

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOUNDATION

Chairman's Circle 26 January 2012: "Movements of Terrorists in Southeast Asia – Jemaah Islamiah and Al Qaeda"



After a long – flood related – break, HDFP's Chairman's Circle started the year 2012/2555 with a presentation by Police Lt Gen Tritot Ronnaritvichai, currently Commissioner to the Office of National Security Council (NSC), on "Movements of Terrorists in Southeast Asia – Jemaah Islamiah and Al Qaeda". HDFP's choice of topic for the month of January could have not have had better timing as a terror warning and the capture of a suspected Swedish-Lebanese Hezbollah member has been the talk of the town only a week before.

Due to Gen (ret) Bunchon Chawansin's absence, HDFP Executive Director Dr. Wilfried A. Herrmann delivered the opening remarks welcoming all participants to the half-day event and subsequently introduced Police Lt Gen Tritot Ronnaritvichai, internationally known for his capture of Al Qaeda (AQ) and Jemaah Islamiah (JI) member Hambali. Gen Tritot used his presentation to give insight into the long line of incidents eventually leading to the capturing of Hambali, real name Riduan Isamuddin, in his apartment in Ayutthaya, Thailand.

Before going into specifics, Gen Tritot gave a brief introduction on JI to ease the participants into the topic, followed by a detailed description of previous key JI members in South East

Asia. Jemaah Islamiah gained international attention after the 2002 Bali bombing but the group was building itself through the 1990s by its leaders Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir in Indonesia and, for the most part, in Malaysia. Hambali, as well as the two aforementioned members served as Mujahideen in the Taliban war against the Soviet Union, which in turn



turned out to be a great networking event for aspiring international terrorists. While Sungkar and Bashir concentrated on building up JI, Hambali later on served as a linkage between AQ and JI as well as a representative for AQ in Southeast Asia.

The successful arrest of Hambali was a cooperative effort between several agencies from various countries. On the other hand, the Hambali network included support from Iraqis, Pakistanis, Malaysians and Indonesians nationals. As Hambali's goal was to rule as a Caliph over territories covering almost all of Southeast Asia (including parts of Thailand), nationalities played no role in the ideologically shaped world of an Islamic extremist.

Gen Tritot finally captured Hambali on 11 August 2003 in Ayutthaya. Of utmost importance to Gen Tritot was to catch Hambali alive to be able to prove that the Bali bomb had not been planned in Bangkok, which could be proven. The Q&A session after the presentation was lively and interesting.



HDFP's next Chairman's Circle will most likely take place in the first week of March with the developments in Myanmar envisioned as topic. We hope to see you there! For any further questions please contact herrmann@hdfp.org or gassner@hdfp.org