

# JI Adopts New Strategy: Targeted Assassinations

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In March, Indonesian police raided Jemaah Islamiya (JI) safehouses in the Javanese cities of Yogyakarta, Semarang and Surabaya, leading to the arrests of seven suspects, the death of one and the capture of two large caches of explosives, materials and small arms. The cache included: 70 kg of TNT, 30 sacks of ammonium nitrate, several large jugs of chemicals, 193 detonators and 43 bits of circuitry (similar to those used in the three Bali II suicide bag bombs in 2005). In total, police believe that 20 bombs similar to those used in the Bali II attacks were operational. Clearly, JI continues to see bombing as the primary means to achieve its goal of bringing down the Indonesian government. The raids also netted three M-16 rifles, revolvers and thousands of rounds of ammunition. More ominously, however, police found documents suggesting a new strategy: targeted assassinations.

According to the head of Indonesia's counter-terrorism efforts, General Ansyad M'bai, JI has established a team of roughly 100 assassins, known as Sariyah (Jakarta Post, April 16). Police found detailed organizational charts of Sariyah, which is headed by Abu Dujana, who is believed to be JI's current leader (Terrorism Focus, April 4, 2006). Beneath him were four territorial commanders, although two were recently captured. The remaining two, the heads of the Jakarta and central Java regions, remain at large. One operative arrested in March, Ayyasy, confirmed that small arms training for the group had been conducted in several remote areas of central Java beginning in mid-2006 (Antara, April 3).

While press reports continue to suggest that Abu Dujana is at odds with Malaysian bomber Noordin Mohammad Top, it is not because of Noordin's strategy of bombings (Terrorism Focus, July 25, 2006). Indonesian police revealed that Dujana is believed to have a laboratory to manufacture chemical explosives (Antara, April 3). Tempo reported that Dujana was more concerned with the lack of discipline and coordination in Top's operations (Tempo, April 3-9).

Targeted assassinations are clearly within JI's capabilities. In the troubled regions of Central Sulawesi and the Maluku, JI and splinter groups routinely assassinate government officials, prosecutors, human rights activists and Christian leaders and clergy. In the conflict zones, targeted killings have been far more effective than bombings. Since the first Malino Accord was signed on March 12, 2001, there have been more than 60 bombings, although the tempo has increased since October 2004 when there have been at least 28 successful bombings resulting in the deaths of 48 people. Three of the bombings accounted for more than half of the total number of deaths. Yet more than 21 people, including five policemen and several Christian pastors, were gunned down, causing more instability and unease. While the process of manufacturing or procuring bombs is dangerous, time consuming and expensive, a campaign of assassinations is simple, cost-effective and requires less training. It could also be more beneficial in the short-run.

Ansyad M'bai said that the target list that police recovered included the rector of a Christian university in Central Java and an official of the Central Java Attorney-General's Office that has led many of the JI prosecutions. Unsurprisingly, Ansyad also expected Christian leaders to be targets as well, as they have been in the outer islands. The presence of the hit squad in Jakarta also portends that foreigners will be targeted. It should be noted that this is not the first time that police have warned about JI adopting this strategy. Similar reports surfaced in 2004, although the program never materialized. This time, however, there is substantially more evidence that the new strategy has already been implemented, with an organization established, trained and deployed for the purpose.

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