Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific

MEMORANDUM 10

ENHANCING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE FACTORS DRIVING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

A working definition of terrorism

Political differences among the members of the international community have to-date prevented agreement on a common definition of terrorism. This memorandum is premised on a suggested working definition of terrorism as "organised violence employed against civilians for a political purpose". Terrorism can be perpetrated by persons who belong to any ethnic, religious or ideological group.

International terrorism is terrorism mounted by an entity with a capacity to undertake attacks in more than one country, and with transnational elements in terms of goals, membership or support. This memorandum addresses international terrorism personified in the al-Qaeda network and terrorist groups that are linked to or inspired by that network, such as the Jemaah Islamiyah.

The dominant factors driving international terrorism

The factors underlying international terrorism are subject to as much contention as the definition of terrorism. Politicisation of issues relating to terrorism aggravates efforts to clarify and understand better the driving forces behind international terrorism, hinders efforts to deal effectively with terrorism at the operational level, weakens international cooperation, and often plays into the hands of terrorists.

The phenomenon of global terror is best understood as an ideological struggle. There is general agreement that terrorism feeds upon a complex mix of factors that can vary in different environments depending upon the peculiar historical, political, economic, social and security conditions. International terrorism also has a degree of domestic moorings where local terrorist groups link themselves to the al-Qaeda. The al-Qaeda has also demonstrated a tendency to exploit any emerging issue in order to serve its cause.

The following are the primary driving factors that are often cited for international terrorism and the support for it, although the driving factors are sometimes contested:

1. The desire to expel foreign military forces from "holy" Saudi Arabian soil.

2. Hostility to some of the policies of the United States and its allies in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. Perceived US support for what are considered "oppressive" regimes in the Middle East, perceived US support for Israel in the Palestine-Israel

Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
Memorandum 10 – Enhancing efforts to address the factors driving international terrorism

1

conflict and the invasion and occupation of Iraq have emerged as the most prominent issues exploited by the al-Qaeda.

3. Exploitation, manipulation and distortion of Islamic teachings to provide a religious dimension to the al-Qaeda terrorist agenda and to secure recruits and support in the Arab and Muslim world. The al-Qaeda has distorted Islamic teachings to spread hatred, intolerance and violence including against innocent civilians.

4. Exploitation of political, economic and social grievances against governments, which in some instances have led to the growth of separatist movements. These grievances may include perceived political oppression and marginalisation; perceived suppression and abuse of human rights; and poverty and wide income gaps.

5. The exploitation and distortion of Islamic teachings in some *madrassahs* to incite hatred against "un-Islamic" Muslim governments and the West and to preach violent and militant struggle against them.

6. Perceived excesses and alleged human rights abuses in the "war against terror", including alleged over-reliance upon "hard measures" involving the use of the military instrument and alleged abuse of prisoners.

7. "Operational" failures and shortcomings in the implementation of the campaign against international terrorism, including inadequate political resolve in some countries, insufficient resources and intelligence failures.

Recommendations

CSCAP would like to register the following points and offer the following recommendations in this regard:

1. International terrorism as personified in the al Qaeda is a serious threat that must be condemned unequivocally and confronted without reservation or double standards by all nations acting both individually and in cooperation with others in regional organisations such as ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.

2. There should be greater political will for engagement in strong multilateral cooperation. The United Nations should be vested with a key role for countering terrorism at the international level.

3. The campaign against international terrorism entails both short-term political-military measures as well as long-term political-economic-social solutions. It must be a sustained effort aimed at accomplishing enduring results. There should be no let or complacency.

4. The campaign must be a comprehensive one, employing all relevant instruments and effective measures. These should be both preventive and remedial in nature, and encompass efforts in the political, socio-economic and security spheres. Ultimately, the terrorists must be defeated in the ideological struggle. Governments and civil society both have an obligation to engage in this contest of ideas.

5. Addressing and neutralising the factors that drive terrorism is a vital and indispensable component of sound counter-terrorism strategy. It is central to "winning the hearts and minds" of the people whom the terrorists seek to cultivate. It is not a concession or capitulation to terrorist demands, and it must be prevented from being perceived or exploited as such.

6. In order to counter the exploitation and misrepresentation of Islam by al-Qaeda and its allies, the Muslim community and Muslim nations have a special responsibility to fulfil in protecting Islam. Islam forbids the killing of innocent civilians. To this end the Muslim

Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
Memorandum 10 – Enhancing efforts to address the factors driving
international terrorism

2

world must implement all measures possible, including in educational institutions, to discredit and remedy the distortion of the teachings of Islam to promote the terrorist agenda.

7. Good governance in the political, economic and social spheres will help sustain an environment that is impervious to exploitation by terrorist groups. The welfare, rights and dignity of all peoples must be respected and promoted, and their legitimate local grievances must be comprehensively addressed to end poverty, injustices and suffering.

8. The major powers should scrutinise their policies in the Middle East and in other parts of the world and adjust them where necessary and where beneficial to prevent extensive alienation and hostility that can be exploited by terrorist groups. An early and just solution to the Palestine-Israeli conflict, as well as an early resolution to the situation in Iraq without destabilising the country, will go a long way towards denying terrorists major issues to exploit.

9. International law and national sovereignty should be fully respected. Human rights should be fully observed by all nations in the implementation of counter-terrorism strategy and programmes, especially with respect to the conduct of law enforcement and military operations. While the use of force may be necessary, disproportionate use of force should be avoided.

10. Every effort should be made by all nations individually and in cooperation with others to enhance their capabilities to prevent, detect, interdict and disable the terrorist infrastructure and support base.

24th CSCAP Steering Committee Meeting
Jakarta, Indonesia
5 December 2005

Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
Memorandum 10 – Enhancing efforts to address the factors driving
international terrorism

3