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**OPENING ADDRESS BY SENIOR MINISTER AND
COORDINATING MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY PROF
S JAYAKUMAR AT THE NATIONAL SECURITY SEMINAR 2009
ON 9 OCT 09 (FRI), 9.30 AM AT NTUC AUDITORIUM**

Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

TERRORISM: A PERSISTENT BUT EVOLVING THREAT

1 Recent developments in our region, including the simultaneous suicide-bomb attacks on the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta three months ago, and more recently, against the UN WFP (World Food Programme) office in Pakistan, have highlighted the continuing threat of terrorism. Three weeks ago, Indonesia's most wanted fugitive, Noordin Mohammed Top, was killed in a police raid in Central Java. The end of Noordin Top however is not the end of the fight for Indonesia or the rest of the region. The regional *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) network remains active, continuing to receive support and new members.

2 We are still dealing with a real and persistent threat with no end in sight. Terrorism is asymmetric and constantly evolving. Terrorists are constantly adapting and seeking new ways to circumvent the latest security measures.

3 Let us recap the pattern.

- The September 11 attacks saw terrorists using aviation as a weapon. National security agencies moved quickly to review and tighten aviation security.

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- After terrorists conducted bomb attacks on railway, subways and buses in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005, security agencies moved to tighten security loopholes in public transportation systems.
- The Mumbai attacks in November last year showed a new *modus operandi* when terrorists descended through the sea coast and mounted simultaneous swarm attacks on targets in city. They shot indiscriminately at victims. They also leveraged on technologies such as GPS, satellite phones and VOIP (voice-over-internet-protocol).
- The recent terrorist attacks against hotels in Indonesia again revealed new tactics by the terrorists in Indonesia. While there was perimeter security in place, the terrorists stayed in the hotels as guests and calmly walked into the restaurants during breakfast. These attacks aptly show the meticulous planning that goes into trying to circumvent existing security measures.
- Then consider the latest attempt by terrorists to circumvent security checks during the attack against the Saudi Deputy Minister of Interior. Security analysts are abuzz with reports that the terrorist may have hidden the explosives in his body cavity, and then used a handphone to activate the IED. If indeed this was the *modus operandi*, it is another example of the extent to which terrorists are constantly innovating to avoid detection.

4 There are also other non-conventional forms of aggression such as cyberspace attacks that took place in Estonia and Georgia. The attacks caused great disruptions, resulting not only in inconvenience but in

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substantial costs. Attacks of such nature can easily be launched with little resource, but they carry severe consequences.

NEED FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COUNTER-TERRORISM

5 This asymmetric nature of terrorism poses a fundamental challenge to designing counter-terrorism policies and strategies. As terrorists are constantly evolving, so too must a nation's response evolve. Terrorists are ever more imaginative in overcoming security measures. So as we review our own defences, we must never discount what by conventional standards may seem implausible modes of attack just because we have not seen such attacks previously.

6 The basics remain – to succeed in addressing this threat, we need constant vigilance, and a holistic approach to national security is necessary. Now, what does it mean to take a holistic approach?

- First, we need to continue working closely with our regional and international counterparts;
- Second, we should continuously carry out regular and rigorous reviews of our existing measures and strategies;
- Third, we must involve all sectors of society to prevent, protect and respond to threats.

IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

7 Just as terror networks are trans-national, an effective security strategy must leverage on bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The disruption of the *Jemaah Islamiyah* network in Southeast Asia is the result of such close cross-border inter-agency cooperation.

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8 To stay abreast of global and regional developments, Singapore closely collaborates and exchanges information with our regional and international partners. We have established mechanisms to share and exchange information on cyber-security with other countries, and also embarked on joint collaboration in research and development of security technologies. Not much may be said publicly about such bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as it is most effective when kept outside the glare of public scrutiny. However, although little is said, much is being done.

CONSTANT REVIEW OF SECURITY MEASURES

9 Since September 11th, 2001, we have put in place many measures and enhanced our security and resilience significantly. We have also conducted many reviews and exercises. This will always be work-in-progress. The fact that terrorism is asymmetric and evolving means there can never be an everlasting, full-proof strategy. From time to time, gaps will emerge in our defences as tactics and technologies change. Then quick action will be needed to plug these gaps. Therefore, it is vital that we seek out our own weaknesses systematically and relentlessly, and then fine-tune our plans to ensure that we stay ahead of the threats.

10 An example of how we have continuously reviewed and beefed up existing security measures can be seen in the area of maritime security. In 2007, we implemented the Harbour Craft Transponder System or HARTS, which required harbour and pleasure crafts and fishing vessels operating in Singapore port waters to carry transponders. These transponders enable us to track and monitor vessel movements in our waters. We subsequently reviewed HARTS and decided to make it mandatory for all other smaller vessels that call at our ports to also install transponders.

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11 Another good example is Jurong Island. After 9/11, as Jurong Island was considered to be of greater risk due to the inherent nature of the chemicals industry, a number of security measures were taken to enhance the security of the island and the assets there. With continued security enhancements made over the years, Jurong Island now has in place security measures such as comprehensive CCTV coverage, strict access control, and dedicated SAF and Police presence, just to name a few. An inter-agency working committee also continues to review the security requirements. Through these efforts, Jurong Island now enjoys a secure reputation that has become its competitive advantage and attracts major investors from all across the globe.

12 We must continue to adopt the same continuous review approach in all key areas, whether critical infrastructure protection such as Jurong Island and hardening of our power grid, or in the areas of aviation security, public transport security, and defence against CBRE threats. Even then, the best of measures cannot provide iron-clad protection. The price that we must bear is eternal vigilance, and alertness against complacency.

INVOLVING ALL STAKEHOLDERS

13 Any effective approach to counter terrorism must also involve the people and the private sector. The reality is that terrorists are increasingly turning their attention to soft targets. There are countless soft targets out there, making it virtually impossible for the authorities to completely secure everything. A recent report by *Strategic Forecasting Inc*, a global intelligence organisation, noted that the number of attacks against hotels has more than doubled since September 11th. In the past year, a significant number of terror-related attacks in Asia have also been on soft targets.

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14 What this means is that while we harden the security of various critical domains, it is important to also continue to focus on our engagement efforts vis-à-vis the community and the private sector. For instance, new initiatives have been implemented in view of the vulnerability of hotels as potential targets. In August this year, we launched the new Hotel Security Standard and also conducted an inaugural, three-day workshop for the hotel industry on effective crisis management. We must continue to ensure that our community are kept updated on new developments, and that they understand the importance of readiness, resilience and cohesion in dealing with any crises.

15 In this regard, I commend all those involved in the Northstar Exercises, in particular Northstar VII in July this year which involved 15 public and private sector organisations and 2,000 participants. I observed the positive response of the private sector partners, such as the hotels and shopping malls, in volunteering to take part. They recognised that the new business model cannot ignore or discount security, and believe that participating in such exercises provides their clients added confidence in their business operations and management approach.

16 The Government too adopts such an approach. We have been open and candid about Singapore being a potential target. At the same time, we demonstrate through our policies and actions how we tackle these challenges. Hence, Singapore continues to be consistently rated and perceived to be safe and secure. For instance, a 2007 Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) Survey report stated that “Singapore has made itself a very hard target for any would-be terrorists”. This positive reputation and confidence in Singapore, has helped us to attract even more investors and visitors to our shores.

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CONCLUSION

17 To conclude, I return to the earlier point: terrorism is evolving and so countering terrorism is, and will always be, work in progress. With Singapore hosting more international events such as the F1 Grand Prix and the APEC Meetings, it is inevitable that we will draw more attention and need to be ever vigilant.

18 Coupled with non-traditional threats such as SARS and H1N1, the times ahead for our national security officers will be even more challenging. Every single officer has an important role. To keep up the good work done so far, not only do you need to maintain the physical and mental stamina and agility, but equally important is the garnering of information and access to knowledge to constantly challenge our established mindsets.

19 This year, we have four speakers sharing their expertise on two key areas, namely, the strategic implications and lessons learnt from the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, and strategies to counter homegrown terrorism and radicalisation, together with an exhibition which showcases Singapore's national security efforts. Today's National Security Seminar is thus an important event for our national security community, international and local experts to share experiences and thoughts on these important challenges which we all face. I wish you a fruitful exchange of views.

Thank you.