



Country Monthly Report of
International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research
THAILAND

Trends

- Bomb and gun attacks occur sporadically throughout the year, but there was a spike in terms of the number of attacks carried out during the Islamic month of Ramadan. The targets were mainly Buddhist monks, government figures, and defence volunteers.
- In addition to the violent attacks, anti-government protest posters were also found across the south, including in the Ruso district of Narathiwat and Pattani. The appearance of these protest posters coincided with the timing of the attacks. These anti-government banners, which have accused state officials in the course of their duties of violating human rights and disturbing the public, support the view that these attacks were done in deliberate contempt for the Thai security establishment.

Analysis

- The perpetrators of the aforementioned attacks are believed to be Muslim separatist insurgents who are motivated by a persistent and continuing desire for independence from the predominantly Buddhist Thailand. This desire is

underpinned by a religious dimension, as the insurgents see themselves as involved in a mission to reinstate Islamic governance in southern Thailand.¹

- Attacks by Muslim separatist insurgents are believed to be generally motivated by grievances and feelings of marginalisation. The use of heavy-handed tactics by the military to suppress the insurgents has served as a source for fuelling the insurgents' grievances and feelings of marginalisation. For instance, insurgents have frequently accused the military of using excessive force against them, although the military has justified it on the grounds that force is required in order to quell the insurgency in the rebel strongholds in southern Thailand (comprising Pattani, Narathiwat, Songkhla, Yala). For this reason, security officials, which include southern Thailand's district chiefs and their guards, are often perceived by insurgents as legitimate targets of attacks.²

Implications

- On a domestic level, as attacks to Buddhist monks and to government figures have become increasingly common in the south, this will likely drive a wedge between Muslims and Buddhists. This may render the southern border provinces even more ungovernable, due to the high levels of insecurity and mistrust among the ethnic groups, and further erode prospects for economic and wider civic development.
- On an international level, the religious underpinnings of the conflict may present opportunity for global jihadists to exploit and co-opt for their causes. This would widen the insurgents' localised concerns as it acquires a global dimension. Meanwhile, local grievances could be used as justifications for insurgents to join global jihadist causes. This is especially so, given that the government is also dealing with a long drawn out peace process with the insurgents, the outcome of which continues to remain uncertain.

¹ "The Malay-Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand: Understanding the Conflict's Evolving Dynamic," RAND, accessed August 4, 2015,

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2008/RAND_OP198.pdf.

² "Confronting ghosts: Thailand's Shapeless Southern Insurgency," Lowy Institute, accessed August 4, 2015, http://www.lowyinstitute.org/files/pubfiles/Liow_and_Pathan%2C_Confronting_ghosts_web.pdf.