



Hotels targeted in Jakarta

Eight people were killed and 48 injured when two separate bomb attacks were launched at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, in July. Mandy Aitchison reports on the aftermath

Although no group has claimed responsibility for the bombs so far, it is believed that Jemaah Islamiyah, a group linked to al-Qaida, is to blame. The bombs went off almost simultaneously at around 8 a.m. and are thought to have been detonated by suicide bombers – at least one of whom was a guest at the Marriott. Firman Santyabudi, police chief in South Jakarta, confirmed that both explosions took place at luxury hotels in the upmarket neighbourhood of Kuningan, an area thick with foreigners – reports stated that most of the dead and injured were foreign visitors.

ITIJ spoke to security specialists red24 to see how the company was handling the situation as it developed. Head of corporate intelligence Lee Niblett explained: "red24's crisis management centre picked up on the incident shortly after it happened (00:30 GMT) and our security and analytical team assessed the situation, briefed key clients and authorised the deployment of consultants onto the ground to provide accurate and timely intelligence on developments and to directly assist and support our clients in the country. Advice has been administered and a range of contingency plans, both for business and travel, have been implemented for those concerned."

The airport nearest Jakarta, Soekarno-Hatta International, has heightened its security and, immediately following the bombing, there were a high number of people flocking to the airport in order to get out of the country. Regarding advice offered to clients, Niblett said they have been told not to go to bars and restaurants usually popular with Western tourists, as the terrorists could strike again, and everyone in Jakarta should 'exercise heightened awareness' of their immediate surroundings. When asked about the after effects the bombs would have, Niblett commented: "Apart from transportation modes, militant Islamists have consistently attacked hotels and other soft targets associated with foreign nationals [such as] restaurants, nightclubs and embassies. This targeting pattern obviously has direct implications for tourists, business personnel and their employees, as well as the

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insurance industry itself."

The Manchester United football team were scheduled to stay at the Ritz-Carlton just a day after the attack to play a match against the Indonesia All Stars, but cancelled the match and the trip after the bombings. The Australian government, meanwhile, has issued a warning against unnecessary travel to Indonesia for its nationals – a move that has not gone down well with Indonesian tourist authorities who say the country is much more secure than it used to be. The BBC spoke to Jamie James, an American partner in the Warung Bonita travel company in Bali, who made reference to the fact that the bombers are trying to instil the same fear they did several years ago when they hit a nightclub and restaurant on the island: "Whoever did this is trying to turn back the clock," said James, "all the history creates an impression that this is all that's going on here – but things have been getting better here in recent years." The warning put in place by Australian authorities will have an immediate and severe effect on tourism, according to those in the business, which is only just recovering from the last warning put in place by the Australians. The country has shown a higher than normal level of caution regarding terrorism in Indonesia, due to the high number of nationals lost in the Bali bombings of 2002.

ITIJ also spoke to Graeme Trudgill, technical and corporate affairs director at the British Insurance Brokers Association, who said the incident had brought terrorism cover in travel insurance policies back into the spotlight: "This latest terrible incident in Jakarta illustrates the need to provide travel insurance protection to people for terrorist events. BIBA has made a lot of progress, with many insurers agreeing to delete the terrorism exclusion over the last few years, but there are still many policies that have a terrorism exclusion. The travel underwriters who have provided the cover tell us the cost to cover terrorism is tiny, so we will continue to lobby for change, particularly for medical and repatriation costs." A few days after the attacks were mounted, five patients were flown by air ambulance jet from Jakarta to Singapore by International SOS for further medical treatment, including two Indonesian men, two Americans and a Dutchman onboard two separate flights. A spokesman commented on the company's role in disasters such as the bombings: "When crises happen, we deploy a team because there is usually a good chance that our members are involved. We can then help, for example, by sending them to the nearest medical centre of excellence or repatriating them to their hometown once their conditions have stabilised."