.

What Australia should do to prepare for terrorism

1. These developments call for *closer regional political, diplomatic, law-enforcement, military, security and intelligence co-operation and co-ordination*. Australia has no option but to work jointly with S E Asian countries to detect, disrupt, degrade and destroy the JI organisation. Its failure to do so will result in further attacks both in Australia and its neighbourhood.
2. *Australia must re-evaluate the increasing threat from transnational terrorism and must seek to disrupt their networks that are active inside Australia*. Terrorism cannot flourish without the tacit support of sympathetic non-terrorists. Both the terrorists and their supporters must be targeted.
3. Until Bali, there was a very poor understanding of this threat within Australia. The Australian malaise is one of not being sufficiently educated about the Asia-Pacific region, with a poor understanding of the culture, politics and economies of its neighbours. In the face of serious transnational terrorist threat, the prevailing attitude of 'she'll be right' or 'it can't happen to us' or fear of being politically incorrect if we take action, is clearly inadequate. *Australia must become more strategic and more sophisticated in its understanding of the threat*.
4. In the task ahead, Australia will require a shift of thinking on how its finite resources should be deployed. As a technologically advanced country with a significant economic, political, diplomatic and military capability, Australia could assist countries in SE Asia, especially Indonesia, to improve their capability to fight terrorism. To meet the current threat, *ASIO and ASIS need to double their strength. They also need to acquire greater powers to operate effectively and efficiently*.

5. As Al Qaeda is a learning organisation, the law-enforcement, security and intelligence agencies fighting it must be goal-oriented and not rule-oriented.
6. If Al Qaeda is to be defeated, a change behind the thinking of the US led 'war on terrorism' is paramount. Despite the US-led coalition's worldwide campaign, the Al Qaeda alliance – 'the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders' – has managed to repair the damage to its support and operational infrastructure. As no serious international effort has been made to *counter the Islamist ideology* (the belief that 'every Muslim's duty is to wage jihad'), the robust Islamist milieu is providing recruits and financial support for Islamist groups to replenish their human losses and material wastage. In each week in Afghanistan, 2 –4 Al Qaeda and Taliban members are captured or killed to a dozen new recruits.

The powerful message that Al Qaeda is not Koranic but heretical has not been packed into the counter-terrorism toolbox. As there is no effect to counter or dilute the ideology of extremism, there is popular support for the Al Qaeda model of Islam among politicised and radicalised Muslims. This means the military campaign against Al Qaeda, even if pursued single-mindedly and unrelentingly, is likely to take decades. Unless the US and its allies can think beyond the obvious military and financial dimensions of counter-terrorism, the 'deep reservoir of hatred and a desire for revenge will remain. *Australia must think beyond the obvious military and financial dimensions of counter-terrorism and make a serious effort to counter and dilute the ideology of extremism by confronting the fact that Al Qaeda is not Koranic but heretical.* (Italics are my words).

7. The international community must seek to *build a zero-tolerance level for any activity that supports terrorism*. There should be no appeasement of those who seek to advance their political aims by using violence. Countries that condone, tolerate or fail to take tough action against terrorism will be harmed by it.
8. Despite efforts to the contrary, segments of Muslims in migrant communities in Australia continue to provide support to Al Qaeda and its affiliates. The continuation of Islamist-support activities in Australia should be interpreted as an alarm signal. *They should be stopped* (Italics are my words).
9. Fighting terrorism will be a long fight and it will have to be fought on all fronts by multiple actors across many countries. To ensure the success of the campaign, *the international community must remain focused on Al Qaeda, and committed to Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Western nations must move beyond rhetoric into concrete action. They need to pour in resources and build modern, nation states for the Muslim world in these two countries. Protecting Presidents Karzia of Afghanistan and Musharaff of Pakistan – the most threatened world leaders – is paramount. International assistance to their regimes, to politically and economically develop their countries and invest in their people, is the key to challenging the Islamists' base and reducing the space they rely on to appeal to the politically and economically marginalised.
10. Since 9/11, Al Qaeda's propaganda war has increased the support for terrorism. It will grow even further now that the US and Australia have intervened in Iraq. The world has recently witnessed several isolated terrorist incidents perpetrated by those influenced by terrorist propaganda. With the steadfast erosion of its personnel and physical infrastructure, Al Qaeda can become a state of mind, spawning both individual terrorists and successor terrorist organisations. To avoid this real danger, *the ideological response to Al Qaeda and Islamism must be a primary task*.

11. To win the campaign, *all efforts must be made to protect moderate Muslims from virulent ideologies propagated by mullahs of the Al Qaeda brand of Islam.* The hands of progressive Muslim leaders both in government and outside government, especially in non-government organisations, must be strengthened. It must involve the best of relations between western governmental and non-governmental leaders and their Middle Eastern and Asian counterparts. It must involve public diplomacy, where governments directly communicate with the public, even across borders.
12. The failure of Arab leaders to invest in their citizens – despite receiving the financial benefits of the oil boom – has increased both the ideological appeal and the welfare programs of terrorist groups. The fashion of Arab regimes blaming the west for their ills and their failure to counter anti-western rhetoric makes it even more necessary for the west to *engage in public diplomacy in the Arab world.*
13. *We must engage with the Middle East to develop transparency and accountability.* We must engage in joint prophylactic measures – greater investment in political, socio-economic reforms, especially in education and welfare – with the Muslim world. This is likely to reduce support for terrorism in the long term.

The alternative is a continuation and escalation of the threat. WE cannot under-estimate the phenomenon facing us.

Thank you for reading this late submission.



Christine Keene
Concerned citizen