



# Recovering from Terror Attacks

## A Proposal for Regional Cooperation

PROFESSOR ROSS BABBAGE

01 An ASPI Occasional Paper

## Executive summary

The Asia Pacific's response to the threat from international terrorism has so far focused primarily on the 'front-end' challenges of detection, apprehension and prosecution. These activities are essential. However, no matter how effective the region's intelligence and preventive measures might be, prudent planning cannot exclude the possibility that terrorist operational preparations might go undetected, and one or more Asia Pacific countries might be struck, possibly with devastating consequences. At present few, if any, countries in the region are well prepared for this eventuality.

In consequence, it was suggested at the first IISS conference of Asia Pacific Defence Ministers in May–June 2002 that it might be appropriate for the region to now devote some attention to the 'back-end' challenge of terrorist incident management and recovery. A potentially useful approach could be for Asia Pacific governments to agree to facilitate close cooperation in preparing for—and pooling resources to respond to—any future major terrorist attacks in the region. Such an agreement might encompass:

- Early steps to establish direct communication links between relevant emergency management and response organisations
- Periodic meetings of the heads of such organisations

- Information sharing on relevant organisational, command and control and resource issues
- Some combined training and exercises.

In the event of a participating country being struck by a major terrorist attack, each member state could agree to assist, within its available means, through the provision of specialist search and rescue teams, medical specialists and facilities, engineering specialists and other capabilities, as may be agreed.

This type of agreement would help Asia Pacific governments to better manage the increased risks they now face from international terrorism. Participating authorities should then be better placed to respond to major terrorist incidents with efficiency and effectiveness, and to save many lives.

An appropriate way to launch practical cooperation in this field might be for a meeting of relevant senior officials to be convened at an early stage to sketch the parameters of such an agreement for consideration by governments. Apart from the direct practical benefits, this would boost the public's sense that governments are responding to the challenge effectively, and could also usefully reinforce other cooperative security measures in the Asia Pacific and contribute to a growing sense of regional community.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute's aim is to promote Australia's security by contributing fresh ideas to strategic decision-making, and by helping to inform public discussion of strategic and defence issues. ASPI was established, and is funded, by the Commonwealth Government as an independent, non-partisan policy institute. It is incorporated as a company, and is governed by a Council with broad membership.

This publication can be found on our web site at [www.aspi.org.au](http://www.aspi.org.au).

Hard copies of the publication are available through ASPI, please call +61 2 6270 5100 or email [enquiries@aspi.org.au](mailto:enquiries@aspi.org.au) for details.