

Analysis: Twin Bomb Attack in Tentena, Indonesia

22 killed and more than 50 injured in the blasts

Summary:

- Two bombs exploded approximately 15 minutes apart during a peak shopping hour Saturday morning, 28 May in a crowded market in the town of Tentena
- The first, and smaller of the two explosions, occurred at about 8:00 AM local time
- The second, a much more powerful blast, occurred 15 minutes after the first, as people rushed to the scene to help the victims of the first explosion
- Though Indonesia is the most populous Muslim nation in the world, central Sulawesi, where Tentena is located, has roughly equal Muslim and Christian populations
- Religious fighting between Muslims and Christians in Sulawesi has claimed thousands of lives since 2000
- Reports that 19 of the dead were Christians worried some officials that this attack may be a precursor for a new wave of sectarian conflict
- While Indonesian police have named five suspects, two of the five remain at large and the motives behind the attack remain unclear

Tactics:

- Majority of victims came to help those hurt in the initial blast and then became victims themselves when the second, larger bomb was detonated, leaving a 1m deep crater
- Bombs consisted of a mixture of low level explosives with thousands of sharp metal shards
- Explosives included potassium chlorate and sulfur
- Detonator consisted of pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) – the Indonesian government tightly regulates the sale of this chemical compound
- Police suspect that the bombs were constructed in a prison workshop some 35 miles north of Tentena; the prison warden may be involved
- After the bombings, police discovered an unexploded bomb outside a nearby church



Target Background and Significance:

- Tentena is a mostly Christian town in the Central Sulawesi province
- Three years of Muslim-Christian conflict in Sulawesi left over 2,000 people dead; a peace agreement was reached in December 2001
- Peace agreement ended most of the overt violence, but tensions have persisted, with regular smaller-scale, local attacks
- Past Sulawesi violence focused on nearby village of Poso, which has drawn attention from Al-Qaeda linked groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (see dossier on this group at www.cpt-mi.org)
- Weekend of May 28, 2005 marked the fifth anniversary of the “Walisongo Massacre,” where a Christian mob killed hundreds of Muslims who had taken refuge at an Islamic boarding school

Terrorist Profiles:

- Hasman, head of the Poso prison, arrested while driving in a minivan with 2 convicted murderers. He had a firearm and several sharp weapons. Police found residue on his clothing, which was identical to the chemicals used in the attacks
- Eyewitnesses identified Abdul Kadir Sidik, head of housing and disaster relief in the Poso, and Ismet, an official with the Poso Health Office, at the scene before the bombings
- Both men should have been incarcerated after being convicted for embezzling government funds, which fueled police speculation that the attacks were an attempt to cover up official corruption
- Ahmad Laparigi and Andi Makkasau, both prominent public figures convicted in the corruption case, have been linked along with Kadir Sidik to the beheading of a key witness in this case
- Erwin and Alias Atuk, who are believed to be the bombers, remain at large
- Police found chemical substances identical to those found at the bombing site on the left handlebar of Erwin’s motorcycle
- Eyewitnesses saw Atuk moving back and forth throughout the market before the explosions
- Authorities also named Abu Halmas as a key perpetrator



Scene of the initial blast



Police roadblock in Sulawesi

Implications for Law Enforcement:

- Second bomb targeting responders was central to this attack. Response tactics must identify and reduce secondary devices, or confirm they are not present as quickly as possible
- Classic, casualty-producing explosive devices used in the attack
- Yet another attack against a soft target, designed to produce high number of casualties
- Attack timed to coincide with anniversary of an important date to Muslims in the area, a hallmark of Islamic terrorist attacks. In designing counter terrorism operations, police should consider not only dates of international significance, but also of local significance
- Same genre of low maintenance, homegrown attacks seen recently in London. Local prevention measures should focus on this genre, especially in light of DHS' revised strategy of focusing on catastrophic attacks
- Terrorist tactics, including responder IED and intentional targeting of religious site, similar to those employed by Anti-Iraqi Forces. Local fusion centers should monitor trends in Iraq and Afghanistan for possible application in the U.S.

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