

# UPFRONT



## FACE OFF

Made Pastika knows better than most the reality of the Kuta nightclub bombings

**TERRORISM** CLAIRE SCOBIE

# 'JI is an idea, not a formal organisation'

The man who led the Bali bomb investigations has some startling things to say about the threat posed by Islamic terrorists.

"More terrorist attacks are inevitable," said Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who was not spared a frisking by Indonesian security at the Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counter-Terrorism held in Bali last week. "Jemaah Islamiyah remains highly resilient and committed to its cause. It is planning for the long term, actively training and recruiting young men as the next generation of leaders."

Downer's view mirrors that of other ministers at the conference who agreed that while the JI network has been seriously disrupted, with over 200 suspects detained, several key members are still on the run. Nor has the Indonesian government outlawed JI, which still recruits willing acolytes in mosques. According to one senior Indonesian policeman, who asked not to be named: "Many underground cells still exist that are very difficult to break up. Even if one JI member is caught, five more can be recruited."

Such assertions directly contradict General I Made Mangku Pastika, the Bali police chief who led investigations into the 2002 Kuta bombings. Pastika told *The Bulletin*: "JI is an idea, not a formal organisation. It is not easy to say whether people are being recruited or not. We have to be very careful at describing it as JI, what we are fighting is terrorism, not JI. It is an underground, not a formal, group. Everyone denies being part of JI."

"In Indonesia the investigation starts from the crime scene. In Malaysia and Singapore it starts with JI," says Pastika. "We cannot say JI is legal or illegal, there is no HQ, no chairman. It is an Islamic term, literally meaning 'many Muslim people doing good things'."

"We are not under pressure from Australia to investigate JI and we do not know JI operates with Al Qaeda."

Australian authorities may see it differently. One of the key outcomes of the conference – attended by delegations

from 25 countries, including United States Attorney-General John Ashcroft – was the unveiling of a joint Indonesian and Australian centre on counter-terrorism.

Jointly funded and expected to be in operation by the end of the year, Australia will inject \$38.3m over five years, equipment and 20 staff, most from the Federal Police. The centre will be based in Semarang, central Java, the site of a bomb-making factory linked to JI raided by police last year.

The centre will provide a forensic laboratory, police training and courses, and act as a regional resource for the tracking and interception of terrorists. It will not be an operational facility, says Pastika: "The centre will not help with investigation because of the problem of jurisdiction and sovereignty issues." It is expected the centre's budget will increase with contributions from other countries, including Britain, the Netherlands and Canada.

But the centre faces other challenges. Attempts to play down JI may not only be a reflection of the political and cultural sensitivity of the issue in a predominantly Muslim country. Forthcoming Indonesian elections only exacerbate the fear of alienating Islamic leaders who are being urged to advocate moderation. So while Downer upheld the conference as a landmark in the war against terrorism, it is clear that without a united front from the Indonesian police, JI may continue to evade detection and strike again. As Downer admits: "Indonesians are the first to recognise their anti-terrorism laws need more work."