

## We Won't Let the Terrorists Beat Us

by John Arnold, managing director, APCO Indonesia

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As the news of yet another bombing reached me on my mobile phone early on Friday, I was breakfasting with an expatriate friend. We were together at a restaurant in another high-profile building within sight of the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels. We, of course, might just as well have selected one of those ill-fated venues for our meeting, but we were lucky and thus safe. Others, including several mutual friends we would later learn, were tragically far less fortunate.

It wasn't long before the TV was beaming live broadcasts from the scene into our restaurant. At first details of casualties were not known. Any new bombing is serious enough news, but for a while at least, I was able to hope that this time the high level of security at the top hotels would have minimized injuries.

Following breakfast I was scheduled to attend a meeting within the US Embassy. As that meeting had not been canceled, I was encouraged still to hope that the incident had not been so serious. At the embassy I was required to surrender my mobile phone so was cut off from the instant communication that we now almost take for granted — out of phone, out of mind. When nearly three hours later, I emerged and reconnected with the world, my phone was bursting with messages and missed calls. The full horror of events rapidly became apparent.

I soon learned of the deaths and injuries: Indonesians and expatriates; some of the latter new to Indonesia, others who have lived here longer than most Indonesians. Names like James Castle, who survived the first JW Marriott bombing, Noke Kiroyan and Adrianto Macribie among the injured; all friends known to me for many years; all business leaders who have contributed much to Indonesia. Tim Mackay, head of Holcim, is among the dead. Ghastly! Why? I think of the suffering of the injured and the bereavement of the families of the dead. Some of the injured are critical. Will they recover? Will their lives ever be the same again? What a senseless waste.

While I make my first call to my office, I am simultaneously responding to messages of concern from as far away as Europe and the United States. Our world never sleeps and the worst news travels across it in an instant. But the world is not just reading and thinking about individuals. It is the nation of Indonesia that is hitting the headlines and once more for the worst of reasons. This is especially tragic after the recent largely peaceful legislative and presidential elections and the kudos the president has justifiably earned from the progress his administration achieved in reining in terrorism. It demonstrates how far removed the methods of the terrorists are from the mass of Indonesia's rational citizens.

I think back to 2000, when one afternoon I was taking a call at my office in what was then known as the Jakarta Stock Exchange Building. Just as I began to speak, there was a very loud but distinctive muffled boom from below me. At that time we had no experience of bombs in Jakarta, but from living in London in the 1970s, I had become all too familiar with the IRA's then campaign of terror. For me there was no mistaking that fearful sound. I

informed my caller that I thought a bomb had just exploded beneath me so would she please allow me to interrupt our conversation. I am not sure whether she believed me, but at that moment the now familiar use of such terror was applied for the first time.

Despite all the deaths and injuries from that first bombing being Indonesians, the then perpetrators and successors recognized nothing futile in their methods. War has been described as the pursuit of politics by other means, but even that cynical analysis assumes the existence of some achievable objectives. When did the use of indiscriminate terror ever achieve anything worthy?

Indonesians are inevitably wondering now what the future holds for their country. If you had asked me such a question a few days ago, I would have said that I felt more optimistic about Indonesia than at any time during the previous 25 years I have been a resident. I have witnessed all the good, the bad and the ugly that Indonesia has lived through during those sometimes turbulent years. All the progress of recent times cannot be undone by the tragic and terrible events of one morning. Terrorism is a global scourge against which all the peoples of the world must unite in order for it to be destroyed.

Indonesia is far from being the state worst impacted by terrorism. If we just take the example of India and the attacks in Mumbai earlier this year, we can learn that it is possible to quickly move on. The most effective way to restore confidence is for the security forces to quickly identify and apprehend whatever groups are behind the outrage. They must perform with a sense of urgency and transparency, and any arrests must be credible. Intelligence gathering is clearly vital, but to win, the security forces must be smart rather than draconian. Hard-won freedoms must not be sacrificed. That way ultimately only the terrorist wins.

Communicating with the public frequently and honestly without prejudicing security is also critical. Communicating with key foreign embassies to ensure that travel warnings are not reimposed is especially essential. The global community must believe that terrorism is still being tackled with resolve and determination.

Clearly, foreigners and what are perceived to be foreign-owned assets are top targets. Business and tourism will inevitably be affected in the immediate future. That it is now the Northern Hemisphere's holiday season is especially unfortunate, but it will be too late for many to change their plans. It is thus an opportunity for Indonesians to warmly welcome those visitors who are arriving and show that they are fighting back against a common enemy. We must all be extra vigilant, but after a quarter century in Indonesia, I am not about to run away and nor do I believe will many other of my expatriate friends. I may feel less safe today, but I remain as determined as ever not to let the bastards beat me.

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