

ETHNIC SEPARATISM IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: KINGDOM FRAYING AT THE EDGE?

Ian Storey

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Overview

- Since January 2004 separatist violence in Thailand's three Muslim-majority southern provinces has claimed the lives of nearly 1,900 people.
- The root causes of this latest phase of separatist violence are a complex mix of history, ethnicity, and religion, fueled by socio-economic disparities, poor governance, and political grievances. Observers differ on the role of radical Islam in the south, though the general consensus is that transnational terrorist groups are not involved.
- A clear picture of the insurgency is rendered difficult by the multiplicity of actors, and by the fact that none of the groups involved has articulated clear demands. What is apparent, however, is that the overall aim of the insurgents is the establishment of an independent Islamic state comprising the three provinces.
- The heavy-handed and deeply flawed policies of the Thaksin government during 2004-2006 deepened the trust deficit between Malay-Muslims and the Thai authorities and fueled separatist sentiment.
- Post-coup, the Thai authorities have made resolving violence in the south a priority, and promised to improve governance and conduct a more effective counter-insurgency campaign.

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- Despite the emphasis on national reconciliation, violence in the south has escalated dramatically post-coup. Although the Thai government predicts that the violence will be contained within six months, few observers share this optimism, and many expect that the violence will increase during 2007.
- The United States is constrained in its ability to assist Thailand, as the presence of U.S. military advisers would likely exacerbate the problem. The United States should, however, encourage the Thai authorities to improve good governance in the south, and pass on counter-insurgency lessons learned from American experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Roots of the Problem

On Jan. 4, 2004 militants raided an army barracks in Narathiwat Province, killing four soldiers and stealing over 400 weapons. Militants also burned down 20 schools in the area, attacked police posts, and detonated several bombs. These attacks marked the beginning of the latest, and most violent, phase of Thailand's southern insurgency. The conflict has now claimed nearly 1,900 lives and without doubt poses the most serious challenge to Thailand's internal stability.

The root causes of the problem are a complex mix of history, ethnicity, and religion, fueled by socio-economic disparities, poor governance, and political grievances. The three southern provinces wracked by violence, Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani, originally formed part of an independent entity called the Pattani Kingdom which was slowly subsumed by the Thai state (then called Siam) from the late 18th century onwards. Two Anglo-Siamese treaties in 1902 and 1909 resulted in the formal incorporation of the three provinces into Thailand, while the rest of the Pattani Kingdom became part of British Malaya.¹ The majority of the population of Thailand's three newest provinces were Malay-Muslims: ethnic Malays who spoke Malayu and adhered to Islam. Beginning in the 1920s the Thai government initiated a policy of forced assimilation with the aim of turning these Malay-Muslims into Thai-Muslims. In reaction, an armed separatist movement emerged in the early 1960s that campaigned for a separate homeland for Malay-Muslims. By the late 1980s, however, the Thai authorities had essentially defeated the separatist insurgency in the south through a combination of improved governance, economic development projects, blanket amnesties for the insurgents, and stepped-up security cooperation with neighboring Malaysia.

By 2000, however, separatist sentiment had reemerged in the south. Many of the causes were the same as before. Malay-Muslims felt politically marginalized by Bangkok, and perceived that their ethnic, cultural, and religious identity was under threat from the predominantly Buddhist Thai state. The population felt deprived of the socio-economic and educational opportunities afforded to other parts of the country. Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani are among some of the poorest provinces in Thailand, with high numbers of unemployed, young Muslim males. Educational standards are low, which means that few Malay-Muslims can pass the entrance exams for government positions, including the local police. These positions are invariably taken by Thais from outside the

region who do not speak the local language nor understand the cultural mores. This breeds frustration and resentment among the local population. The police have a particularly poor record of community policing in the south, and are widely perceived as corrupt, incompetent, and able to abuse their authority with impunity.

While some observers have put the accent on ethno-nationalism as the primary driver of the current insurgency, with religion accorded very much a secondary position, this is, in reality, a false dichotomy: Islam cannot be separated from Malay identity. That said, however, most commentators would agree that the religious element of the current insurgency is becoming more pronounced. Thus, according to Joseph Liow, Islam increasingly serves as a “potent avenue to comprehend, rally, articulate, and express resistance against the central state”.² What adds credence to this view is that much of the violence being perpetrated today is Muslim against Muslim, whereas in the early stage of the insurgency it was Thai-Buddhist versus Malay-Muslim.

The growing sectarian nature of the conflict calls into question the role of radical Islam and the involvement of outside groups such as Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Here scholars are divided. Liow argues that the violence is primarily rooted in local grievances rather than radical Islamist ideology. He supports this contention by pointing out that the southern militants’ rhetoric does not make calls for worldwide jihad, that Western interests in Thailand have not been targeted, and that the insurgents have not resorted to suicide attacks.³ Zachary Abuza, on the other hand, posits that the violence has radical jihadist overtones, and that the conflict is as much about the insurgents wanting to impose hardline Salafism on the Malay-Muslim population as it is about secession.⁴

Most observers would agree that transnational terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and JI have played no operational role in the conflict thus far. According to sources who spoke with the author, JI operatives offered assistance to southern Thai militant groups during 2002-2003, but these offers were rejected because of differences over targets (JI wanted to attack Western targets in Bangkok) and because the southern separatists do not see the creation of a pan-Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia as their end game. The facts that the insurgency has been going well for the militants since 2004 without outside help, and that JI is currently preoccupied with re-establishing its power base in Indonesia, militates against JI involvement for the immediate future. Malay-Muslim militants are likely, however, to have been *influenced* by radical Islamic websites, and have also copied tactics, such as the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and decapitation, from insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, a major concern for security practitioners in Thailand is that if the violence continues, JI or other groups will become involved, as jihadists have done with other conflicts in Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

The Insurgents: Origins, Aims, and Tactics

The current phase of the insurgency seems to have incubated in the south’s religious schools (*pondocks*) during the 1990s. When the Thai government offered blanket amnesties in 1984 and 1993, a minority spurned this offer and took up positions in the *pondocks*; these schools provided them a forum to teach young Malay-Muslims about Pattani nationalism and perceived injustices perpetrated by the Thai state. These teachers inspired a new generation to resist Thai authority. By 2000, their students were in their late teens or early twenties and ready to fight; 2001-2003

witnessed a gradual rise in small-scale attacks against symbols of the Thai state, with a major escalation of violence beginning in January 2004.

Although many groups are involved and none has claimed responsibility for the violence, there is general consensus among security practitioners in Thailand that two groups are responsible for the majority of attacks. The first group is the Barisan Revolusi Nasional–Koordinasi (BRN-C) and its armed wing Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK). The second, smaller group is Gerakan Mujahideen Islami Pattani (GMIP).⁵ Both groups are said to meet on a regular basis to coordinate attacks in the three provinces. The rank and file of the insurgents are typically young males in their 20s or 30s, many of whom have attended religious schools in Thailand or overseas. The number of insurgents is difficult to ascertain, though the Royal Thai Army (RTA) estimates 1,500 active insurgents and 8,000-10,000 supporters.⁶

To date, none of the insurgent groups has articulated any demands. Their overriding goal, however, would seem to be the establishment of an independent Islamic state incorporating the three southern provinces. It is possible that factions within the various groups might settle for genuine autonomy, at least as the first stage toward independence. In order to achieve independent statehood, hardcore groups such as BRN-C and GMIP have adopted two main strategies. The first is to shatter the fabric of society in the south, polarize society, force Thai-Buddhists to migrate, and destroy Thailand's governmental structure in the south. To date, the militants have achieved a high degree of success. According to Abuza, Thai officials estimate that 30,000 Thai-Buddhists (ten percent of their population) have fled the south over the past three years.⁷ The insurgents have also been quite successful in targeting the symbols of Thai authority, especially police, army, and government officials. The militants have singled out schools, not only because they represent a soft target, but also because they are perceived as places where Malay-Muslim children are "brainwashed" to accept Thai authority. Since January 2004, insurgents have killed 64 teachers and torched 72 schools.⁸ The second strategy is the establishment of an alternative governance structure in the south – known in the lexicon of counter-insurgency as a counterstate. In December 2006 the *Bangkok Post* reported that separatist groups were planning to form an alternative government for the Islamic Pattani State, which included their own flag.⁹

Since January 2004 the violence has largely been confined to Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, though several attacks have occurred in neighboring Songkla Province. After the 2006 New Year's Eve bombings in Bangkok which killed three people and injured 38, suspicion immediately fell on southern militants. The Thai government, however, was quick to dismiss their involvement, instead blaming elements still loyal to deposed Prime Minister Thaksin. The government ruled out southern separatists in the belief that they lack the organizational, operational, and financial resources to conduct attacks outside their home provinces. Unconfirmed reports, however, suggest Malay-Muslims have conducted reconnaissance missions on shopping malls and airports in Bangkok and Phuket, albeit very amateurish ones.¹⁰ And in February 2007, a senior Thai police official said they were looking for a suspect in connection with the bomb blasts who may have links to the southern insurgency.¹¹

State Responses

State Responses under the Thaksin Administration, 2001-2006

State responses to the upsurge in separatist violence under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who held office between January 2001 and September 2006, were, in the main, heavy-handed and deeply flawed, and served only to fuel the violence and increase the distrust between Malay-Muslims and the Thai authorities.

The Thaksin administration's first error of judgment was to misdiagnose the problem and then, based on that faulty assessment, dismantle the security apparatus that had helped keep the peace for over a decade. Although an increase in shootings and bombings in 2001-2002 suggested separatist sentiment was on the rise, Thaksin dismissed the violence as simply a turf war between rival criminal gangs. In 2002, believing that separatism was no longer an issue in the south, Thaksin abolished the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) and the Civilian-Military-Police Taskforce 43 (CMP-43). The SBPAC and CMP-43 had been established in the early 1980s and were key elements in the Thai government's successful counter-insurgency campaign. The SBPAC, staffed largely by local officials, essentially governed the three provinces, oversaw economic development projects, and resolved grievances between Malay-Muslim and government officials. CMP-43 coordinated all security operations in the south and worked closely with the SBPAC. These two organizations, plus two blanket amnesties for insurgents in 1984 and 1993, are widely credited with taking the heat out of the insurgency in the 1980s and early 1990s. In their place, Thaksin (a former Lieutenant-Colonel in the police force) transferred responsibility for security in the south from the army to the police. Furious at the loss of prestige, the army ended all cooperation with the police. The police, never a popular agency in the south due to its poor human rights record, initiated a shoot-to-kill policy under the guise of Thaksin's 2003 "war on drugs". During this campaign the police executed many former insurgent operatives who had become government informers, depriving the security services of their "eyes and ears" on the ground.

When major violence erupted in January 2004, the Thaksin administration could no longer ignore the problem and immediately adopted a hardline military-security response. Bangkok declared martial law in the south, and dispatched 10,000 soldiers to join the 20,000 already stationed there. During 2004 the government's heavy-handed response resulted in two major atrocities. On Apr. 28, a group of young militants armed with machetes attacked police and army posts in Pattani, and then took refuge in the Krue Se mosque. The army stormed the religious sanctuary, gunning down all 31 militants. By the end of the day, 108 militants and five security personnel lay dead. The second incident took place on Oct. 25 in the town of Tak Bai, Narathiwat Province. Soldiers opened fire on protestors who had surrounded a local police station and then herded hundreds of them into cramped army trucks for transportation to an army camp five hours drive away. During that journey 78 males suffocated to death. Government commissions investigated the Krue Se and Tak Bai incidents and concluded that excessive force had been used, and that those responsible should be brought to justice. However, to date, no one has been charged, and the commander of the Tak Bai operation was moved out of the area and promoted.

Other state responses also helped fuel separatist sentiment. In February 2005 the government announced that the south would be divided into red, yellow, and green zones; red zones contained villages deemed to be supporting the insurgents and would be denied government funding.¹² This policy was widely condemned. In July 2005,

following a series of bombings in Yala, the government replaced martial law with an Emergency Decree. This new measure moved decision-making away from military commanders to the prime minister, giving the security services immunity from prosecution the power to search and make arrests without warrants and to hold suspects for seven days without charge. The new measure was perceived in the south as handing the security forces a license to kill. Inter-agency rivalry during this period, especially between the army and police, rendered state responses ineffective.

Not all state responses under Thaksin were as heavy-handed. In March 2005, in response to domestic and international pressure following the Tak Bai Incident, Thaksin appointed a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The NRC, composed of security practitioners, politicians, and community and religious leaders, delivered its report in June 2006 after conducting extensive consultations in the three southern provinces. Its recommendations included, *inter alia*, the need to right past injustices, encourage greater participation by Malay-Muslims in decision-making bodies, and allow the use of the local dialect as a working language by government officials. By this point, however, Thaksin was preoccupied with the political crisis that eventually led to his ouster, and basically ignored the report's recommendations. In another attempt to achieve peace, the Thaksin government gave the nod to secret talks with the exiled leaders of separatist organizations that had been active from the 1960s until the late 1980s, such as the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), and Bersatu. The talks, which took place in Langkawi, Malaysia in 2005-2006 and were brokered by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, produced a vague plan of action. What was clear to several analysts then, however, and something that the Thai security forces now accept, is that the leaders of these exiled groups have absolutely no influence or control over militants on the ground. As such, the talks were a failure.

The Thaksin government's heavy-handed response to the violence not only exacerbated separatist sentiment, but also strained relations with Thailand's Muslim-majority neighbors, especially Malaysia. In late 2004 Bangkok incensed Kuala Lumpur with unfounded allegations that Muslim-Malay militants had established training camps in Kelantan State across the border. Moreover, human rights abuses perpetrated by the Thai security forces hampered security cooperation between the two countries and aroused sympathy among Malays, particularly those living in the country's northern states.

State Responses Post-Sept. 19, 2006

On Sept. 19, 2006, the head of the armed forces, General Sonthi Boonyaratkin, ousted the Thaksin government in a bloodless coup. The armed forces established the Council for National Security (CNS) and appointed a former general, Surayud Chulanont, as interim prime minister. The CNS promised fresh elections within the year. A major change of policy was expected, as Sonthi is a practicing Muslim and had differed with Thaksin over the need to hold talks with the insurgents. Moreover, both Sonthi and Surayud were Special Forces operatives, and had participated in counter-insurgency operations against the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) during the Cold War. As such, both men understand how the Thai armed forces had framed a successful counter-insurgency strategy in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Surayud government made resolving the problem in the south a priority, and took a number of important steps toward that end in the wake of the coup. Surayud adopted a more conciliatory tone than his predecessor, and promised to establish a constructive dialogue with “all concerned parties.” The prime minister said he would use the recommendations made by the NRC as “guideposts,” patch up relations with Malaysia, and even consider the partial implementation of Sharia law in the south.¹³ Surayud also recognized the importance of improving governance, socio-economic development, and educational standards in the south. On his first visit to the south, Surayud took the symbolically important step of apologizing for the excesses of the previous government, including the Tak Bai Incident.¹⁴ Soon afterwards, the government dropped all remaining charges against the Tak Bai protestors. Surayud also promised to make Thai officials more accountable for their actions, and investigate past abuses.

In terms of economic development, the new government has tried to kick-start the economy by designating the three southern provinces (plus Satun and Songkla) as a special economic zone, with tax incentives for those willing to invest in the area. The government also announced plans to revive the 1993 Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle which covers all five provinces. In a bid to improve educational standards, the Surayud government plans to increase the number of scholarships available for Malay-Muslims to attend university. How effective these initiatives will be remains open to question. As long as the violence continues, businessmen are unlikely to perceive the south as a hospitable investment environment. And the university scholarship program is unlikely to raise educational standards significantly when the real problem lies in the provision of primary and secondary education.

Since the coup the new government has made significant progress in mending ties with neighboring countries, especially Malaysia. Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi has praised Surayud’s “more diplomatic” approach to the restive south.¹⁵ On the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in January 2007 the two leaders agreed to reconvene annual talks and to push forward with the Joint Development Strategy, which is designed to foster economic integration between Thailand’s southern provinces and Malaysia’s northern states. When Surayud visited Jakarta in November 2006 he praised the peace process in Aceh as a model Thailand should emulate.

As mentioned above, both Sonthi and Surayud are veterans of the campaign against the CPT, and after the coup, some of the counter-insurgency structures adopted were employed during that era. This includes re-establishing the SBPAC and CMP-43. However, when the SBPAC was formally stood up on Jan. 3, 2007, bureaucratic inertia and budgetary issues left it understaffed and not fully operational. In an attempt to stamp out inter-agency rivalry and improve command and control, the CNS reinvigorated and increased the powers of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), an organization established in the late 1960s to better manage and coordinate Thailand’s counter-insurgency campaign against the CPT. ISOC’s immediate task is to resolve inter-agency rivalry in the south. The government has also resurrected the use in the south of Rangers, locally recruited militias whose job it is to protect townships and combat insurgents.

It was hoped that the Surayud government’s change of tone, emphasis on national reconciliation, and adoption of new strategies would result in decreasing levels of violence in the south. In actual fact, however, post-coup the number of assassinations,

bombings, and arson attacks increased dramatically. In November 2006, for example, there were 122 assassinations or attempted assassinations (80 people were murdered), up from 81 attacks in October, 64 in September, and 59 in August.¹⁶ Daily assassinations, bombings, and arson attacks have continued into 2007.

Several factors explain the increase in post-coup violence. First, the insurgents are seeking to discredit the conciliatory policies of the new government. Second, violent attacks are aimed at intimidating the population into non-cooperation with the Thai authorities. Third, the insurgents are sending a message to Bangkok that they do not care which group of “infidels” are in power, their goal remains the same: secession. Fourth, the escalation of attacks also reflects the insurgents’ growing confidence, numbers, and sophistication.

Although the Surayud government has offered to talk with the insurgents, this offer has been rebuffed. From the point of view of the insurgents, the campaign of violence is going well, and the security authorities have failed to make serious inroads against them. There is simply no incentive to engage in talks with the government. Moreover, the insurgents suspect that the government’s offer is simply a ruse to bring their leaders out into the open, after which they will be targeted for assassination.

Alternative Futures

With the new policies in place, the Thai government has confidently asserted that the level of violence in the south will return to pre-2004 levels during the course of 2007. Defense Minister Boonrawd Somthat has forecast that the security situation in the three restive provinces will improve dramatically by mid-2007, while Interior Minister Aree Wongsearayana made the astonishing prediction in late January 2007 that the violence would be contained within a month.¹⁷ Few observers in Thailand share this optimism, with most believing that the level of violence will actually escalate during 2007 for reasons outlined earlier. One NGO consultant with extensive experience in the south has predicted widespread communal and sectarian violence by midyear.¹⁸

The general consensus of opinion among those who follow events in the south is that 2007 is the key year in terms of success or failure for the Surayud government. According to RTA estimates, less than two percent of Malay-Muslims are actively involved in the violence; the other 98 percent of the population, while they may have grievances with the Thai authorities, do not support violent measures.¹⁹ The aim of the Surayud government is to win the hearts and minds of this 98 percent during the course of 2007 through improved levels of governance, righting past injustices, and initiating socio-economic development projects. However, the goal of the insurgents is essentially the same: to win over the majority of the population, partly through fear and intimidation, and partly by demonstrating that the “infidels” in Bangkok are anti-Muslim and do not have the interests of the Malay-Muslims at heart.

The fear among some observers in Thailand is that the longer the violence continues, frustration levels among the security forces will rise, and the temptation to lash out will become uncontrollable, possibly resulting in serious human rights abuses of the kind which occurred at Tak Bai. The reimposition of heavy-handed tactics by the Thai security services will reinforce the insurgents’ claim that Bangkok is fundamentally anti-Muslim. Moreover, by further alienating Malay-Muslims, more recruits will be attracted to the separatists’ cause. For these reasons, therefore, it is likely that the insurgents will seek to provoke the security services in 2007.

To date, the political elite in Bangkok has rejected the idea of autonomy for the south as simply the first step toward outright independence. If the Thai authorities had considered granting genuine autonomy to the three southern provinces in 2004, or arguably even earlier, an escalation in violence might have been avoided. If, however, the violence continues to escalate, as seems likely, by the time the Thai authorities are willing to consider *genuine* autonomy, perhaps akin to Aceh, the insurgents will settle for nothing less than full independence. Given that Bangkok has absolutely ruled out the idea of secession, unless the central government can win the hearts and minds of Malay-Muslims while striking decisive blows against the insurgents, separatist violence will continue indefinitely.

Implications for the United States

The ongoing insurgency in southern Thailand has important implications for the United States as Washington has close defense, security, and economic ties with Bangkok, and Thailand is arguably America's most important partner in mainland Southeast Asia. The United States has obviously been concerned with the escalation of violence in the south since January 2004, and with the implications for Thailand's stability, its relations with neighboring countries, and the "war on terror." America was critical of the Thaksin government's heavy handed response to the violence during 2004-2006, noting that members of the security services had committed "serious human rights abuses."²⁰ In 2005 the United States used stronger language, identifying arbitrary and unlawful killings by both the security forces and insurgents, torture and excessive use of force by police, and impunity for human rights abusers.²¹ Although Washington was concerned by the September coup and called for the quick restoration of full democracy in Thailand, it has welcomed the Surayud government's more conciliatory tone and its emphasis on improving governance in the south.

The United States acknowledges that there is no evidence of linkages between the insurgent groups and transnational terrorist groups.²² It shares the concern of the Thai security forces, however, that the longer the violence continues, the greater the likelihood that groups such as Al Qaeda or JI will graft themselves onto the situation and southern Thailand will become part of the global jihadist movement. Such a development would be a severe setback for America's global counter-terrorism efforts. Washington was also perturbed by the deterioration in Thailand's relations with Malaysia under Thaksin, and obviously welcomes improved ties between two of its most important friends in the region.

The United States is somewhat constrained in its ability to assist Thailand. Bangkok would undoubtedly reject any offer of U.S. Special Forces advisers on the ground, such as there are in Mindanao in the Philippines, for fear of inflaming the situation. A widespread conspiracy theory in the south is that the United States is orchestrating the violence as a pretext to military intervention; the presence of U.S. troops would simply reinforce that conspiracy theory. The United States should encourage Bangkok to improve good governance in the south and pass on counter-insurgency lessons learned from its experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, post-coup the United States was forced to suspend some military aid to Thailand, including counter-terrorism aid, because the armed forces had ousted a democratically elected government in September 2006. A return to full democracy in Thailand will, therefore, expedite U.S.-Thai counter-insurgency cooperation.

Notes

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<http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370241>

¹ For a good history of the partition of the Pattani Kingdom see “Ethnicity, Islam and Irredentism” in Clive Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (London and New York: Taurus Academic Studies, 1996).

² Joseph Liow, “International Jihad and Muslim Radicalism in Thailand? Toward an Alternative Interpretation,” *Asia Policy*, No. 2 (July 2006), p. 100.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴ Zachary Abuza, *A Conspiracy of Silence: The Insurgency in Southern Thailand* (forthcoming, 2007).

⁵ For more on these and other groups see Zachary Abuza, “A Breakdown of Southern Thailand’s Insurgent Groups,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 4, Issue 17 (September 8, 2006)

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?search=1&articleid=2370121>

⁶ Interview with Royal Thai Army, Bangkok, December 2006.

⁷ Interview with Dr. Zachary Abuza, Bangkok, December 2006.

⁸ “Groping for south plans”, *Bangkok Post*, January 30, 2007.

⁹ “Surayud plays down Pattani state rumour,” *Bangkok Post*, December 13, 2006.

¹⁰ Interview in Bangkok with Royal Thai Army, December 2006.

¹¹ “Bangkok blast suspect ‘linked to attacks in the south,’” *Straits Times*, February 3, 2007.

¹² During the 1970s and 1980s the government had divided the south into colored zones also: red, pink, and white. Red zones were also deemed to be hotspots in the insurgency, but in contrast to Thaksin’s policy, the red zones were given priority for economic development funds.

¹³ “Thai PM open to syariah law in restive south,” *Straits Times*, November 9, 2006.

¹⁴ “PM apologizes to the south,” *Bangkok Post*, November 3, 2006.

¹⁵ “Malay PM says Surayud on right track in south,” *Bangkok Post*, December 12, 2006.

¹⁶ Figures provided by Anthony Davies, *Jane’s* correspondent, Bangkok, January 2006.

¹⁷ See “Boonrawd says southern situation to improve in six months,” *The Nation*, January 9, 2007 and “Bomb injures three Pattani policemen,” *The Nation*, January 29, 2007.

¹⁸ Interview with Human Rights Watch consultant, Bangkok, December 2006.

¹⁹ Interview with Royal Thai Army, Bangkok, December 2006.

²⁰ “Thailand, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2004,” released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 28, 2005

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41661.htm>

²¹ “Thailand, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005,” released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, March 8, 2006 <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61628.htm>

²² United States Department of State, Office of the Coordination for Counter-Terrorism, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2005,” April 2006 <http://state.gov/documents/organization/65462.pdf>, p. 82.