Bombings Near Outrigger Bali Construction Site

The triple suicide bombings at Kuta and Jimbaran on the island of Bali, Indonesia, just one week ago, on October 1, are a terrible reminder that terrorists often target resort areas to achieve the most extensive physical and psychological damage. With the Outrigger Bali Legian Beach under construction just north of Kuta, the bombings also brought Outrigger Hotels & Resorts almost up to the front line of one of the battlefields in the global war on terrorism.

According to the many news reports summarized online in Wikipedia, the first two explosions occurred at 6:50 p.m. local time near a food court in Jimbaran, not far from the Four Seasons Hotel. The third blast went off at 7:00 p.m. in Rawja's Restaurant in Kuta Square, less than six miles (10 km) away. Nineteen innocent people, plus the three suicide bombers lost their lives and over 130 were injured, many seriously. NEWS.com.au reported that hospitals and eyewitnesses reported massive head, abdominal, and chest wounds caused by shrapnel. At press time, those reported killed included 12 Indonesians, four Australians, two Americans, and one Japanese.

Evidence indicates that the attacks were in some ways similar to but also different from the October 12, 2002, nightclub bombings in Bali that took the lives of over 200, many of them Australian. The current blasts came during a school holiday for some Australian states and just two days before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Many believe last week’s Bali bombings were planned by the active terrorist network, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an organization associated with al-Qaida. JI is also linked to the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2003 Jakarta Marriott Hotel bombing, and the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing.

The Outrigger Bali is under construction at Legian Beach, approximately three miles (five km) from Kuta. Currently, the four-story building is almost framed out, and the project is on target to open in December 2006. The Outrigger Bali will offer 112 self-contained, air-conditioned, condominium-style apartments and penthouses with private balconies right on beautiful Legian Beach.

It is too early to tell what impact the recent bombings will have on Bali. Our Outrigger Bali developer partner, Mark Wiggins, reported to Dave Lawrence, Managing Director – Oceania, that his staff has contacted all purchasers to apprise them of what is happening. However, none of them have canceled their contracts. Dave added, “Surprisingly, they have sold four units since Saturday’s bombings.”

Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) Vice President – Development, Peter Semeone, has been in Kuta since October 2 and reported to eTurboNews, “Activity by tourists and locals continues. Those that have chosen to stay in Bali are continuing to enjoy their holidays. ... As you walk around the streets of Jimbaran and Kuta, one would almost think that nothing has happened here. People are still in restaurants, walking around and shopping, enjoying the beach, and enjoying their holiday. The Balinese temple festival of Galunggag starts on October 5 as planned. Families all over Bali are preparing for this colorful Hindu festival as usual.”

Others are less optimistic. As reported by the New York Times, Indonesia’s Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Aburizal Bakrie, predicts a 20 percent decline in tourist arrivals for the rest of the year.
Australian Prime Minister John Howard said, “I see [the Bali bombings] very much as part of an ongoing attempt by terrorists to undermine democratic Indonesia.” New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said such “callous and cold-blooded” acts are “an affront to humanity.”

At this point, Bali’s hotels, restaurants, and other attractions frequented by tourists are dramatically shifting their security focus and procedures. The 2002 Bali nightclub, 2003 Marriott, and 2004 Australian Embassy blasts were all caused by car bombs. Accordingly, establishments have taken many measures to screen vehicles allowed close to buildings.

By contrast, there is evidence that last week’s Bali bombings, like the recent London transit attacks, were caused by suicide bombers carrying explosives in backpacks. Preventing follow-up backpack bombings will take a whole new level of security with many implications not only for Bali, but for Travel & Tourism all around the world.

Every member of our ‘ohana needs to understand the issues and be constantly vigilant during these dangerous and turbulent times.