

Hotels step up security following Jakarta bombings

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Hotels in Singapore are stepping up vigilance following the blasts in Jakarta on Friday morning.

For security reasons, they are not able to go into the specific measures. But a security consultant told Channel NewsAsia that travellers can expect additional checks on their baggage, identities and movements at hotels.

Major hotels said they have increased their levels of security and are working closely with Singapore authorities.

Danny Chan, director of global risk assessment at iJet, said: "Looking at what happened, there's a strong possibility where the terrorists or the perpetrators actually checked in as guests. So obviously, that element needs to be looked at.

"Check extensively the luggage that has been brought into the hotel and not just do a quick glance over. Some hotels in Singapore merely use a metal detector which is quite inadequate. I think explosives vapour detection devices or EVD have to be looked at."

Guests can also expect increased vigilance from hotel staff who will monitor and report those taking pictures in and outside the hotel.

Singapore's Home Affairs Ministry said there is currently no information of any threat to Singapore, but it is in contact with the Indonesian authorities on the Jakarta bombings and the likely perpetrators.

Nonetheless, experts said the threats to Singapore hotels are very real.

Associate Professor **Kumar Ramakrishna**, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said: "The attacks in Jakarta this morning basically drive home the point that although those two hotels, the Ritz-Carlton and the Marriott, were relatively well-protected... a militant network that's really determined and resourceful may succeed."

In general, experts said Singapore hotels spend between 5 and 15 per cent of their annual budget implementing security measures. But these are mostly global brand names.

"The hospitality industry is hit with a double whammy as there's a drop in the number of guests staying with them and there's now an increase in costs, so that's something to be managed," said Mr Chan.

"I think when it comes down to it, they have to understand that security is no longer a business advantage, but a necessity. In the long run, if you want to protect your hotel and your branding, it's of paramount importance that you put more resources in security."

The challenge now is to get local hotels to step up security measures, especially when more businesses opt for cheaper accommodation due to corporate budget cuts.