

WEAK, THEREFORE VIOLENT: THE MUJAHIDIN OF WESTERN INDONESIA

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I. INTRODUCTION

In December 2012, about a dozen men met in Bandung, West Java and proclaimed themselves Mujahidin of Western Indonesia (Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, MIB). Five months, ten robberies and one murder later, they were a spent force – not that they had been much of a force to begin with. The short life of MIB illustrates the continuing decline of Indonesia's extremists. It also shows, however, how leaders of weak groups with no hope of domestic, let alone international clout, have a need to plan acts of violence to keep their followers together and establish their own legitimacy. This motivation explains the proliferation of would-be jihadi groups and terrorist plots in Indonesia at a time when capacity may be at an all-time low. The apparently inexhaustible supply of new recruits also underscores the importance – and highlights the absence – of an effective counter-radicalisation program.

The failure of most plots to materialise and the criminal aspects of those that do – bank robberies, assaults on police – underscore how much “terrorism” in Indonesia looks more and more like ordinary crime, even if motivated by jihadist ideology. Any large-scale attack along the lines of those on Kenya's Westgate Mall, Algeria's In Amenas oilfields or India's Taj Mahal Hotel is almost unthinkable in Indonesia today. Not only are there no unstable or unfriendly neighboring states from which such an operation could be launched, but no one is even thinking on that scale. The focus remains very much on domestic targets and on operations that do not require resources much beyond one's own cell. To some degree this may be a question of ideological orientation, but it is also a lack of training and a (fortunate) failure of imagination.

MIB leaders did think vaguely about creating an Islamic state, but their immediate operational ambitions were not very high. They wanted to raise funds through robberies, buy guns and get military training. They saw Poso in central Sulawesi as the nucleus of the Indonesian jihadi movement, and their own role as trying to protect it by creating diversionary movements on Java. As the police dragnet closed in, revenge attacks on police became a higher priority.

As with many other jihadi groups operating in Indonesia today, MIB had no real in-house religious expertise. It also had neither the capacity nor the time for lengthy indoctrination of members, so it effectively outsourced ideological instruction to extremist preachers outside its own ranks. This meant constant interaction with other groups – which was good for recruitment, but probably bad for security.

In a way, all this is good news for Indonesia and the region more broadly because it suggests that the violent extremists operating today are not the threat they once were. But it is not just the ease of recruitment that is a source of concern. It is the resilience of networks that keep coming back in new forms and may endure long enough to provide the seeds of a more dangerous movement if or when domestic or international circumstances change - for example, when a few Indonesian jihadis start coming back from Syria. Marriage and kinship ties are still important in cementing those networks, but so are prisons, business partnerships, disaster relief efforts, and schools.

Sleeper cells are a problem: one man in a Makassar-based cell, who had fought in Poso at the height of the communal conflict there in 2000-2001, had been inactive for seven years when he was effectively summoned back to active jihad duty by the man who had been his commander.

Police tactics need to be examined as well. The tactics that were appropriate in the face of al-Qaeda-style bombings ten years ago probably need to change to take the new “terrorist-as-petty-criminal” phenomenon into account. Anger at the police over arrests and killings of family members has created a new generation of younger brothers and sons – and probably sisters and daughters, though harder to tell – who want revenge. When that motivation is combined with ongoing extremist preaching and radical recruitment, it becomes another problem waiting in the wings.

That said, the low-tech, low-competence, low-casualty nature of terrorism in Indonesia today means that more than ever that it should remain a matter for law enforcement, not military action. A rash of drive-by shootings of police in July and August led to calls for the military to take a larger role, but there are no strong grounds for altering current arrangements. It is the police that have the institutional knowledge, the experience and the intelligence to be able to deal with the problem effectively. The focus now should be on reducing the number of deaths in police operations.

II. ABU UMAR AND MIB'S ANTECEDENTS

Mujahidin Indonesia Barat was a new group with a long history. Its roots go back to Darul Islam (DI), the venerable 65-year old organisation that started out as an armed guerrilla group against the Dutch at the time of Indonesia's struggle for independence and turned into a clandestine organisation to establish an Islamic state.¹ More immediately, it emerged from the disarray in one Jakarta-based DI faction following the July 2011 arrest of its leader, Muhammad Ichwan, better known as Abu Umar. The story of MIB is a case study in what happens when a top leader and many of those around him are removed in one blow, and those who are left have to scramble to keep the group together. MIB was the fourth group to emerge from the remnants of Abu Umar's network, and it will not be the last. To understand MIB and its alliances, it is important to understand who Abu Umar is and where he fits within Indonesian jihadism.

A. *Abu Umar: Shaped by Communal Conflict*

Abu Umar came of age as a *mujahid* when Indonesia's communal conflicts were at their height, in the immediate aftermath of the end of President Soeharto's three-decade rule. In 1990, as a teenager, he was inducted into DI and became a member of its Jakarta command. He rose in the ranks and in 1997 was sent for training to a DI camp on the grounds of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's Camp Abu Bakar in the Philippines. The aim was to help the MILF and, in the process, get combat experience for eventually taking on the Indonesian state. Two years later, Soeharto was gone and fighting between Christians and Muslims had erupted in Ambon, in central Maluku. Angered by the DI leadership's reluctance to send fighters to help the Muslim side, he broke away and together with other DI dissidents, formed the Abu Bakar Battalion, with the express purpose of sending *mujahidin* to Ambon.²

The group robbed a few banks for funds and in March 2000, attacked and nearly killed a senior member of parliament.³ Rumors began to circulate that one man involved in the attack was linked to an army intelligence officer. Suspicions and recrimination led the group to split in two, with Abu Umar and other Mindanao alumni leaving for Ambon where they joined a DI faction under the leadership of an Afghan veteran named Taufiqurrahman alias Akram and began working closely with the Islamic charity KOMPAK, led by Abdullah Sunata.⁴ Both Akram and Sunata believed that communal conflict could spark a larger conflagration that would ultimately produce an Islamic state.

In January 2000, Akram and a few others threw a Molotov cocktail at a mosque near the pal-

1 For a detailed history of Darul Islam, see Solahudin, *The Roots of Terrorism in Indonesia*, Sydney, August 2013.

2 According to Abu Umar, DI leaders reasoned that because the Muslims in Ambon were not fighting to establish an Islamic state but only engaged in a local clash, there was no reason to help them. See witness testimony of Muhammad Ichwan alias Abu Umar in the case dossier of Rian Adi Wijaya, 12 January 2012.

3 This was Matori Abdul Djalil, then the deputy head of parliament from the PKB party. Abu Umar's group reportedly was led to believe that Matori was a Communist agent.

4 In 1987, in the DI-JI camp on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, Akram was known as Shamsuddin. He was in the same batch as Mukhlas, the Bali bomber.

ace (*keraton*) in Yogyakarta, central Java and placed a bomb there that failed to go off. They apparently hoped the attack would be attributed to Christians and set off more communal violence.⁵ The mosque suffered only minor damage, but for years, no one knew who was responsible, and other more dramatic acts of terrorism by JI and others ensured the Yogyakarta incident, minor in the overall scope of things, would be forgotten.⁶

At the end of 2000, Abu Umar followed a friend to Makassar, then to East Kalimantan where he settled first in Nunukan, just across the water from the town of Tawao in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah, then in Pulau Sebatik, an island off the Borneo coast divided in half between Malaysia and Indonesia. From here he helped develop DI networks in Sabah and taught school. DI's Mindanao training had been suspended for a few years when all attention was focused on getting fighters to Ambon and Poso. But in 2003, two men who had been involved in the 2002 Bali bombing, Dulmatin and Umar Patek, fled to Mindanao with DI's help and helped revive the training program. Abu Umar took on a key role of assisting Indonesians transit through Malaysia to Zamboanga and central Mindanao.

In June 2005, police finally caught up with Akram and arrested him in Solo for the mosque attack. Abu Umar left Pulau Sebatik to return to Jakarta a month later. Abu Umar himself says that his position became unsafe after Malaysian police arrested several Indonesians from KOMPAK who were trying to get to Mindanao and may have been in contact.⁷ But Akram's arrest may also have been a deciding factor.⁸

At the time Abu Umar returned to Jakarta, the alliance between DI and KOMPAK was at its height. The two groups collaborated closely during the conflicts in Ambon and Poso. Abu Umar had joined Abdullah Sunata in Ambon, and after moving to East Kalimantan, made several visits to Kayamanya, Poso, where KOMPAK's local fighters were based. He became particularly close to a trio of brothers there: Emil Salim, Erwin (aka Jodi) and Rusli (aka Uci) Mardani. Erwin some years earlier had married into a blue-blood DI family from West Java, cementing the alliance still further.

On 16 May 2005, just before Abu Umar's return to Java, Jodi and Uci, together with several DI members, had taken part in a KOMPAK-led attack on a police post in Loki, West Ceram, Maluku in which five paramilitary police and their cook were killed. DI lost one man, Ikhlas, who had been a friend of Abu Umar's in Ambon. Several of the attackers were captured, and both Jodi and Uci became fugitives. Uci fled back to Kayamanya, but he and Jodi continued to be active.

Abu Umar thus arrived in Jakarta in the midst of arrests and high tension. It was a time to lie low and focus on rebuilding. In addition to old friends from the days of the Abu Bakar Battalion, he worked closely with a DI cell in North Jakarta, led by a man named Budiman – whose wife was the sister of Erwin Mardani's bride from the blue-blood DI family. Abu Umar took charge of military affairs, leaving Budiman in overall charge of a loose structure covering the greater Jakarta area.

Budiman was very conscious of the fact that his group lacked religious expertise. He and Abu Umar encouraged their members to attend religious lectures and discussions led by leading salafi jihadi scholars. These included Halawi Makmun, head of the Islamic law division of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), the above-ground advocacy organisation then headed by

5 They also saw the mosque a *mesjid dhiror*, legitimate to attack because used for un-Islamic purposes.

6 These included the December 2000 Christmas Eve bombings, the October 2002 Bali bombings, the December 2002 Laskar Jundullah bombings of a McDonald's restaurant and an auto showroom in Makassar and Noordin Top's first attack on the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta in 2003.

7 Trial dossier of Muhammad Ichwan alias Zulfikar Alias Abu Umar, West Jakarta District Court, May 2012. Malaysian police arrested two Indonesians from KOMPAK in July 2005 and a larger group of DI members in 2006.

8 According to one account, Abu Umar's decision to return to Java was motivated in part by a perceived need to prevent Akram's unpredictable brother, a Wonosobo-based tobacco merchant with connections in the Philippines, from taking his place.

Abu Bakar Ba'asyir; Farid Okbah, an ex-JI member and Afghan veteran who was virulently anti-Shi'a; and Aman Abdurrahman, who, after his arrest in 2004 led discussions by speaker phone from prison. Participation in these discussions gradually drew Abu Umar's network into Aman Abdurrahman's circle.

Up until this point, the DI factions associated with Abu Umar were not involved in al-Qaeda style attacks aimed at mass killing of civilians. They were radicalised by domestic conflicts, not the global jihad, and saw Christian-Muslim clashes as not only justifying the need for an Islamic state but also helping to provide the spark to bring it about. For the six years of his tenure in Jakarta, from 2005 to 2011, Abu Umar was not involved in anything that could be called terrorism. Military training, acquisition of weapons, recruiting and indoctrination, yes, but not attacks.

B. Shootout in Poso, Jakarta Arrests and New DI Cells

In early 2007, jihadi attention shifted back to Poso as police operations against a small group of suspected terrorists associated with JI went into full gear. When it was clear that the men in question would not surrender and the police would use force to capture them, many men from other groups decided to come to their aid – including the Makassar branch of DI. The climax came on 22 January, when police entered the Poso neighborhood that had become the militant base. One of the jihadis shot and killed the first officer to walk in. Other paramilitary police opened fire and by the end of the day, fourteen fighters were dead, most of them shot while fleeing, and dozens more arrested.

Working together on that day to fend off the police were Uci – one of the three brothers who had become friendly with Abu Umar – and the operational head of DI-Makassar, known as Autad Rawa and a host of other aliases.⁹ When the clash was over, Autad Rawa made his way back to Makassar and Uci fled to Jakarta where he joined Budiman's cell in North Jakarta.

In October 2008, police finally found and arrested Uci in Plumpang, Jakarta as he was helping Abu Umar arrange for arms to be brought in from Makassar.¹⁰ They also arrested Budiman, who died a few days later of natural causes, and three others.¹¹ With Budiman gone, Abu Umar took over full leadership of the Jakarta network and began putting in place a more organised cell structure in North and West Jakarta.

Two of those cells were in Cengkareng, near the Jakarta international airport, and Ciledug, a town further south. These were to become the core of MIB. By early 2009, the membership was as follows:

Cengkareng:

- Ahmad Sofian (Sofyan)
- Fauzi alias Ozi, a student at the Saudi-funded Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA) in Jakarta.
- Kodrat alias Polo alias Dede who had been part of Aman Abdurrahman's circle in Cimanggis in 2004.

⁹ He is also known as Abu Autad, Sabar, Udin Bacok and Daeng Koro.

¹⁰ The media, building on an erroneous police statement, reported that he and his friends were planning to blow up a Pertamina depot in Plumpang. There were never any such plans. Uci was eventually sent back to Maluku for trial in connection with the attack on the Brimob post in Loki.

¹¹ The others were Nurhasani alias Hasan, who was also married to a sister of Budiman's wife (thus, three sisters from one DI family were married to three *mujahidin*, Nurhasani and Budiman from DI and Erwin Mardani from KOMPAK); Imam Bashori alias Basar; and Muntasir.

- Arianto alias Togog
- Indra Hermawan alias Kardus
- Boy alias Dayat
- Eko
- Syahid

Ciledug:

- Untung Hidayat alias Abu Roban, originally from Kendal, central Java
- Robhitoh (Robitho, Rabhitoh) Ahmad Faisal alias Boim
- Arifin alias Ipin
- Indra alias Jendol
- Zulfikri alias Kiki
- Wandoyo Fajrudin Yunus alias Salman
- Andre Anggara alias Muchlis alias Agung

Both cells were under the leadership of a man named Jamil alias Abdullah, who reported to Abu Umar, and both met regularly at a small mosque (*mushola*) called al-Jihad in Cengkareng. In late 2009, however, major tensions arose between Jamil and Abu Umar. Jamil had heard about the plans for the Aceh training camp that was then in formation and wanted to join. Abu Umar forbade it. He already had his own training program in Sulawesi that he ran jointly with Autad Rawa in Makassar and did not need to join anyone else's. Jamil argued that the leaders of the Aceh program wanted to more than just military training: they wanted to form an Islamic government and begin armed jihad operations. For the militants of Cengkareng and Ciledug, Abu Umar's focus on military preparation alone was a little too tame.

The result was that the two cells broke away, and Jamil began regular communications with KOMPAK leader Abdullah Sunata about getting his members up to the camp. In early 2010, several members made their way to Stabat, Medan, on the border with Aceh, where they were put up by a former JI member from West Java and told to wait for further word on how to get to the camp. Also in Stabat waiting for the green light to Aceh were several would-be *mujahidin* from Lampung.

The word never came, because police discovered the camp and broke it up in February. The disappointed DI members returned to Jakarta and shortly afterwards, expelled Jamil. In his place, they selected Ciledug cell member Abu Roban as leader. Even with Jamil gone, they did not immediately go back to Abu Umar. Instead, Fauzi, known as "Ustad" (teacher) for his religious scholarship, helped steer them toward a group linked to radical preacher Aman Abdu-rrahman, even though Aman himself had been arrested for his role in raising funds for Aceh.¹²

The new group also failed to provide enough action, so sometime in late 2010 or early 2011, hearing that Abu Umar was at last thinking of planning some targeted assassinations (*ightiyalat*) against police and Shi'a, Fauzi and Abu Roban brought the old cells back into the fold. Shortly thereafter, in February 2011, Fauzi left for Palopo, South Sulawesi to take part in one of Abu Umar's training programs.

Abu Umar's assassination plans never reached fruition because he and about a dozen of his men were arrested in July 2011, in connection with an operation to bring in arms from Mindanao. His arrest led members of the Cengkareng and Ciledug cells to take divergent paths. One

¹² It was Aman's second arrest. In March 2004, a group of his followers learning how to make bombs accidentally blew the roof off a house in Cimanggis, Depok, outside Jakarta. The explosion led to the arrest of several men, including Aman.

group, mostly from Ciledug, decided to flee to Makassar and join forces with Autad Rawa's group; Ahmad Sofian, from Cengkareng, decided to strike out on his own.

Two aspects of Indonesian jihadism are worth noting here. First, organisational crossovers are the rule more than the exception. If in the past, induction into an organisation effectively meant lifetime membership and leaving was rare, today individuals seem to go in and out of organisations with little stigma attached to leaving and little difficulty encountered in going back. The fluidity is a function of lax recruitment and vetting procedures: when anyone can become a member, loyalty to the organisation is much lower.

The second factor is the problem of inaction. More experienced jihadis, like some of the senior JI leaders, recognise that there is no point to conducting attacks on Indonesian soil today. The enemy (the Indonesian state) is too strong, community support too weak and the likelihood of unnecessary Muslim deaths too high. But as Martha Crenshaw writes:

Terrorists are denied the option of passivity. Because action is imperative, leaders must take risks in order to maintain the organization. They must cope with a constant tension between their desire to preserve the organization (since action risks destruction by government forces) and the membership's demand for action. Nor is it easy for terrorist leaders to find a substitute for violence, since many recruits rejected other similarly directed organizations precisely because of their nonviolence.¹³

Members frustrated by the lack of opportunities for jihad within their own organisation will thus look for more militant groups to join.

III. JAKARTA REACHES OUT TO MAKASSAR, SOLO AND POSO

The twelve months after Abu Umar's arrest had jihadi organisations across Indonesia in a state of constant flux. In Jakarta, there was no one of Abu Umar's stature left to succeed him, and members floundered, impatient for action. Poso continued to be a magnet. It was as though the small band of fighters there constituted the embers of a once-passionate jihadi movement that if only properly fanned might once again ignite. All of the various jihadi groups still active – disillusioned JI members, former followers of Noordin Top, ex-combatants in Poso with nothing to do, DI men in Jakarta, JAT members fired up by radical preachers – had similar aims: getting weapons, attacking police and helping Poso. In all of these efforts, the Makassar DI cell was positioned to play a key role.

A. *The Makassar Cell*

The Makassar cell was closely connected to a *pesantren* in Maros, just outside Makassar, led by Ustad Basri, an alumnus of the DI-JI training academy on the Pakistan-Afghan border in the early 1990s. Basri was assisted there by a teacher named Syamsudin, better known as Abu Uswah. During the Poso conflict, the two men had developed close relations both with Abu Umar and with KOMPAK, and all had trained together at a camp in Pandajaya, Pomona Selatan, Poso district.

One of the Pandajaya instructors was Autad Rawa. Originally from Java, he had been one of Abu Umar's protégés who had been sent to Mindanao for training. After the Poso conflict eased, he married a woman from Sulawesi and settled in Maros, becoming the operational leader of the Pandajaya alumni in Sulawesi. As noted, he had taken part in the defense of JI militants in January 2007. The military training program that he and Abu Umar began in Sulawesi later that year

¹³ Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes and Consequences*, London, 2011, p.77.

became another way that Jakarta and Makassar members came to interact. It became another way in which Jakarta and Makassar members came to interact. The trainings were generally conducted once or twice a year for about ten days, involving some 25 to 30 men. The training sites moved around Sulawesi, from Mambi in the west to Enrekang in the south to a place called Turtle Island further to the southeast.

By late 2010, the old Poso jihadi network, dormant since the shootout with police in 2007, had been revived by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's organisation, Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT).¹⁴ It included former members of a variety of militant organisations, including JI and KOMPAK. A man named Santoso, previously part of the JI affiliate in Poso, was put in charge of the military wing, and proceeded to recruit old friends and former prisoners, and begin his own training sessions for militants in the hills outside Poso.

The difference between Abu Umar-Autad Rawa's training courses and Santoso's was that the first remained focused on preparation for some indeterminate future war, where as the latter, like Aceh, were aimed at immediate action – attacking police. By doing so, several objectives were met at once: instilling fear in the enemy, taking revenge, getting guns and giving members a mission. Poso also offered another chance to start the seeds of an *imaroh Islam* or Islamic polity, in the wake of Aceh's failure.

Santoso's operations thus attracted jihadis from outside Poso, and the Makassar cell, as a trained unit with experience in Poso, became the staging ground for sending men on to the Poso "front". A few men from a group in Laweyan, Solo, linked to the late Noordin Top, arrived in November-December 2011 to train with Santoso and help with bomb-making instruction.¹⁵ In early 2012, a few members of the Ciledug and Cengkareng cells arrived in Makassar, both because they felt uneasy in Java after Abu Umar's arrest and because they were determined to come to Santoso's aid. Two men from JAT Bandung, Willem Maksum and Budi alias Angga, arrived in Makassar in March, also interested in joining Santoso.

Discussions in Makassar, however, led the ex-Abu Umar men, led by Abu Roban, and Willem Maksum's group from Bandung to conclude that they would be more useful raising funds and purchasing guns on Java then by joining Santoso in the hills. They thus returned home, having now bonded with Makassar and agreed on collaboration.

Not long afterwards, Santoso, without cutting ties to JAT, moved out on his own, calling his new alliance the Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia (Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, MIT).

B. Ahmad Sofian and the Cileungsi Group

In the meantime, a member of the Cengkareng cell, Ahmad Sofian, had fled to Cileungsi, near Bogor, West Java after the arrest of Abu Umar. He was given a place to stay by a follower of Halawi Makmun, the radical preacher. By late 2011, he and his host had decided to form a new group that they simply called the Cileungsi group, with Sofian as head.¹⁶ They decided to start with assassinations of police, because police were killing and arresting their friends, and bank robberies, because they needed funds. They were also interested in joining the jihad in the Philippines, an aspiration probably inspired by Abu Umar.¹⁷ But first they needed guns. Sofian contacted a friend named Fajar Siddiq from Halawi Makmun's circle to see if he could help.

Fajar, 29, from Tasikmalaya, had links to both Darul Islam and JAT. For high school, he

14 For the details on how this network was revived, see International Crisis Group, "How Indonesian Extremists Regroup", Asia Report No.228, 16 July 2012, p.6.

15 Trial dossier of Wendy Febriangga, West Jakarta District Court, June 2013.

16 Members of the group included Cahyo alias Yoyo, Anwar, Anton, Bram alias Makmur, Udin, Tedi Koswara, Hendra Saputra, Ade and Fahri. Confidential document made available to IPAC, Jakarta, October 2013.

17 Confidential document made available to IPAC, October 2013.

had attended a DI *pesantren*, Nurul Salam, in Ciamis and had a sister in one of the JI-affiliated *pesantren*, al-Muttaqien in Cirebon. He was attracted to JAT after its formation and attended JAT lectures in Jakarta but stopped after the Jakarta leadership was arrested in early 2010 in the aftermath of the Aceh debacle. He then joined his old teacher from Darul Salam, Nurul Haq, in a small DI cell. Nurul Haq had the connections to gun dealers in Bandung, but not directly. He had a friend from JAT-Bandung, Willem Maksum, who knew the dealers.

Thus, in late 2011 when Ahmad Sofian wanted to buy guns, he asked Fajar, Fajar asked Nurul Haq and Nurul Haq asked Willem Maksum, who then placed the order with a gun dealer. JAT was not involved as an organisation, but the men knew each other through JAT activities. Once Sofian's group had their first weapon, they began planning a robbery to raise money. The initial target was a convenience store in Bekasi, and six men from Sofian's group were assigned to do surveillance on it. On 25 March 2012, as the surveillance was underway, they were interrupted by police on patrol from the local station. Sofian's men hacked and bludgeoned the two officers to death, but one of the attackers, Tedi Koswara, was quickly captured. Two others were tracked down in a police operation on 30 March and fatally shot. Initially, the police had no idea that the perpetrators were linked to extremists, but when they searched the house where the two were living, they found materials for making explosives, documents about how to rob a bank and books on jihad.¹⁸ It quickly became a case of terrorism.

Sofian was undeterred by the loss of his men, especially because two members of his group had expressed an interest in becoming martyrs – i.e. suicide bombers.¹⁹ The potential to carry off a spectacular attack thus was still possible. The problem was that his group had no bomb-making capacity and they wanted training. The obvious place to look was Solo, home to many of the more experienced jihadis. As it happened, Sofian had two members who were originally from Solo, Anton and Wahyu Ristanto alias Anwar. Through Anton, a recent graduate of Darusyahada *pesantren* in Boyolali, another JI school, Sofian made contact with Badri Hartono. Badri was a former JI member who led his own extremist group – and who himself had just returned from a training exercise with Santoso in Poso.²⁰

Badri and Sofian discussed joining forces for jihad and assistance to Poso. The joint group would be called Al-Qaidah Indonesia, and Sofian would be *amir* for the Jakarta area. They would build bombs to send to Poso but also undertake actions in Jakarta and Solo to divert police away from Poso and their pursuit of Santoso.²¹

The upshot was that in June 2012, Anton, Anwar and a third member went from Jakarta to Solo to study bomb-making with one of Badri's members, Wendy Febriangga, an ex-JI member. They were not very good students and claimed to know more than their instructor. When Anwar returned to Jakarta, however, and tried to make his first bomb the following September, he ended up blowing himself up and in the process, destroying the group.

18 "Dua Pembacok Polisi Bekasi Ditembak Mati," *vivanews.com*, 30 March 2012.

19 Trial dossier of Ahmad Sofian, West Jakarta District Court, July 2013.

20 Badri Hartono, from Laweyan, Solo, recalls joining JI in 1991, but since it did not exist until 1993, one can assume he joined at its inception, shortly after he graduated from Sebelas Maret University in Solo. In 2000 he went to Ambon to fight for two months with Laskar Jihad. He left JI later the same year, when one of the first big splits occurred in JI, following Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's creation of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). He was close to MMI and went as a volunteer with them to Aceh, after the 2004 tsunami. He also helped out as a disaster relief volunteer after the 2006 earthquake in Yogyakarta. In 2009, he was approached by friends to work with Bagus Budi Pranoto alias Urwah and Noordin Top on a project that became the Jakarta hotel bombings. He helped hide Noordin before the attack as well as some of Noordin's followers afterwards. After lying low for a while after Noordin and Urwah were killed by police, he began in 2011 to help recruit fighters and raise funds for Santoso's group in Poso. After sending two men who were sent back for talking too much and being otherwise undisciplined, he decided to pull a group together that were both more trustworthy (some ex-JI) and had useful skills. He persuaded a friend to teach the group how to make bombs. In February 2012 the whole group went to Poso to join a training exercise with Santoso; there they discussed more Solo-Poso cooperation.

21 Trial dossier of Badri Hartono, West Jakarta District Court, June 2013.

IV. CONSOLIDATION AND DISSOLUTION

Meanwhile, other former members of the Ciledug and Cengkareng cells were making their own short-lived effort at consolidation, trying to make Jakarta and West Java the hub of a new movement with a territorial command structure that resembled some of the DI movements of old. The difference was that they had no effective commanders, no standards for recruitment, poor security, poor training and limited vision.

A. *The Situgintung meeting*

In late July 2012, Abu Roban, ex-Ciledug, and Ust. Fauzi, ex-Cengkareng, invited some 50 men to a meeting in Situgintung, Tangerang with the idea of revitalising the jihadi movement. They included former members of Abu Umar's network, the group around Nurul Haq in Ciamis-Tasikmalaya and the Bandung JAT activists led by Willem Maksum.²²

Ust. Fauzi led the meeting. He spoke of the need for a new jihad organisation that could unite various groups as well as assist Santoso in Poso. There was apparently no discussion of the danger that working together rather than in small separate groups might cause. After all, the disastrous consequences of the police discovery of the Aceh training camp were still being felt by the jihadi movement across the country as each arrest led to new intelligence and further exposure of extremist networks.²³

Kodrat alias Polo, a follower of Aman Abdurrahman, who narrowly escaped arrest in Cimanggis in 2004, was chosen as *amir* of the group by acclamation.²⁴ He reportedly had the charisma but not the brains for good leadership – the strategist of the group was Fauzi. But he set up a rudimentary territorial structure with divisions in Klaten, Ciamis, Garut, Bandung, Bojong (Depok) and Jakarta and appointed separate teams for military training (*asykari*), jihad operations (*amaliyah*), and logistics.²⁵ Willem Maksum was made head for the Bandung area, Nurul Haq for Ciamis-Tasikmalaya, and almost certainly Sofian for Bojong, Depok. Kodrat then exhorted those present to return home and undertake small-scale actions, such as robberies. Any major operations, such as assassinations of officials, would require his approval first.²⁶ The group agreed to look for support for Santoso and to raise funds for their allies in Makassar.

The new group, which apparently never had a name, lasted less than six months. Its dissolution was preceded by a number of calamities. On 12 September, Anwar, Sofian's would-be bomb-maker, died after a bomb he was making went off prematurely in Beji, Depok, leading to the arrest of several members. Then an ally of the Makassar group from Ambon was arrested in Tual, Southeast Maluku.²⁷ On 22-23 September, police picked up Badri Hartono and eight of his men.

The arrests deepened the determination of the Makassar group, now working closely with

22 Those present included Ahmad Sofian (Sofyan); Fauzi alias Ozi; Kodrat alias Polo; Arianto alias Togog; Indra Hermawan alias Kardus and Eko from the Cengkareng cell; Abu Roban; Robhitoh; Arifin alias Ipin; and Zulfikri alias Kiki from the Ciledug cell; Endang Syarifudin, an Aman Abdurrahman follower; Nurul Haq; Sahed; Agus Kacamata; Budi; Boy; Ahmad Sofian; Rizal; Edi; and Lubis, among others.

23 A devastating critique, "Reflections on the Aceh Jihad" (*Refleksi Jihad Aceh*), written by someone close to JI, appeared on many radical websites in April 2010. It suggested, among other things, that the Aceh participants had badly miscalculated the level of public support and that any cost-benefit analysis would have shown that the costs of using violence were far too high. The criticism was clearly lost on the Situgintung participants.

24 Kodrat was from Universitas Gunadarma in Jakarta, a private institute specialising in information technology. Two other Gunadarma students were also involved in the Cimanggis group in 2004.

25 Confidential document made available to IPAC, October 2013.

26 Ibid.

27 This was Sutarno Nuhayanan alias Walid who was one of seven men from Maluku sent to train with Lashkar e-Taiba in Pakistani Kashmir in 2001. One of the other trainees, Abu Harun, serving as a link between Makassar and Ambon, was still at large as of this writing.

Santoso, to take revenge. In a plan concocted by Autad Rawa and Abu Uswah, two police on patrol near Tamanjeka, Santoso's stronghold, were abducted and killed on 8 October. Their almost beheaded bodies were found on 16 October, and the manhunt for Santoso intensified. Meanwhile, Sofian had been captured in Depok, Jakarta on 12 October. It seemed there was no group that was safe from police detection. It also meant that the Situgintung group was likely compromised.

B. *The Break-Up*

Then Abu Roban disobeyed Kodrat's orders. Sometime after the Situgintung meeting, he sent two of his men to Makassar at the request of Abu Uswah to work with the Makassar cell on a planned assassination of the governor of Sulawesi – unquestionably a major operation that the *amir* should have approved first. The governor, Syahril Yasin Limpo, was running in a local election against a team that included as candidate for deputy governor the son of Darul Islam legend Kahar Muzakkar.²⁸ Killing Yasin, they reasoned, would pave the way for the political influence of the son, Aziz Kahar Muzakkar, to rise and thereby increase the prospects for the application of Islamic law in South Sulawesi. Abu Uswah reportedly wanted Jakarta men to do the deed because they were less likely to be recognised if his own group were under surveillance. In the end, while Abu Roban's men were part of the team, Abu Uswah used two men from West Sulawesi to throw a bomb while the governor was on stage making a speech during a campaign rally on 11 November 2012. The governor was unhurt, and both men were immediately arrested.²⁹

Kodrat was reportedly angry that Abu Roban had helped plan the attack without telling him, and the two groups split. Abu Roban agreed, however, to a division of labour. He would leave any operations in Jakarta to Kodrat and work elsewhere. The bonds and friendships between members of the two groups remained, however, with one family having members in both: Robhitoh, from the Ciledug cell, went with Abu Roban while his younger brother, Kiki, stayed with Kodrat.³⁰

C. *The Formation of Mujahidin Indonesia Barat*

In December 2012, Abu Roban brought about ten of his followers together in Gunung Kamojang, Bandung and proclaimed the establishment of Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, with himself as *amir*. Its long-term goal was to establish Islamic law in Indonesia. Its short-term goal was to create communal conflict and general instability, including by disrupting the 2014 elections, in order to facilitate a jihad for an Islamic state.³¹ They would invite *mujahidin* from the region, including friends from the Philippines, to help. They had absolutely no capacity to do any of the above, but it did not stop them from deciding to step up military training, recruitment and fund-raising through robberies (*fa'i*).

The men who met in Bandung were a fairly diverse lot, reflecting Abu Roban's personal net-

28 Kahar Muzakkar, founder of the Darul Islam movement in Sulawesi, was killed by the Indonesian army in 1965. He is seen as a hero by Islamists and by many ethnic Bugis and Makassarese in Sulawesi for standing up to the Jakarta government to demand redress for regional grievances.

29 Andika and Awaluddin Nasir, both from Mambi, West Sulawesi, had both taken part in Santoso's training in Poso earlier in the year. "Syahrul Yasin Limpo: Gila Itu Bom", *Tribunnews.com*, 12 November 2012. The two men from Abu Roban's group who took part were Zaenuri alias Toni, who was killed in Kebumen on 8 May 2013, and Fauzi, who was eventually arrested.

30 Confidential document made available to IPAC, October 2013.

31 *Ibid.*

work.³² Several were from the JAT branch in Kendal, Central Java, Abu Roban's home town. He had recruited them not just as fighters but also as business partners when he made periodic visits there to buy jackfruit and take it to Jakarta to sell in supermarkets. He also traded in clothes at various JAT events, underscoring the importance of itinerant trading as a profession eminently suitable for violent extremists and fugitives needing to keep in touch with a wide circle.³³

JAT Bandung was represented by Willem Maksum and Budi alias Angga.

The old Ciledug cell was represented by Abu Roban himself and Robhitoh, who had tried to join the Aceh camp in 2010. He never got there, but while in transit in North Sumatra, he developed close friendships with a group of men from Lampung who were part of a group led by ex-JI member Qomarudin alias Mustaqim. The friendship led to frequent visits back and forth to Lampung and the eventual recruitment of Robhitoh's friends into MIB.³⁴

Several MIB members were followers of Aman Abdurrahman who had joined Kodrat but then stayed with Abu Roban when the two groups split. One of these, for example, was Endang Syarifudin from Jakarta.

D. Fundraising

The new group immediately set out to raise money, and they did so successfully, with one robbery after another, producing a total haul of some Rp.1.8 billion, or about \$180,000.

- 13 November 2012, robbery of Lucky Cell mobile phone store, 100 phones stolen
- 7 December 2012 robbery of Trijaya construction supply store in Bintaro, Tangerang (Rp.30 million)
- 12 December 2012, robbery of post office in Serua, Tangerang Selatan (Rp.30 million)
- 18 January 2013, robbery of Bank BRI Reben, Batang (Rp.790 million)
- 22 February 2013, Bank BPR Batujajar, Bandung (Rp.40 million)
- February 2013, robbery of construction supply store in Pondok Ranji, Tangerang (Rp.30 million)
- 28 March 2013, Bank BRI Grobogan, Purwodadi, Semarang Timur (Rp.500 million)
- 18 April 2013, robbery of post office in Cibaduyut, Bojongloa Kidul, Bandung (Rp.80 million)
- 22 April 2013, robbery of BRI Lampung (Rp.466.7 million)

Abu Roban took part in most of the robberies himself, as motivator and coordinator. He also took responsibility for apportioning the proceeds, with 80 per cent going to the organisation and 20 per cent shared among the participants.

The allocation of funds was a critical part of the operation because Abu Roban wanted a staff of full-time *mujahidin*. All were paid a small monthly salary of Rp.2 million (about \$200); those who took part in operations received a bonus in the form of a share of the 20 per cent of the total, and the more frequent the operations, the higher the bonus. Budi Utomo alias Andre, from

32 They included William Maksum, also known as Dadan and Tio; Budi, also known as Asep, Sugeng and Angga; Dodon alias Iwan; Altop alias Yono; Budi Utomo alias Andr alias Baron; Agus Widarto (also known as Agus Kacamata and Nanang); Tedi alias Sulis alias Khoeron; Toni; and Yusuf alias Rian. The latter four from JAT Kendal. They were joined in early 2013 by Agung alias Primus and Ihsan from Jakarta; Pak De Sule also known as Basari; Robhito (also spelled Rabito, Robhitoh, Robhitoh, Rabitoh) bin Ahmad Faiz, also known as Rudi and Boim from Ciledug; Purnawan Adi Sasongko also known as Iwan and Roni; Budi Supriyantoro also known as Mantri and Galih; Jarwo; Cipto; Wagiono alias Gandi; and Beni.

33 The same point was made in International Crisis Group, "How Extremists Regroup", op.cit. The JAT Kendal group had almost all started out as members of MMI in 2000 and switched to JAT after Abu Bakar Ba'asyir broke with MMI in 2008.

34 Those recruited included followers of both Mustaqim and Aman Abdurrahman.

Central Java, was thus able to make about Rp.20 million a month (about \$2000).³⁵ Financial incentive may have been at least as high as ideology as a motive.

The 80 per cent covered operational and logistical costs, including purchase of guns and motorcycles. Abu Roban also was planning to use some of the funds to invest in several businesses, including a banana plantation in Central Java and a small *konfeksi* enterprise (embroidered sheets and linens) in Jakarta. These plans were ultimately disrupted by arrests.

In addition, the robbery income was used to assist families of slain and arrested comrades, help MIT in Poso, and support military training for the group, including in Bima, Sumbawa. It happened that one of the popular preachers among the extremists in Lampung recruited by Robhitoth was a man from Bima named Iskandar alias Abu Qutaibah (also spelled Hutaebah).³⁶

Through Iskandar, Abu Roban and Robhitoth were able to open channels to *mujahidin* in Bima to discuss setting up a training camp there that would take members from MIB, Lampung, the Makassar DI cell and MIT in Poso. In December 2012, the first men from Lampung were sent. On 5 January, however, counter-terrorisme police swooped into Bima and shot dead three men involved in the camp, including one of Santoso's men, and the hope of a training center died with them.

One would have thought that the unrelenting pursuit of suspected terrorists by Indonesian police would have caused the Abu Roban group to lie low, but instead it seems to have acted as a stimulus – not only for Abu Roban but also for the Makassar cell. On 4 January, a day before the Bima shootings, police had killed Abu Uswah and an associate on the steps of a mosque in Makassar. Instead of halting activities, Autad Rawa, Abu Uswah's commander, sent an envoy to Abu Roban asking for more financial help.³⁷

V. THE END OF MIB

At no point did Abu Roban and Kodrat seem to appreciate the extent of police surveillance or take extra security precautions, such as avoiding the use of mobile phones or meetings of more than two or three people. Their groups may have split in late 2012 but they were so interwoven in so many ways that anyone from one would likely possess potentially damaging information about the other. This made any arrests a serious problem, as a robbery in Tambora was to demonstrate.

A. *Fallout from the Tambora Gold Store Robbery*

On 10 March, a group of seven men led by Kodrat robbed the Terus Jaya gold store in Tambora, making off with 1.5 kg of gold and Rp.500 million in cash.³⁸ It was a Sunday morning around 10 a.m. and the one guard on the premises was easily overcome. Police quickly tracked down the robbers, some of whom must have been under surveillance anyway. On 14-15 March, in op-

³⁵ Confidential document made available to IPAC, October 2013.

³⁶ Iskandar was well known among JAT activists, because he had helped set up JAT Bima and in 2011-2012 was assisting in the formation of a JAT branch in Ambon. He was also close to Aman Abdurrahman. It was he who helped Ust. Kamaludin, a key lieutenant of Aman's fleeing the fallout from the Aceh camp, get to Bima in 2010. Kamaludin was finally arrested there in April 2012. He had been part of Aman Abdurrahman's group in Cimanggis in 2004, served a brief prison sentence and was released in 2006. Another of Aman's followers who helped him get to Bima in 2010 was one of the original members of Abu Umar's Ciledug cell, Andre Anggara alias Muklis.

³⁷ Confidential document made available to IPAC, October 2013.

³⁸ The seven were Zufikri alias Kiki, originally from the Ciledug cell; Aryanto alias Togog, originally from the Cengkareng cell; Encek alias Sahid; Edo; Akmal alias Arman Maulana; Kodrat; and Bram alias Makmur. Bram was a fugitive from the August 2010 robbery of a branch of the CIMB-Niaga bank in Medan, carried out mostly Medan-based jihadis but including some men who had been involved in the Aceh training camp. Kodrat, Bram and Arman were killed.

erations across Jakarta, police killed Kodrat and two others and arrested three, including Kiki, brother of one of Abu Roban's most trusted associates, Robhitoh. Nevertheless, MIB proceeded with bank robberies in Bandung, Semarang and Lampung.

In April, MIT in Poso sent Erwin Mardani – one of the three brothers originally from KOMPAK-Kayamanya who had married into blue-blood West Java DI – to Jakarta to meet with Abu Roban. He brought a message from Santoso and Autad Rawa that the *mujahidin* in Poso were in desperate need of funds. In exchange for financial aid, MIT would train members of MIB.

On 6 May, Abu Roban called a meeting of his closest associates in Batang, Central Java to discuss the proposal. They agreed to step up efforts to raise funds through bank robberies, targeting banks where security was weak – Bank Rakyat Indonesia was a favorite target in this regard. They would do everything possible to increase military capacity, including through training in Poso in physical fitness, bomb-making and firearms. Finally, they would prepare a place in Sulawesi for *hijrah*, to which *mujahidin* pursued by police could flee.

The meeting also produced a new governance structure, underscoring the aspirations of MIB to establish an Islamic state (*imaroh Islam*). Abu Roban headed the group as *amir*. Immediately under him were Budi alias Angga, ex-JAT Bandung, as Minister of Home Affairs and Purnawan Adi Sasongko, ex-JAT Kendal, as Finance Minister. Regional governors included Agung alias Primus for Jakarta (one of the few members of the group still at large); Willem Maksum for West Java; Basari alias Pak De alias Sule for Central Java; Budi Utomo alias Andri for East Java; and Bayu alias Ucup for Lampung.

After the meeting, a number of the participants left for Kebumen, intending to rob a BRI bank there. But police were waiting – not only in Kebumen but in Tangerang, Bandung and Kendal as well, where on 8 May, they conducted simultaneous raids. When the raids were over, seven MIB members were dead, and seventeen arrested. Those killed included Abu Roban himself; his “governors” of Lampung and Central Java, and his “home affairs minister”.

B. MIB's Achievements: Close to Nil

As a terrorist group, MIB was an abject failure. In the just under six months of its existence, it only succeeded in terrorising a few bank tellers. It lost most of its members. It may have further endangered its allies in Makassar and Bima.

For all the big talk, its members managed to kill only one person: a Christian theology student named Omega Suparno who had converted from Islam – and even there, the ties to MIB are tangential. The one non-robbery operation that it tried to pull off as a group was an arson attack in January 2013 on three markets in Glodok, Jakarta's Chinatown, apparently in revenge for violence against Muslims in Myanmar, seeing Indonesian Chinese as a proxy for Burmese Buddhists. None of the eleven firebombs worked.³⁹ In any case, the plot was a violation of the agreement with Kodrat that MIB would only operate outside Jakarta.

Within the Indonesian jihadi universe, however, MIB was more effective than most. Pulling off ten robberies in quick succession in Java and Sumatra requires more planning and discipline than most other organisations are capable of, and Abu Roban had real potential as a leader. His shortcomings were ultimately revealed by how quickly the police were able to find him – whatever his other skills, covering his tracks was not one of them.

It is curious why neither Kodrat nor Abu Roban learned any lessons from Aceh about the dangers of having many *mujahidin* in one place at one time. The meeting in Situgitung may not have been on the police radar screen, but the Batang meeting clearly was. The need to gather

39 Those involved were Budi Utomo alias Andri, implicated in the theology student's death; Robhitoh; and a few other MIB members.

together may have been because of the importance of showing visibly that this was more than a handful of people with unrealistic ambitions – it was a movement, with broad geographic reach.

Also, taking risks was part of the point. In an exhortation to his followers shortly before his death, Abu Roban heaped scorn on the cowardice of Muslims who refused to fight:

Do you want to be grouped with Nahdlatul Ulama, who see jihad as overcoming personal weaknesses, or the salafis, who see it as purifying the faith?⁴⁰ [...] Don't disappoint your wife and children! You have told your children "Your father is a *mujahid*." You have told your wife "Your husband is a *mujhaid*." If you then don't do the work of a *mujahid*, it means you have disappointed and deceived your family....

You think you're safer by not going to war. Yes, you're safe with the treason of infidels, curses upon them, but in fact you're creating a place that will bring you no safety at all, and then you will have nowhere to run.⁴¹

C. Taking Revenge on Police: Nurul Haq

The death of Kodrat and Abu Roban left one of the ex-Abu Umar groups still standing, if not entirely unscathed. This was the Tasikmalaya-Ciamis group around Nurul Haq, the teacher in Nurul Salam *pesantren*. Nurul Haq had helped Sofian and Abu Roban get guns. He had been present at the Situgintung meeting, where his brother, Ust. Fauzi, was the main strategist. He then joined Abu Roban. In mid-March 2013, building on information compiled after Sofian's arrest and the Tambora gold store robbery, police picked up one of his men, Fajar alias Siddiq.

Fajar told them that in addition to Nurul Haq, the group included Fajar's brother-in-law, Hendi Albar, and another teacher at Nurul Salam named Haris. Fajar, Haris and Nurul Haq had helped build pipe bombs for use in the Tambora robbery, which in the end were never used. Hendi, an engineer who had taken a course in car mechanics, helped manufacture a small arsenal of homemade guns; these were also seized in the aftermath of the robbery. Everyone in the Ciamis group besides Fajar, however, managed to evade capture and were still at large when this report went to press.

A few months after the May raids, a series of attacks on police began. On 27 July, a traffic policeman, Warrant Officer Paptah Saktiyono, was shot and killed in Ciputat, Tangerang south of Jakarta. On 7 August, gunmen killed another officer, Warrant Officer Dwiyatna in front of a hospital in South Tangerang. On 16 August, two men on a motorcycle shot Warrant Officer Kus Hendratma, and when other officers tried to come to their aid, one of them was also shot and killed. Police announced on 30 August that the main suspects in the shootings were Nurul Haq and Hendi Albar. (Another police shooting in front of the Anti-Corruption Commission in Jakarta was unrelated.)

Thus far their trail appears to have gone cold – reportedly in part because they are not using mobile phones.

VI. RESILIENCE AND REGENERATION

The story of Mujahidin Indonesia Barat is one of weakness, but it is also one of constant evolution and adaptation. Abu Umar's network evolved into the Situgintung group, with a few diversions and splinters along the way. Situgintung evolved into MIB, and MIB has now been superseded by the Ciamis group around Nurul Haq – and there will be someone to carry on when

40 Nahdlatul Ulama is Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation with generally moderate views.

41 See karawangbertawhid.wordpress.com/2013/05/13/nasehat-asy-syahid-insya-alloh-abu-robanuntungbambang-nangka, 13 May 2013.

Nurul Haq is arrested, as he surely will be.

Along the way, MIB intersected with most of the key jihadi groups operating in Indonesia today, although it is important to note that there are several it had no contact with – for example, the men involved in the plot against the Myanmar embassy in 2013. It also does not appear to have had any meaningful communication with Ring Banten, the DI splinter group whose members worked on the first Bali bombing and the 2004 Australian embassy attack and whose leaders also took part in the Aceh training camp. Some members must have known each other, given the territorial overlap, but there was no intermixing.

A. Modes of Interaction

Any jihadi group in Indonesia, however, is only one degree of separation away from any other, and it is worth noting where they intersect:

- Religious study groups (*pengajian*) and public lectures (*taklim*) led by radical preachers remain important venues for interaction, and particular mosques are particularly well-known for hosting radical activity. Any lecture by Halawi Makmun or Farid Okbah is guaranteed to attract extremists from a variety of different groups, just as Aman Abdurrahman did before he was re-arrested. In 2007, one man from the Cileungsi group was part of a “roaming *pengajian*” that moved around seven mosques in the Jakarta area, most of which continue to host radical preachers today.⁴²
- Marriages and kinship ties also help group solidarity and organisational alliances. The marriage of Erwin Mardani, one of the trio of Poso brothers, cemented ties to DI-West Java and to the men around Abu Umar. An even more interesting alliance is that of Hendi Albar, now being sought for the police shootings in July and August. In addition to having a DI brother-in-law (Fajar Siddiq), his sister is married to the head of the *az-Zikra pesantren* in North Bengkulu, founded by radicals with ties to several different JI schools in Solo.
- Prisons bring individuals together and can be a means of cross-fertilisation among organisations. It will be important for prison authorities to note who the MIB men associate with, once they are sentenced, and who their regular visitors are.⁴³ Also several members of the Abu Umar network arrested in 2011 and given short sentences are likely to be out next year. Unless carefully monitored, some could be targets for future re-recruitment.
- Santoso’s operations in Poso served as a training hub for a while, although it is hard to believe any systematic instruction can be going on while MIT is effectively under siege by a joint police-military force. Military training is essential for jihadi *esprit de corps*; without it, there is no point in trying to keep a group together.
- Business operations, including trading networks and medical clinics (particularly for *bekam*, or cupping), provide avenues for recruitment and cross-organisational interaction.
- Disaster relief efforts bring groups together; many jihadis met each other for the first time as volunteers in Aceh after the tsunami in December 2004.

42 The mosques were al-Mubarak in Krukut, West Jakarta; Mesjid Ramadhan, Bekasi; al-Hikmah, in Tanjung Barat, Lenteng Agung, South Jakarta; Baiturrahman in the Rancu Indah housing complex, Tanjung Barat, Lenteng Agung; Mushola al-Jihad in Cengkareng; Mesjid at-Taqwa in Tanah Abang; and the mosque in the Pertamina hospital, South Jakarta.

43 See “Prison Problems: Planned and Unplanned Releases of Convicted Extremists in Indonesia”, IPAC Report No.2, 2 September 2013.

- Finally, schools and alumni networks continue to be important. The Tasikmalaya network around Nurul Haq was built upon ties forged in the Nurul Salam *pesantren* in Ciamis, and JI schools continue to come up in the testimonies of MIB members, even though most members themselves attended ordinary state, not Islamic schools.⁴⁴

Many members of MIB had some intersection with JAT, and the JAT chapter in Kendal seems to have gone over almost wholesale to Abu Roban. But JAT was the gateway – it was never the organisation controlling the decision-making of the Abu Umar network or any of its successors and splinters.⁴⁵ The lack of in-house *ulama* (religious scholars) made JAT lectures and other activities particularly attractive as a way to acquire the basics of salafi jihadi ideology.

All these means of interaction make it more likely that a new group will form out of the remnants of one decimated by arrests.

B. *How the Weak Get Stronger*

The current level of weakness could change with an infusion of new thinking or training from abroad or if some of the smarter, more experienced fugitives now lying low were to be persuaded to become active.

It is reassuring that most of the would-be terrorists in Indonesia lack international experience and international connections, but the longer the Syrian conflict continues, the greater the chances that more Indonesians will get involved. On 28 November 2013, the twitter account of the Suqour al-Iz battalion in Syria (@sqoor_Al3z) announced the death of an Indonesian “martyr” in the fighting around East Ghouta several days earlier. The Indonesian in question was Reza Fardi, also known as Abu Muhammad, a 2006 graduate of al-Mukmin *pesantren*, the boarding school in Ngruki, Solo founded by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir. He seems to have made his way to Syria from al-Iman University in Yemen.⁴⁶ In an interview following news of his death, an Indonesian foreign ministry spokesman estimated the number of Indonesians fighting in Syria as about 50.⁴⁷ In October, the Indonesian ambassador to Pakistan announced that four Indonesian students from the International Islamic University in Islamabad had gone “missing” after leaving Pakistan and arriving in Turkey in August 2013; the concern was that they too were trying to go to Syria. In addition, JI’s humanitarian wing, Hilal Ahmar Society of Indonesia (HASI) has sent nine missions to Syria for up to a month at a time and clearly has well-established contacts there.⁴⁸ All of this is a reminder that the current sense of distance from the global jihad can easily change as more Indonesian fighters go to Syria and return.

The groups today could also be strengthened by guidance from more experienced jihadis, including men wanted by police. The list of fugitives is long and growing. It includes Autad Rawa alias Sabar from Makassar who is Mindanao-trained; Nurul Haq, the alleged police assassin; Taufiq Bulaga, the skilled bomb-maker from Poso; Mohamed Abdi alias Sabar from Medan, who seemed to be one of the more strategic thinkers in jihadi circles before he went to ground in 2010; Abu Harun, a Lashkar-e-Taiba trained jihadi from Ambon; Fadli Sadama, who escaped

44 Anton, a member of Ahmad Sofian’s group, was a graduate of Darusyahada in Boyolali, Solo; several of the Lampung members met in pengajians at Ulul Albab in Lampung. Amir Machmud, one of the killers of the theology student in Jepara, graduated from al-Muttaqien, Jepara. Fajar Siddiq’s sister attends al-Muttaqien Cirebon.

45 This was also the case for the ex-JAT men involved in the 2011 attack on a Cirebon police mosque.

46 See www.voaindonesia.com/read/indonesiana/2013/11/30/27861/keluarga-besar-ponpes-al-mukmin-bergembira-dengan-kesyahidan-alumninya/#sthash.g7A4WsxL.HMpgfupZ.dpbs. Two other Indonesians who studied at Al-Iman (also transliterated al-Eman) were the late Syaifudin Zuhri bin Ahmad Jaelani, the field commander for the 2009 Jakarta hotel bombings, and Abdurrohman Ba’asyir, Abu Bakar Ba’asyir’s younger son. Information from an Indonesian arrested in Yemen in 2010 suggested that the Ngruki school had a regular scholarship program to Yemen, sending five students there a year.

47 “Kemlu Belum Terima Informasi Meninggalnya WNI di Suriah”, VIVAnews, 29 November 2013.

48 See www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntkrGl8A7f0 and www.hilalahmarsociety.org.

from Tanjung Gusta prison earlier in the year; and many others. Any of the above could add an element of professionalism to operations. In addition there are some very experienced imprisoned jihadis who will be out soon, most of whom will disengage from violence on their release, but some of whom may want to rejoin old networks.⁴⁹

Given the fact that Indonesia does not have a repressive government, is not under occupation or attack and has no active communal conflicts at the moment, the only real motivation for temporarily disengaged jihadis to return to battle is to avenge *mujahidin* deaths at police hands. This means there is an urgent need for counter-terrorism police to review the procedures that are resulting in so many deaths of suspects and make a more concerted effort to ensure that future targets are captured alive.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The groups in Indonesia today that are committing or trying to commit acts of violence in the name of jihad may be doing so because they are weak. They are daring because they have to be: in a crowded field of amateurish jihadi wannabes, the only way to gain legitimacy is to pull off an attack. This may explain why according to the National Anti-Terrorism Agency's statistics, there were 75 terrorist plots between 2010 and 2013 – far more than in previous years – but few succeeded. The last three attempts at suicide bombings have killed only the bombers themselves, and the toll on the groups has been high in terms of arrests and deaths.⁵⁰

The more experienced operatives know better. Many have done the equivalent of a cost-benefit analysis and realised that at the moment, the costs of using violence are too high. They have not decided that violent jihad in Indonesia is illegitimate or that the ideology behind it is flawed, only that the political context at present is not conducive to attacks.

If one aim of a counter-terrorism strategy is to get extremists to change their behaviour and disengage from violence, getting leaders with legitimacy in hardline circles to focus on cost-benefit reasoning, rather than “moderating” interpretations of jihad, might be more productive.

Weak groups also need to give members something to do. It is almost certainly no coincidence that as long as Abu Umar was regularly sending men to Sulawesi for training, there seemed to be no great pressure for mounting attacks. When the opportunities for training became more restricted, the need to plan attacks rose, because inaction would almost certainly lead to defection, splintering and the search for more militant alternatives, which is in fact what happened.

The shortcomings of groups like the Mujahidin of Western Indonesia may make it seem as though Indonesia has nothing to worry about. But if their propensity to violence is a result of their weakness, then more attacks are likely – and one of them might work.

49 IPAC Report, “Prison Problems”, op.cit.

50 The three bombings in question were the Cirebon police mosque bombing in April 2011; the Solo church bombing in September 2011; and the Poso police station bombing in June 2013. The police have lost 24 men to jihadi attacks from the beginning of 2010. Jihadi groups have lost 60 men to police shootings in the same period and some 300 have been arrested.