SIMMERING PROBLEM

CONFRONTING INDONESIA

While Belgium grapples with a homegrown terror problem coupled with Europe’s notoriously porous borders, our nearest neighbour is battling its own homegrown radicals.

CINDY WOCKNER and KOMANG ERVIANI

AUSTRALIAN authorities now say the threat of a terrorist attack in Indonesia is “above probable” and local authorities say plans to attack Bali yet again were being discussed, along with other plots.

Indonesian police say those particular plots have now been neutralised by a series of arrests, there is a bigger issue needing attention – long-standing problems with Indonesia’s prison system.

The fact the January terror attacks in Jakarta were orchestrated from one of the nation’s most high-security prisons illustrates this. Like Belgium, where neighbourhood harbours radicals, in Indonesia the jail system is proving a big hurdle in the fight against terrorism.

Terrorists have been allowed recruit from behind bars and the lack of legislation to prosecute those who support ISIS has allowed Syrian returnees to go back into the community.

The Parliament is only now debating new laws to deal with this. Several of those involved in the January attacks were recidivists – former terrorist prisoners.

Hundreds of Indonesians are said to be fighting in Syria with ISIS and Al Nusra and guns from the Philippines and Malaysia are finding their way into the country.

HUNT FOR SANTOSO

The appointment of the former Jakarta police chief and respected counter-terrorism police general, Tito Karnavian, to head up Indonesia’s National Counter Terror Agency, the BNPPT, has been applauded by the global community.

Karnavian recently revealed that, in the wake of arrests for the January attacks, police had learned further attacks were being considered for Bali, Jakarta’s airport and on an international school.

But he pointed out the planning was not advanced or sophisticated.

Karnavian said he did not want the threat to be blown out of proportion.

“With regard to Bali, Jakarta airport and the other one into international schools, it was just at the stage of an idea.”

Scores of arrests had neutralised the plans and ideas.

And a shipment of nine handguns, stolen from a Jakarta prison and destined for the country’s most wanted terrorist, Santosos, who is on the run in Poso, Central Sulawesi, was uncovered.

The first Indonesian to pledge allegiance to ISIS, Santosos has been the target of a sustained police and military hunt for months and Karnavian says catching Santosos is a priority.

The discovery of the stolen guns destined for Santosos underlines the problem with the country’s jails, something which Karnavian himself acknowledges.

One of the men on death row for the Australian embassy bombing in 2004 was among the planners of this year’s Jakarta attack, along with another ISIS ideologue.

“TERRORISM HASN’T GONE AWAY”

The Australian Federal Police’s counter-terrorism chief, Assistant Commissioner Neil Gaughan (pictured left), has praised his counterpart, Kar

navian, saying it is a big deal he has publicly acknowledged the prison system problem.

Gaughan says the risk of another terrorist attack in Indonesia is now “slightly above probable.” The threat level for Aus

tralia is currently at “probable.”

“There is nothing to indicate an attack is going to happen tomorrow but unfortunately we haven’t had another Bali bombing,” Gaughan says.

People need to be complacent about their environment in the region.

“Terrorism expert and Islamic scholar, Al Chaidar, from the Uni

versity of Malikussaleh in Aceh, says the country’s prisons have become a kind of command centre for terrorists.

“It is dangerous. We know that the prison management in Indonesia means messed up. The prison has become a central command for these kind of movements and the management should be fixed,” Chaidar says.

He estimates that about two mil

lion Indonesians support ISIS.

The BNPPT says Bali and Jakarta are categorised as “red areas” or alert zones for terrorism.

SAFEGUARDING BALI

Recently the BNPPT conducted a fire

day anti-terrorism training program in Bali for police and military which included strategies for coping with chemi

cal, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks, known as CBRN.

“We anticipate in the future terror

ists will no more use traditional acts as bombing and shooting and others. We anticipate they could use CBRN,” BNPPT secretary, Gustama Wiranegara says.

Wiranegara says there is no indi

cation or knowledge of any such plots but planning for them is key and chemi

cal shops are being tightly monitored.

“We know that there are many tourists here. In Bali, the income from the tourism sector is extraordinary and we don’t want the ter

rorists to benefit from this situation. So we have to safeguard Bali for our international image,” Wiranegara says.

Bali’s Governor, Made Mangku Pastika (left), the former Bali police chief, says he believes Bali is safe and his administration is doing everything to increase vigilance across the island, including the introduction of international standard security systems.

“They are continuing now with the training and routinely we build co-operation with several other countries,” Pastika says.

Another issue exercising the minds of the Indonesian authorities is the fate of their citizen, Hambali, and what will happen to him when Guantanamo Bay closes later this year.

Hambali has been held by the US since his capture in Thailand in 2003 and he is alleged to have been heavily in

volved in the 2002 Bali bombings and other plots.

Indonesia has made no secret of its desire that he never be returned.

With prisons already a problem the last person they want is someone like Hambali in the mix.

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