

# Hype and Falsehoods Abound About Terrorism in S.E. Asia

by Mike Billington

Beginning in January, the Western press, and some governments, have presented Southeast Asia as the new center of gravity of the terrorist networks supposedly responsible for the attacks of Sept. 11. As the story goes, the al-Qaeda apparatus of Osama bin Laden, chased out of Afghanistan, has shifted operations into the Islamic regions of Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and the southern Philippines province of Mindanao. In fact, during December and January, the Malaysia, Singapore, and Philippines governments arrested several dozen men suspected of involvement in terrorist actions within the region, and of planning further attacks.

In Malaysia and the Philippines, those arrested are accused of responsibility for attacks on police and army units, a deadly bombing spree in Manila in December 2000, assassination of elected officials in Malaysia, and other, similar crimes.

In Singapore, 13 members of an organization called Jemaah Islamiah are accused, not of such local criminal activity, but of plotting to bomb U.S. military and diplomatic buildings in the island-state. A videotape was discovered at the home of one suspect which showed the surveillance of the targets, with a moderator describing methods for planting explosives. A duplicate tape was later found in a former al-Qaeda base in Afghanistan. If substantiated, a major attack was averted by these arrests.

The charge of conspiracy against American targets has been brought against the Singapore detainees only. Despite the massive Western press campaign to the contrary, there is no evidence that the detainees and suspects in the neighboring states—Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines—have been engaged in any terrorist planning or activities against the United States or other Western powers. Just as there has not been one iota of evidence presented to link bin Laden to the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington, so also, in Southeast Asia, the lack of evidence has not served as a restraint to Western governments and media in pronouncing Malaysia and Indonesia to be major headquarters for international terrorism.

With U.S. military operations already under way in the southern Philippines, there is ample justification to be concerned that the “Clash of Civilizations” proponents within

and around the Bush Administration may escalate their threats and military operations across the region in the period ahead.

Why, despite virulent objections from the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia, is the United States recklessly threatening these American allies under the guise of the “war on terrorism”? At a Schiller Institute conference, webcast internationally from Virginia on Feb. 16, *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche was asked by a Filipino journalist and political commentator, Herman Laurel, whether the Philippines were not being used as a side show, to fill the void of a lull in the war, after Afghanistan, while preparations were put in place to attack Iraq.

## The Lesson of Successful Modern Warfare

LaRouche responded: “It’s geopolitics. The Philippines formerly had two bases, Clark Air Field, and a naval base, Subic Bay. These two bases were a key part of the U.S. strategic position in the Pacific. You have today, the intention that Japan, and also South Korea, but especially Japan and the Philippines, be pivot points in a U.S. position for an eventual war with China.

“On the basis of that, two things come into play. First of all, you have people [in the Philippines] like Hank Greenberg, of the American International Group, who has just bought control of the country—again. He was the guy who overthrew Marcos, or was key in that. The Philippines has a large mineral potential, one strip of this is a highly volcanic, seismic area. Gold, all kinds of things, in Mindanao—things to be looted. It also has the location and position, as an island nation, to function once again as a major naval base for somebody who wants to operate in that part of the world. You have geopolitical reasons to try to build up bases for a future war against China, say, 20 years from now, 10 years from now, whatever they plan. . . .

“One thing about all of these kinds of deals—they won’t work. We don’t have the kind of industrial potential comparable to what we had in the 1930s or World War II. We don’t have that any more. We are not, physically, a power of that type, from the standpoint of traditional military values. The military policy of the U.S. right now is insane. The Pentagon is collectively insane. You may have individuals in there who are competent, but the institution is insane. You *do not* deal

with military problems by bombing the hell out of a desert! You don't use super-bombs against a mountain. You don't win a war, *you win a peace*. The American Army understood that in World War II. . . . When the American Army moved in, in World War II, the Corps of Engineers moved in, and engineering capabilities of other types moved in. Things were built. Things were made to work that didn't work. . . . That's a real army—it's based on an engineering tradition, modern warfare. You don't win the *war*, you win the *peace*. When the war ended—the day that Roosevelt died, just before the war officially ended—the U.S. had won the peace—and Truman and his successors took the peace away from us, and gave us more war, that we didn't need.

"Now, this has come to an extreme point. We no longer have a military that is capable of winning the war in the sense of winning the peace. You go into an area, and you may administer a defeat to an opposition force, but you *leave the place with the people on your side, knowing that you came as an enemy, but left as a friend*. That's the lesson of the Treaty of Westphalia. That's the lesson of successful modern warfare."

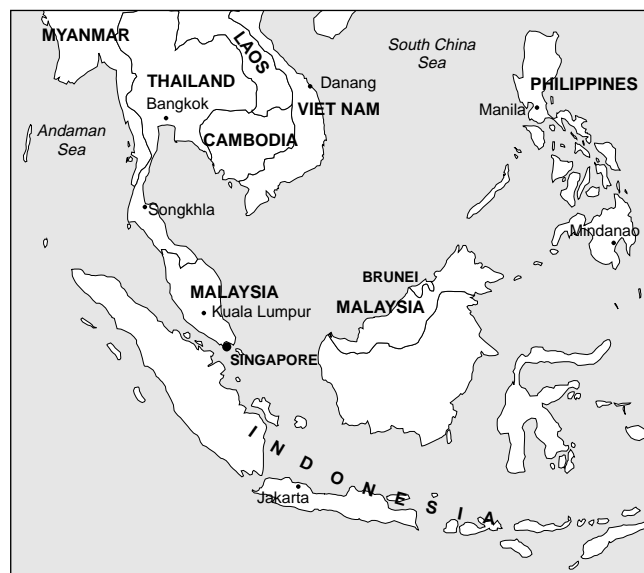
## Afghansi in Southeast Asia

The wave of arrests of terrorists in the region actually began in Malaysia last Summer, when several dozen members of a movement called *Kumpulan Militan Malaysia* (KMM) were accused of responsibility for several local crimes, including a bank robbery and a raid on an armory in which one soldier/hostage was killed. Several of the members of the KMM were also members of the opposition Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), including the son of one of the leaders of PAS. Several had also been to Afghanistan, although this was primarily during the 1980s, when the United States and the British were themselves promoting, financing, and training radical Muslims from around the world to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.

The problem in Malaysia is the same as that facing many nations around the world, as documented in a *Special Report* recently released by LaRouche in 2004, the candidate's Presidential campaign committee, entitled "How To Defeat Global Strategic Irregular Warfare." That is, the "Afghansi" irregular-warfare army, created by the Anglo-Americans in Afghanistan in the 1980s, which was drawn from nations across the globe, did not simply disappear after the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan in the February 1989. The highly trained "Afghansi" returned to their homes, many joining local radical networks in terrorist operations within their countries, feeding off the crisis in the Middle East and the mounting economic devastation in the Third World. The controls over these networks generally remained in London and Washington, deployed against targets chosen in the boardrooms of Wall Street and the City of London, such as Egypt, Russia, Kashmir—and Southeast Asia. The "Clash of Civilizations" policy of Zbigniew Brzezinski and his ilk, for an "Arc of Crisis" around Russia and China, promoted instability and

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## Southeast Asia



Source: EIRNS.

violence, even in supposedly allied nations, for the "higher goal" of divisive and subversive containment of Russia and China.

When Malaysia moved against these networks in the Summer of 2001, rather than being praised for cleaning up a group of criminals with possible connections to wider terrorist networks, it was denounced by Western governments and the press for human rights violations, political persecution, and so forth. Of course, that changed drastically after Sept. 11. The arrests in December and January were praised as evidence that Malaysia was supporting the U.S. war on terrorism!

## Wolfowitz Launches the Attack

On Jan. 8, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, the leading spokesman for the war policy in the Bush Administration, announced in the *New York Times* that the Philippines and Indonesia had suddenly become the next likely targets in the U.S. war on terrorism (together with Yemen and Somalia in Africa). It was well known at that time, that President George Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell had prevented, at least temporarily, the push by Wolfowitz and others for a war on Iraq and/or other Mideast targets, which would have certainly precipitated global religious war, and destroyed the international coalition formed by President Bush and Russia's President Vladimir Putin. Wolfowitz, undaunted, escalated on the Asian and African fronts, as part of his professed imperial doctrine that the United States must remain forever the only superpower.

The Philippines government, he said, wanted to deal with

the insurgencies in Mindanao on its own, but since al-Qaeda was supposedly involved, the United States felt it had to take responsibility. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has repeatedly informed the United States that there has been no known contact between al-Qaeda and elements in the Philippines since 1995, but evidence is not considered necessary in these heady days of empire-building. President Arroyo gave in, under huge pressure from Anglo-American “Philippines controller” Hank Greenberg of AIG, and his local cohort, former President Fidel Ramos. A scheduled military exercise was transformed, overnight, into a major deployment of U.S. Special Forces into combat operations in Mindanao, against the kidnapping gang, the Abu Sayyaf, and potentially other separatist movements in the region. The first step down the slippery slope has been taken with the first casualties on Feb. 21, when a U.S. helicopter went down, for unknown reasons, killing all ten U.S. soldiers aboard.

On Indonesia, Wolfowitz took a different tack. Parts of the country, he argued, were not under the control of the government, which meant well, but was too weak to deal with the radical Islamic movement, leaving the country open to al-Qaeda infiltration. This rapidly became the standard line peddled throughout the Western press. The *New York Times* called Indonesia an “anarchic state”; the *Washington Post* headlined its coverage: “Al Qaeda Feared To Be Lurking in Indonesia.” It said that Indonesia is “an easy place for terrorists to operate,” and suggested that the Philippines’ approach, using U.S. Special Forces, should be repeated there. *Newsweek* called Indonesia “Asia’s weak link,” a state unable to guard its borders, endemically corrupt, and not willing to take measures against the terrorists.

Every leading Indonesian government figure has refuted these charges, and insisted that measures are being taken to investigate, but that there has been no evidence presented against Indonesians still living in the country. Chief Economics Minister Dr. Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti, speaking in Washington on Feb. 5, explained to an audience at the U.S.-INDO Society, that Indonesia had dealt with many terrorist threats over the years, since winning a revolutionary war against the Dutch colonialists, but they had never allowed foreign troops back into the nation. He explained that the same Western powers now demanding that people be arrested without evidence, had insisted, after the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, that the laws allowing such detention be repealed—and they were glad to have done so, and did not want to go back. We will handle the problem, he said, but let us do it ourselves, as a sovereign nation.

Most importantly, the government has insisted that, while there are serious problems with terrorism, they would not condone the effort to paint every radical Islamic organization as “terrorist.” The death toll in the several regions of the country where ethnic and religious violence has emerged from the devastating economic collapse after 1998, has reached into the thousands, involving armed gangs of Christi-

ans and Muslims alike. The government has successfully achieved peace agreements in the most volatile situations, based on a policy of *no recriminations*, and they will not allow the (mostly foreign) demand for *vengeance* against the Islamic side, or any side, to disrupt that peace.

The major point at issue is an Indonesian cleric, Abu Bakar Bashir. Bashir had been detained under the Suharto regime in the 1980s for his radical Islamic teachings. He left the country for Malaysia upon his release, living in Malaysia until 1999. While there, Bashir taught several individuals who, in 2001, turned up in the KMM criminal activities. Bashir has been interviewed by the Indonesian authorities, but he insists that he has not been in contact with these groups since 1999, and that he had nothing to do with any terrorist or criminal acts. With no evidence to the contrary forthcoming from Singapore or Malaysia (or the West), Indonesia will not arrest him. (A second Indonesian cleric, Hambali, who had taught the same groups in Malaysia as had Bashir, is on the most-wanted list in Indonesia, because of suspected involvement in the bombing of churches in Indonesia on Christmas Day in 2000.)

*Time* magazine interviewed Bashir. While repeating his denial of any connection to terror or criminal activity, he acknowledged his agreement with bin Laden’s teachings, but added, “This does not mean that he should not be tried if he is guilty of a crime. But so far there is no proof [regarding Sept. 11]. I don’t believe he has the money or the sophistication to mount such an attack.”

Malaysia has reported that it is satisfied with Indonesia’s efforts to fight terrorism, but Singapore, the city-state which continues to serve as the British banking and intelligence center for Asia, is a different story.

### **The Straits Times Fraud**

On Feb. 11, the *Straits Times* of Singapore, which is both very close to the Singapore government, and a regular outlet for British intelligence disinformation, published a report in which it claimed to have obtained from Singapore intelligence, a document titled “Jihad Operation in Asia,” and to have established contact with a “source” within the Jemaah Islamiah. The document detailed plans for the bombing of U.S. Embassies in Jakarta, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur, all on Dec. 4. It named the names and schedules for all three operations, and was conveniently printed in Indonesian, Arabic, and English! The document, together with quotes from the supposed “source,” were such a perfect printout of the charges being concocted against Indonesia, from Wolfowitz and the various press attacks, that this reporter broke out laughing. Besides the diatribes against America as the Great Satan, Indonesia is described as the perfect location, due to its weak security, and the considerable support for terrorists from the population. These terrorists were easily infiltrating into many other Islamic groups, the “source” claimed. The *Straits Times* even went so far as to assert that the document

had been found in October 2001, *in Indonesia, by Indonesian intelligence, but, because they opposed cooperation with the United States, they had kept it secret.*

Indonesia did not fall into the trap. Foreign Minister Hasan Wirayuda, after meeting President Megawati Sukarnoputri, said they had never heard of such a document. "I just laugh every time I'm asked about that. Why do I often argue about something which does not necessarily exist, from unnamed sources?" The Foreign Minister said Indonesians do not feel threatened by these small groups, "because they do not enjoy wide support from our community." Similar responses came from all sides of the political spectrum.

The *Straits Times* quietly dropped the story after two days, but the fact of the outrageous accusations must be taken seriously. In fact, Singapore's senior leader (and Britain's leading comprador), Lee Kuan Yew, jumped into the picture to keep the story alive, claiming that there were terrorist leaders running loose in Indonesia, presenting a threat to the region and to the United States. When Indonesia reacted strongly, demanding evidence or an apology, Lee Kuan Yew's spokesman responded that "the facts are well known, and reported widely in the regional and international press!"

### **Dr. Mahathir Strikes Back**

The attacks on Malaysia reached a peak in the Jan. 28 *Newsweek*, which wrote about an FBI report which claimed that Malaysia is a favorite meeting place for al-Qaeda, and had become "a primary operational launchpad for the Sept. 11 attacks." *Time* added fuel to the fire, saying that not only was Malaysia a hub for the preparations for Sept. 11, but, "if that isn't shocking enough, consider this: The networks are still thriving." The only "evidence" is that two of the accused hijackers of the Sept. 11 jetliners, and the one man now on trial in the United States for the attack, Zacarias Moussaoui, had passed through Kuala Lumpur in 2000, and met in the apartment of one Yazid Sufaat, who is now under detention by the Malaysian government. These meetings had been monitored by the Malaysian police, who promptly informed the U.S. government, which, nonetheless, did nothing to prevent their subsequent entry into the United States!

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad responded to the slanders and the referenced FBI report: "These people were training in the U.S. all the time, and then they planned in America how to hijack American planes, at what time, which plane, which building. All that was done in America, not done in Malaysia." He said the terrorist suspects had been travelling all over the world, including to Switzerland. He said that he doubted that Sufaat, who is under detention in Malaysia for suspicion of domestic terrorist activities, was involved in the planning of the Sept. 11 attacks, and asked those who have information to provide it. "Let's see the evidence. It is very easy to say that he had done it, but did he do it in Malaysia, did he plan everything? I doubt it. . . . It's too sophisticated an operation," he said.

# The Destruction of the Philippines Since the 'Edsa' Revolution

by Herman Tiu Laurel

*The following two-part article was written by Philippines columnist, radio talk-show host, and political activist Herman Tiu Laurel, for the Feb. 25 Philippines Tribune. Given the current U.S. military deployment into the Philippines, with the great potential for a provocation (either accidental or intentional) leading to an escalation into a wider war, we believe that this penetrating look at the destruction of the Philippines economy and social fabric over the past 15 years, from a figure active within that process, is crucial for Americans to understand how the current situation evolved—and America's role in causing that breakdown.*

*A few words of introduction are necessary, since the column was written for a Filipino audience. Edsa I, II, and III (Uno, Dos, and Tres) refer to the three "People's Power" revolutions which have taken place in the Philippines since 1986, all involving mass demonstrations at the Edsa Shrine in the center of Manila. In 1986, with backing from the U.S. State Department, the military, under the direction of the head of the Police, Gen. Fidel Ramos, turned against the President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, and installed Corazon Aquino, the wife of slain opposition leader Benigno Aquino, as President. This was Edsa Uno, or the Yellow Revolution, as yellow was used as a symbol for supporters of Corazon Aquino. At the center of the manipulated "People's Power" demonstrations was Cardinal Jaime Sin, the Archbishop of Manila.*

*In the following article, Corazon Aquino is referred to as the "yellow-clad Housewife," while General Ramos is the "Cigar-Nibbler." Cardinal Sin shows up as the "fat cleric."*

*Following the Aquino Administration, Ramos was elected President until 1998. His efforts to change the Constitution so that he could run again failed, and the populist Joseph Estrada was elected by the largest majority in Philippines history. However, within two years, Ramos, Aquino, and Cardinal Sin were at it again, and repeated the 1986 military coup-process, replacing Estrada with his Vice President, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. This was known as Edsa Dos. Within months, however, the mass-base support for Estrada, especially among the poor, brought about Edsa Tres, a spontaneous mass demonstration on May 1, 2001. Unlike Edsa Uno and Edsa Dos, Edsa Tres was not sponsored by Washington, and was crushed by the military, with many deaths.*