

## Asean armies urged to boost collective response to threats



A Talon Unmanned Ground Vehicle removing a suspicious bag during a demonstration by the SAF's CBRE Defence Group at the workshop. PHOTO: MINDEF

🕒 PUBLISHED JUL 6, 2018, 5:00 AM SGT

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Asean armies must continue to find new ways to enhance their collective response to terror and chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) threats, said Singapore's Chief of Army Goh Si Hou at an inaugural Asean workshop on information sharing.

Brigadier-General Goh stressed in his speech that cooperation between Asean armies is important to combat the threat of terrorism, and that the resilience, response and recovery framework could be used to strengthen collective efforts in combating terrorism and CBR threats in the region.

He was speaking at the opening ceremony of the Asean Armies Information Sharing Workshop on Wednesday, attended by over 100 delegates. They included Asean army intelligence chiefs, military delegates, experts on terrorism and CBR threats, and Home Team officers. The workshop, which took place from Tuesday to yesterday, consisted of two plenary sessions and a roundtable discussion.

At the first plenary session, the Commanding General of the Philippine Army, Lieutenant-General Rolando Joselito Delizo Bautista, provided a first-hand account of the lessons learnt by the Philippine army in the Marawi conflict.

Dr Jolene Jerard of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies and Dr Loke Weng Keong of the DSO National Laboratories highlighted recent trends in terrorism and emerging CBR threats in the region at the second plenary session.

And during the roundtable discussion, Asean army intelligence chiefs shared how they are committed to regional peace, security and stability.

Said Singapore's Assistant Chief of General Staff (Intelligence), Colonel Edward Chen: "The discussions were rich and meaningful, paving the way for further cooperation in the region."

Delegates also witnessed a simulation of terrorist attacks, with the Singapore Armed Forces demonstrating its counter-terrorism, and chemical, biological, radiological and explosives (CBRE) capabilities, involving segments from the CBRE Defence Group, Special Operations Task Force and Medical Response Force.

The workshop is one of the key initiatives declared at the 18th Asean Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting last year. It serves as a platform for Asean armies to share information and engender practical cooperation in areas of common interests.

Singapore's chairmanship of the Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting aims to promote regional counter-terrorism collaboration and build collective defence capabilities against CBR threats in the region.

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