

# **KILLING MARWAN IN MINDANAO**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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The best chance the southern Philippines has ever had for peace may now be in jeopardy as the result of a police operation on 25 January 2015 against Malaysian fugitive Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan—who was not the world-class terrorist he was made out to be. The operation went tragically wrong, resulting in the death of 44 police Special Action Forces (SAF) and eighteen fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mamasapano, Maguindanao. Suddenly, a comprehensive peace agreement between the Philippines government and the MILF, almost two decades in the making and on the verge of passing a final hurdle in the Philippines Congress, is in danger. The debacle raises questions about the intersection of counter-terrorism and conflict resolution and their sometimes competing objectives. Those questions would have been important to address even had Marwan proven to be the master bomber that his reputation suggested. They become even more pressing if he was not.

With a \$5 million bounty on his head from the U.S. “Rewards for Justice” program, Marwan had been targeted for years in a series of operations by Philippines police and military, assisted by U.S. intelligence. Every time he escaped death, the media inflated his exploits. By the time he was killed on 25 January, the then commander of the SAF was calling him “the most notorious bomb expert not just here in Southeast Asia but also in the entire world.”<sup>1</sup>

None of his ex-colleagues saw him this way. One of his Indonesian associates, who worked with Marwan in Mindanao from 2003 to 2009, called him “a little snake who has been blown up into a dragon.” He had dangerous contacts, friends and in-laws. For several years he was a source of funds and equipment for friends in both the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and he unquestionably aided and abetted terrorist attacks.

But Marwan by all accounts was not a leader in Mindanao and had no special bomb-making skills; those he had were in sharp-shooting. A tendency to panic in crisis situations made him unwanted in battle. He was never a member of the once-feared terrorist organisation Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), though he had been radicalised by its Malaysia-based members and occasionally worked with them. He was a senior member of the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia, never its leader. Despite many reports suggesting he was involved in the 2002 Bali bombings, he had no role whatsoever, and in any case was already in the Philippines when they took place.<sup>2</sup> He was often more a burden than an asset to those who helped hide him.

There are many reasons for why the image was bigger than the man. One is that he was a member of the small group of foreign jihadis operating in Mindanao that included major players like Indonesian nationals and JI members Umar Patek and Dulmatin—both of whom *were* involved in the Bali bombings and had similar bounties on their heads. Marwan’s stature may have been a reflection of theirs.

Second, there was a confusion of Zulkiflis. Another Malaysian, Zulkifli Marzuki, was JI’s secretary and a close associate of Hambali—today the only Indonesian in Guantánamo prison. Through his links to Hambali, Zulkifli Marzuki took part in a number of meetings with senior al-Qaeda operatives to discuss targets for terrorist attacks.<sup>3</sup> Some of the background attributed

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1 Text of the 9 February 2015 address by former SAF chief Getulio Pascua Napeñas to the Senate inquiry on the Mamasapano clash is available online at [newsinfo.inquirer.net/671623/full-text-napenas-statement-at-senate-inquiry-on-mamasapano-clash](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/671623/full-text-napenas-statement-at-senate-inquiry-on-mamasapano-clash).

2 At the 9 February 2015 hearing, Napeñas erroneously referred to Marwan as one of the “technical masterminds behind the 2002 Bali bombing. Ibid.

3 Zulkifli Marzuki, who ran a private security company in Kuala Lumpur, took part in several meetings with al-Qaeda operatives. After several years in prison he was deemed rehabilitated, and in March 2013 was taken off the UN Sanctions list. See [www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc10959.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc10959.doc.htm).

to Marwan may refer to this other Zulkifli.<sup>4</sup>

Third, there was the simple fact of his ability to evade capture for so long—the more times he was declared dead and then proved to be alive, the more dangerous he seemed to become.

And finally, there may have been an institutional factor at work: the more fearsome his reputation, the more Philippine authorities and their U.S. allies may have believed that extraordinary measures were required to deal with him. Thus, when the intelligence came in that pinpointed his location, a massive SAF force was organised to go after him, with apparently little consideration given to taking him alive. It became so imperative to get this man who had grown into a monster that for the security forces involved, it was apparently worth bypassing the mechanisms that had been set up with the MILF to allow pursuit of “rogue elements” for fear that information would leak and that Marwan would escape yet again.

This report examines the facts of Marwan’s life and the role he played in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. In addition to using documentary sources, IPAC interviewed five Indonesians who knew Marwan in Indonesia and/or the Philippines, but as reflected in the footnotes, all asked that their names not be used. Marwan’s career shows clearly how MILF leaders rejected the presence of foreign jihadis and tried to ban any activities that could threaten negotiations. They were not always successful and there were occasionally rogue commanders who provided refuge and other forms of support, but the message was clear that terrorists were not welcome. In the future as in the past, the only possible strategy for managing extremism in the southern Philippines is to work in partnership with the MILF.

## II. MARWAN IN MALAYSIA

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Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan was born in 1966 in Muar, Johor, Malaysia, one of 13 children. His early life has been fairly well documented in the Malaysian press.<sup>5</sup> As a high school junior, he was deeply moved by news reports of the massacres of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982 and began to study Islam more seriously. Shortly after graduation, he received a scholarship to the U.S. to study electrical engineering, reportedly at Arizona State University.

In 1988, on his way back from the U.S., he stopped briefly in Iran, then Pakistan, where he joined the Malaysian Students Association of Pakistan and India (Masa Pakindo). Several members had already left as *mujahidin* to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Marwan joined a training camp in Jalojai, Pakistan, belonging to the Hezbi Islami militia of Afghan *mujahidin* leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, where he studied sharp-shooting, worked in the kitchen and helped manage the camp’s telecommunications. There he met several Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) youth wing members who were also in Masa Pakindo. They included Zainon Ismail; Solehan Abdul Ghafar, and Nik Adli, son of the late PAS leader Nik Aziz.

Marwan stayed a year on the Pakistan-Afghan border, then returned to Malaysia for family reasons. By 1990, he had been hired by Telekom Malaysia and had moved from Johor to Shah Alam, Selangor, where his house became a meeting place for Malaysian Afghan alumni.

In 1995 Zainon Ismail and a few other Afghan alumni founded a group they called Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) that aimed to apply Islamic law, purify Islamic practices and work toward the establishment of an Islamic state in Southeast Asia, covering Malaysia, Indonesia, southern Thailand and southern Philippines.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning, the KMM resembled a religious

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4 Full disclosure: the authors of this report themselves confused the two Zulkiflis in a 2003 report for the International Crisis Group where they referred to him inaccurately as a senior JI operative. The report was later corrected.

5 See “The Untold Story of Zulkfli bin Hir”, online at bigcatrambleon.blogspot.com, 4 February 2012.

6 Kamarulnizam Abdullah, “Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI): The Links”, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 4(1), April 2009, pp.29-46.

discussion group, with participants drawn from former members of Masa Pakindo. One of them was Taufik Abdul Halim alias Dani, who had graduated from Jamiat Anwarul Qur'an school in Karachi and had gone on to train on the Pakistan-Afghan border. He returned to Malaysia in 1996. That same year, Marwan married his elder sister, Maria.

In 1999, Zainon Ismail stepped down and turned over the leadership of KMM to Nik Adli. Nik Adli restructured the organisation, creating various committees (*lajnah*) for economic matters, education, communication, operations and logistics. The latter two gave KMM a quasi-military cast. The operations committee, chaired by Marwan, was authorised to use violence if necessary against those considered enemies, including apostates and non-Muslims; the logistics committee was seen as a supporting unit to secure firearms and explosives from Indonesia and southern Thailand.<sup>7</sup>

The shift toward a more action-oriented stance came in response to political events in Malaysia. In 1998, the reform movement (*Reformasi*) in Indonesia sparked a call for the same in Malaysia, and PAS activists were among many who called for longtime premier Mahathir Mohamad to step down. Nik Adli believed that Mahathir might retaliate by declaring martial law and arresting those he saw as dissidents, including PAS leaders. He reportedly wanted KMM to be prepared to use force if the government should suddenly turn repressive, but he had no intention of using violence otherwise.<sup>8</sup>

Marwan, however, took an extremist turn. As head of KMM's Selangor branch, which had about 30 members, he frequently invited Malaysia-based JI members, including Abu Jibril, Hambali and Imam Samudra, to lead group discussions. One unintended consequence was the radicalisation of the participants. They seemed to forget KMM's original aim—to defend PAS in case of attack—and became increasingly attracted to the idea of jihad as individual obligation (*fardu 'ain*) and the need to wage war on non-believers (*kafir*). By this time, a minor incident in the Indonesian city of Ambon in January 1999 had flared into all-out war between Christians and Muslims and had spread to other islands in the province of Maluku, then to North Maluku as well. Marwan and several of his KMM friends were determined to join the Muslim side.

The increasing militancy of KMM's Selangor branch did not mean that KMM had been absorbed into JI. According to one JI leader, JI valued its relationships with other Islamic organisations and was very careful not to be seen as poaching their members. It was one reason it never recruited anyone from the MILF; allies were off-limits. The same was true of PAS and KMM. JI could recruit Malaysians, but not from existing organisations with which it had friendly ties. No matter how closely he worked with JI over the years, Marwan never was invited to join.

### III. MARWAN AND THE AMBON CONFLICT

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Marwan's participation in the conflict in Maluku gave him combat experience and some rudimentary bomb-making skills; it also broadened his links with Indonesian jihadists to include not only JI but also KOMPAK and Darul Islam. It was the non-JI connections that helped him get to Mindanao.

In June 2000, the first KMM contingent of eleven men left for Indonesia, led by Marwan's

7 Ibid. This article, citing an undated Malaysian intelligence report, states that Marwan and another KMM member helped obtain explosives from Imam Samudra that were used in the 25 October 2000 bombing of a Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur. Some of the details may be mistaken, however, because Marwan at the time was in Maluku.

8 IPAC interview, Jakarta, February 2015. Nik Adli was reportedly thinking back to the 1985 "Memali Massacre" in Kedah, when the police forces clashed with PAS member Ibrahim Libya, then openly calling for jihad against the state. When it was over, Ibrahim and fourteen of his followers were dead. See Farish Noor, "The Role Played by the Religious Schools of Malaysia in the Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)", in Farish Noor, Yoginder Sikand and Martin van Bruinessen, eds., *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, Amsterdam, 2008, pp.206-207.

brother-in-law, Dani, and ended up fighting in North Maluku. Marwan followed with a few friends around August 2000, stopping first in Solo to meet JI military commander Zulkarnaen before going on to Ambon. Zulkarnaen gave them a briefing on the fighting there and instructed everyone to change their names for security purposes. Marwan thus became Musa. On arrival in Ambon, they were put up at the JI headquarters in the neighbourhood of Kebon Cengkeh, and given a short course in weaponry. The two KMM groups met in Ambon about a month later.

Marwan first saw actual combat in September 2000, when he took part in the attack on Siri Sori on the island of Saparua, Central Maluku. Throughout September and into October, Muslim forces attacked the village, burning more than 140 homes and forcing its residents to flee.<sup>9</sup> Then a KMM group with both Marwan and Dani left for Gunung Olas, in West Ceram to attend a JI military training course.<sup>10</sup> Marwan's role was to help secure arms and other supplies. He and Dani then joined other participants in an attack on a Christian community in Tanah Goyang, West Ceram before returning to Ambon.

In 2001 the KMM men were assigned to Waimurat, Buru for several weeks to guard Muslim territory. Around March 2001, Marwan and Dani again returned to Ambon but Dani did not stay long. He left for Java and joined a project known as *Aimatul Kufar* or Killing the Kafirs, led by Imam Samudra and Hambali, designed to avenge Muslim deaths in Ambon by attacking priests and bombing churches. Marwan, meanwhile, stayed in Ambon at the Kebon Cengkeh headquarters, giving lessons in weaponry to new recruits coming in from Java and occasionally taking part in attacks.

In mid-2001, Bali bomber Imam Samudra invited Marwan and a few friends to Pandeglang, Banten, west of Jakarta, to help train members of Samudra's old organisation, Ring Banten.<sup>11</sup>

The training took place in July 2001, with Marwan and another KMM member, Zid Sahara-ni, teaching weaponry. Marwan had only taught one batch of students when he got bad news. Dani had been injured when a bomb he was carrying exploded prematurely at the Atrium Mall in Jakarta on 1 August, and he had been arrested by police. Marwan feared that he would be next and decided to flee. Friends from Ring Banten contacted Suryadi Mas'od alias Umar, a Laskar Jundullah activist from Sulawesi who had ferried groups back and forth to Mindanao.<sup>12</sup> Connections between Ring Banten and Laskar Jundullah were very close, and many members of the former had trained in the latter's Mindanao camp. Suryadi had also helped Ring Banten members acquire arms in Mindanao.

In August 2001, Suryadi came to Banten to pick up Marwan. They left first for Makassar, where Marwan stayed with Agus Dwikarna. Suryadi helped him get a false identity document (KTP) in the name of Hendri Lawi. Marwan was uneasy staying in Makassar, however, and wanted to leave. He could not go back to Malaysia, because the government there around the same time had begun a crackdown on jihadists, with the arrest of twelve KMM members, including Nik Adli, Zainon Ismail, and Ismail Lutfi, Zainon's brother. The arrests were linked to a number of KMM actions, including the bombing of a Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur in October 2000 and the assassination in November of Joe Fernandez, a member of parliament from

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9 For an account of this battle from the Muslim perspective, see [groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/laskarjihad/conversations/messages/64](http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/laskarjihad/conversations/messages/64); from the Christian side, see [www.oocities.org/ambon67/noframe/siwalima2309y2ka.htm](http://www.oocities.org/ambon67/noframe/siwalima2309y2ka.htm).

10 The camp in Gunung Olas was JI's; other groups had their own training centers. Mujahidin KOMPAK, for example, had a camp in Waemurat, Buru and in Hila, Leihitu, Central Maluku. Men from Wahdah Islamiyah in Makassar had their own camp in Tulehu, where al-Qaeda operative Umar al-Faruq frequently taught.

11 For background on Ring Banten, a splinter group of Darul Islam, see International Crisis Group, "Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing", Asia Report No.92, 22 February 2005, pp.27-31.

12 Laskar Jundullah was set up in September 2000 in Makassar, South Sulawesi as the security arm of the Committee to Prepare for the Application of Islamic Law and recruited men to fight in Poso at the height of the conflict there. Its members were also linked to several bombings in South Sulawesi in 2003 and 2004. See International Crisis Group, "Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi", Asia Report No.74, 3 February 2004, p.11.

Kedah whom KMM saw as being involved in efforts to convert workers at the Kulim Industrial plant in Kedah to Christianity.<sup>13</sup> (Marwan was not involved in the assassination because he was in Indonesia at the time.) These actions as well as several robberies were carried out by KMM under the direction of Imam Samudra and Hambali.

#### IV. MARWAN IN MINDANAO

Mindanao was the only safe choice. Accordingly, at the end of August 2001, Suryadi Mas'ood took Marwan by boat from the Sangihe islands off the coast of North Sulawesi to General Santos City (GenSan) on the southern tip of Mindanao. Suryadi returned to Indonesia, then flew back to GenSan in early September and accompanied Marwan to Palimbang in Sultan Kudarat. There he was taken to a camp run by Tahir Alonto alias Commander Tigre, a former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) commander who ran the group known as the Pentagon Gang. Suryadi picked up a number of Indonesians who had just finished training there and were ready to return to Indonesia. Marwan accompanied them back to GenSan, where he stayed briefly with a relative of Commander Tigre's. Suryadi then contacted JI operative Faturrahman Al Ghozi and left Marwan in his hands.<sup>14</sup>

Al Ghozi, after housing Marwan for some time, turned him over to Ismail Sulaiman alias Abu Hashim, an MILF commander in Pikit, North Cotabato.<sup>15</sup> Around 2002 or 2003, Marwan married Pahmiah Sabil, daughter of the Pikit village head.

Marwan was not the only foreigner living in Pikit; a former Singaporean soldier named Muawiyah was also there. The Singaporean, who also used the name Manobo, had come to the Philippines in the 1990s as part of the non-violent missionary group called Tablighi Jamaat, but he was moved by the struggle of the MILF and decided to stay.<sup>16</sup>

The two men were very different but generally got along well. Marwan was quiet and very polite, and his relations with the MILF were relatively good. Muawiyah had a sharp tongue and liked to argue; he frequently ended up in disputes with his hosts. In 2003, Abu Hashim threw Muawiyah out of Pikit after he got in an argument with an MILF fighter. The Singaporean went to Pawas, Maguindanao, because he heard there were Indonesians there, including Umar Patek, whom he had met when he was living in Camp Abu Bakar.

As it happened, both Umar Patek and Dulmatin, who had fled to Mindanao to evade capture after the 2002 Bali bombing, were living in the Pawas area. They had a plan to build a new training camp for members of KOMPAK and various Darul Islam factions who had fought in Ambon and Poso. After Estrada's "all-out war" against the MILF in 2000, three Indonesian camps—one belonging to a Sulawesi group, one to Darul Islam and the third, Camp Hudaibiyah, to Jemaah Islamiyah, had been destroyed. JI managed to build a new one named Jabal Quba on Mount Cararao, but it was exclusively for JI members. Abdullah Sunata and Akram, heads of KOMPAK and one DI faction respectively, thought they could benefit from arrival of Umar Patek and Dulmatin to build a new Indonesian camp that would train non-JI recruits.

13 Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia and Jemaah Islamiyah: The Links", op.cit.

14 Al-Ghozi, a JI Afghan veteran, had worked with an MILF Special Operations Group on a deadly series of blasts in Manila on 30 December 2000. He was arrested on 15 January 2002 as he was about to leave for Thailand to attend a meeting with Hambali. He was sentenced to 17 years in prison but managed to escape in July 2003. In October 2003, reportedly betrayed by an MILF member, he was tracked down in central Mindanao by the Philippines armed forces and killed.

15 Abu Hashim had trained on the Afghan border and was also a friend of Saifullah Yunos alias Mukhlis Yunos, an MILF operative who worked with al-Ghozi. Mukhlis Yunos was arrested in May 2003 and sentenced in 2009 to 20 years in prison.

16 Muawiyah is often erroneously reported to be a Singapore JI member but he is not and never was. He initially settled in Camp Abu Bakar, where he became close to al-Qaeda operative Umar al-Faruq, and the two of them decided to go to Basilan to join forces temporarily with the ASG. They only stayed there briefly: al-Faruq left for Indonesia while Muawiyah returned to central Mindanao and settled in Pikit.

In Mindanao they were protected by Mugasid (Mokasid) Delna alias Abu Badrin, a commander of the MILF's Special Elite Force and its main liaison with foreign jihadis, who had been a close friend of Umar Patek's on the Afghan border.<sup>17</sup> He arranged for them to build their camp in Pawas, not far from his home on the edge of Lake Buluan, on the border of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces. It was an ideal location because access to food and other supplies was easy, and the lake was full of fish and ducks.

Muawiyah asked to join Umar Patek's camp and was accepted in early 2004. He then urged Marwan to come too. Marwan by this time was bored in Pikit, especially because Abu Hashim did not let him take part in jihad operations, so he was eager to leave and was also accepted. Umar Patek sent one of his subordinates to pick up Marwan and his family and bring them to Pawas. By early 2004, the camp had some 20 people, although the number fluctuated with people coming and going.

Daily activities in the Pawas camp focused on military training, particularly field engineering (including bomb construction), with Umar Patek and Dulmatin as primary instructors. Weapons training was conducted by a Darul Islam member from Purwokerto, Central Java named Azhar. Marwan rarely took part, even though his grasp of field engineering was very basic and his knowledge of explosives almost nil. When his friends in Pawas were learning bomb construction, Marwan often stayed in his house; he told his friends the bombs scared him.<sup>18</sup> He did not take part very often in weapons training either because he was already relatively skilled. He spent much of his time surfing the Internet with his laptop. The camp had a generator, so there was no problem with electricity.

Marwan was known in the Pawas camp as a gun collector. He had an M16, Shotgun 12A, Winchester 22, and an Armalite 15. He also had accessories such as an M9 bayonet that could be inserted on the barrel of an M16 and a Glock bayonet knife. All of these treasures had been sent to him from California by his elder brother, Rachmat, who also regularly transferred funds. Nevertheless, Marwan was bored as he had been in Pikit and was frustrated that he was living in a conflict area but had never once taken part in a battle. This was in accordance with the conditions that the MILF imposed on the Pawas camp: it was only for training. Its members were not allowed to undertake operations.

Dulmatin and Muawiyah shared Marwan's boredom. They pressed Umar Patek, whom they acknowledged as *amir* or commander, to let them see some action. He refused, saying they had to obey their hosts and not make life more difficult for them, especially because the Philippine government had become aware of their presence, and the MILF was accused of harbouring foreign terrorists.

Mugasid had tried to limit the contacts of the Pawas group with the outside world, restricting their communications to individuals that he knew and trusted personally, such as Tahir Alonto and his Pentagon Gang. They were also allowed to contact MILF members from the 105<sup>th</sup> Base Command led by Amirul Umbra Kato, including Basit Usman, Ismail alias Commander Malaz and others—all known as radicals whom the MILF leadership found difficult to control. Malaz, the logistics coordinator for the 105<sup>th</sup>, was a graduate of the Abu Bakar Islamic University in Karachi.<sup>19</sup>

It was through Kato's men that the Pawas group made contact with the ASG. Sometime in 2004, Umar Patek got a message from Commander Malaz that ASG wanted to open communications with the Indonesians. At this time, top ASG leaders were based on Mount Cararao. They had left

17 Mugasid Delna was arrested in February 2009 in Zamboanga and remains in custody. For more on Mugasid and his role as international liaison, see International Crisis Group, "The Philippines: Counter-insurgency and Counter-terrorism in Mindanao", Asia Report No.152, 14 May 2008, p.5, footnote 16.

18 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

19 This was the same institute where members of JI's al-Ghuraba cell studied in 1999-2001.

Basilan in early 2003 when the Philippines government launched Operation Balikatan. In May 2003 a few senior JI members, including Zulkarnaen, had met Janjalani, Isnilon Hapilon and Abu Solaiman in Jolo to discuss JI-ASG collaboration. Zulkarnaen, according to one person present, urged that ASG move to Mindanao so they could be protected by JI members in Jabal Quba. Janjalani agreed but Raddulan Sahiron objected, on the grounds that he did not trust some of the MILF whom he believed would sell their own friends to the government in exchange for cash rewards.<sup>20</sup>

Janjalani then tried to contact Amirul Umbra Kato's group and reached Malaz, who arranged for Janjalani and a group of followers to come to first to Palimbang, Malaz's wife's home town, then to Cotabato and then to Mount Cararao, where they built a camp near Jabal Quba. They took part in training organised by JI, and it was here that they first met Ahmad Santos of the Raja Sulaiman Group, who had gone to Jabal Quba for training.<sup>21</sup> Their collaboration resulted in the Superferry bombing on 27 February 2004 that killed over 100 people.

At the end of 2004, Janjalani and an ASG group that included Abu Solaiman and Isnilon Hapilon decided to leave Mount Cararao and work together with Kato's 105<sup>th</sup> Base Command and Umar Patek's Pawas group. They asked Malaz's help to arrange their travel to Datu Piang, but their movements were detected by the Philippines army, and in November 2004, before they were able to meet Patek, their hideout was bombed. Several ASG members were wounded.

The meeting between Umar Patek and the ASG contingent finally took place in early 2005 in Datu Piang, and the two groups decided to join forces. Mugasid had been coming under increasing pressure from MILF commanders to stop protecting the Pawas group, to the point that Umar Patek decided he had to leave. Dulmatin, Muawiyah and Marwan were eager to make the move, believing they would have far more of an opportunity to undertake attacks with the ASG.

At first the Pawas group and the ASG contingent looked for a new place to stay in the Datu Piang area, believing that they would be safer under Kato's protection. They asked for help from Malaz but every time they moved to a new place on his recommendation, they came under attack from the Philippines army. Malaz always claimed he was merely conveying Kato's suggestions for new sites, but the group began to wonder. For example in January 2005 he recommended that they move to Butilan, Datu Piang, but as soon as they arrived, air strikes began. For the first time, the Pawas group was involved in direct conflict with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and this put them in a difficult position with the MILF.

It also proved to be particularly hard for Marwan, who turned out to react badly in crisis situations. He once panicked so badly that he started shooting at his own friends, but fortunately did not hit anyone. After that, others were assigned to stay with him so that if attacks occurred, they could keep him calm.<sup>22</sup>

After a few of these attacks, the ASG and Pawas groups suspected that Malaz was leaking information to the Philippines security forces. They also found he had a close relationship with Datu Andal Ampatuan, who in turn had close ties to then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Undaunted, they continued looking for a site for a new camp, and in June 2005, decided to set one up in Talayan, Maguindanao, on the grounds of Camp Umar, a refuge that Kato had used during the Estrada government's military offensive—the so-called All-Out War—in 2000. At this point, three Indonesians decided to stay behind and not join the new camp: Marwan; Dulmatin's brother-in-law Hari Kuncoro; and Usamah, their friend from Pekalongan, Central

20 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

21 For more on the Raja Sulaiman Group, see International Crisis Group, "Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts", Asia Report No.110, 19 December 2005.

22 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

Java.<sup>23</sup> Marwan returned to Pikit. Hari Kuncoro and Usamah left for Cotabato to hide with Usamah's family.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, it turned out that the arrival of Patek and Janjalani in Talayan leaked as well, and on 1 July 2005, their forces were attacked from both land and air for over a month. For the first time, the joint ASG-Pawas group suffered casualties. Six men were killed, among them Azhar, the Indonesian who taught weaponry.

Janjalani and Patek realised Mindanao was no longer safe. The fact that ground troops could reach their camp in Talayan meant that the MILF had abandoned them—the military could have only reached Talayan through MILF territory. The MILF had indeed agreed to help Philippine authorities through the mechanism known as the Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG), designed to “isolate and interdict” criminals, kidnap-for-ransom groups and rogue elements suspected of hiding in MILF areas.<sup>25</sup> In September 2005, the Pawas group left for Jolo.<sup>26</sup>

Back in Pikit, Marwan was again under Abu Hashim's protection. There were several clashes in the area between the MILF and AFP while he was there, all of which he described to his brother in California via email, but he was not allowed to join.<sup>27</sup> He spent most of his time on the Internet. At the end of July 2006, Abu Hashim was killed by unidentified gunmen on a road in Inug-ug village, Pikit, in what some suggested was an internal MILF clash. The ban on taking part in combat may have died with him, but Marwan still did not join. He told his brother,

In the future I want to go when there is need for reinforcement. I can't go by myself; I must have a local guide with me, If I died [sic] as a martyr and if there was some inheritance from the sale of Dad's land please don't forget about my two children here.<sup>28</sup>

On 10 July, ten days after Abu Hashim's death, SAF commandos broke into Marwan's house and had started to search it when they were engaged by his well-armed MILF neighbours – who killed three of the SAF men and took their weapons and ammunition. Marwan, his wife and their two children managed to escape back to the territory of the 105<sup>th</sup> Base Command in Datu Saudi Ampatuan, where they came under the protection of Abdul Wahid Tundok, then one of Kato's commanders.

In September 2006, Marwan was contacted by Basit Usman who asked for money to buy guns and explosives. Marwan's friends, now with the ASG, had contacted Basit and asked him to undertake a few operations to divert attention from Jolo because they were again under attack from the Philippine armed forces, which on 1 August had launched Operation Ultimatum to capture top Abu Sayyaf leaders as well as foreign jihadis.

On 4 September 2006, Khadafi Janjalani was killed in a battle with Philippine marines around Patikul.<sup>29</sup> Umar Patek urged Abu Solaiman to launch a diversionary kidnapping operation in Tawi-Tawi, but it never took place for reasons that remain unclear.<sup>30</sup>

Basit Usman, however, launched retaliatory strikes in Mindanao, with Marwan's help. In early October, he contacted Marwan and asked him to arrange funding for a bombing operation. On 10-11 October, he and his friends bombed targets in three cities, Takurong, Makilala and Cota-

23 Usamah was a JI member and graduate of its Camp Hudaibiyah who had lived in Mindanao since the late 1990s and married a local woman. During the Ambon and Poso conflicts, he had been instrumental in helping KOMPAK secure arms from the Philippines.

24 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

25 For background on AHJAG, see International Crisis Group, “The Philippines: Counter-insurgency and Counter-terrorism in Mindanao”, Asia Report No.152, 14 May 2008, pp.10-11.

26 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

27 The content of the correspondence between Marwan and Rachmat appears in the warrant for arrest of Rahmat Abdhir, United States District Court, Northern District of California, Case Number CR-07-00501-01-JF, available at [www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/431.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/431.pdf).

28 Ibid, p.8

29 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

30 Interrogation deposition of Mohamad Baehaqi, Philippines, 22 February 2008.

bato. Two were killed in Takurong, none in Cotabato, but the Makilala bomb in North Cotabato killed six and injured more than 40. Marwan sent a message to his friends in Jolo, “Pumatok na [It has exploded], Allahu Akbar!”<sup>31</sup>

In November 2006 peace negotiations between the MILF and the government stalled, and the MILF declared war. Wahid Tundok ordered the evacuation of all civilians from his area and also asked Marwan to leave. He moved to Mamasapano, close to Basit Usman, and for the first time saw how poor Basit’s forces were and how old their guns. He sent an email to his brother in California, asking for more funds.<sup>32</sup>

In February 2007 Wahid Tundok called Marwan and told him to be on alert. A month earlier, Philippine forces had launched an operation to capture Basit, who since January 2007 had a \$50,000 bounty on his head from the Rewards for Justice program. In February, the Philippines forces got close to his hiding place but they were pushed back by MILF fighters from the MILF’s 105<sup>th</sup> command. The AFP fired 155 mm bazooka cannons ten times toward the hideout and came within 200 meters of hitting it. Periodic shelling continued until March. At that point, Marwan and Basit split up and began moving around Mamasapano and Sharif Aguak separately. In April 2007 Marwan joined Khair Mundos, Basit’s brother-in-law and a few other ASG fugitives who had escaped from Kidapawan prison in February.

That same month, Marwan met up with a few of the Pawas alumni including Baehaqi, a KOMPAK member who had been in the Philippines since 2003, and Hari Kuncoro at the home of Binbadz, a friend of Khair Mundos who was also a fellow escapee.<sup>33</sup> In the meeting, Marwan asked Baehaqi’s advice on moving to Jolo because he was feeling increasingly insecure—especially after the U.S. in March 2007 placed a \$5 million bounty on his head.<sup>34</sup> Baehaqi urged Marwan to make the move, since by that time, Operation Ultimatum was over and the situation seemed safer.<sup>35</sup>

That June, Marwan heard that Usamah, who had stayed in Cotabato, had been shot dead by his own wife’s relative.<sup>36</sup> This news finally convinced him to leave, and he arrived in Jolo in July 2007. It was only then that he understood the scale of ASG losses, with some 60 fighters dead, including Janjalani and Abu Solaiman.

Marwan arrived just after Dulmatin returned to Indonesia. Before he went back, Dulmatin and Umar Patek had discussed the situation after Operation Ultimatum ended in April. They felt uneasy, because they knew that they had been among the operation’s targets, together with the Abu Sayyaf leaders, and they knew the targeting would continue. They would be causing their Abu Sayyaf friends more problems by staying. They decided to leave Jolo and look for another place to wage jihad. Dulmatin had been thinking about returning to Indonesia, since it seemed fairly quiet—no major bombings had taken place since 2005 and law enforcement operations in Poso had ended in early 2007. He and Umar Patek talked about going to Iraq or Afghanistan to fight. In mid-2007, therefore, Dulmatin, accompanied by a bodyguard named Niko, left for home. Umar Patek would wait to travel until he received news that Dulmatin was safely back.

Shortly after he arrived in Jolo, Marwan received news that his elder brother had been arrested in the U.S. It was a heavy blow, since Rahmat had been his only connection to his family; it also left him short of money because he had depended on regular transfers from California. Not long afterwards, Marwan married for the third time, this time to the widow of Khadafi Janjalani. He apparently had divorced his second wife from Pikit sometime earlier.

31 Ibid.

32 Warrant for the arrest of Rahmat Abdhir, op.cit. In September 2006, Rahmat sent \$5,500 to Marwan.

33 Interrogation deposition of Mohamad Baehaqi, op.cit.

34 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

35 Ibid.

36 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

After the wedding, Marwan joined Umar Patek who then was in a group led by a man known as Doc Abu. His real name was Umbra Jumdail Gumbahali, and together with Radullan Sahiron, he was one of the most senior Abu Sayaf commanders. He had been given the nickname Doc because of his skill in treating wounded fighters with herbal remedies. Throughout his guerrilla career, everywhere he stopped he gave free herbal treatments to the villagers. Umar Patek and his friends, including Marwan, were very impressed with Doc Abu's approach. They saw that villagers were the key to Doc Abu's strength -- they helped his forces when they were under attack, provided information on AFP movements and helped hide his men.<sup>37</sup>

After Dulmatin left, Umar Patek also grew close to Albader Parad, Doc Abu's son-in-law, now dead, who had become one of the ASG's most notorious commanders because of his kidnappings.<sup>38</sup> But Umar Patek wanted to leave more than ever. In 2008, he found a contact who could get him into the Haqqani group in Afghanistan. He told Doc Abu and Albader Parad of his desire and asked permission to leave, which they readily granted. They gave him 970,000 pesos (about \$22,000) for the journey, and he sold two M16 and sixteen magazines for an additional 170,000 pesos (about \$3,800). With Hari Kuncoro and Hasan Noer as bodyguards, he and his wife returned to Indonesia in June 2009.<sup>39</sup>

After they left, only three Pawas alumni remained: Muawiyah, Marwan and Nida, a man from Bekasi who lived in Sulu because he married a local woman. Marwan married again, this time a Basilan woman named Jaida Azhar, who was the daughter of one of Doc Abu's trusted subordinates. When the fourth wife was introduced to the third, Khadafi Janjalani's widow was said to be shocked because the girl looked about fourteen (it turned out she was seventeen).<sup>40</sup>

Even though Marwan had lost his main source of income after Rahmat was arrested, he was not destitute. His basic needs were subsidised by Abu Sayyaf with some of the ransom money obtained from kidnappings. As an indication of just how much they had, Albader Parad once sent a photo of himself lying in a pile of cash to some of the Pawas alumni who were already back in Indonesia.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of 2009 Albader Parad sent additional money to Indonesia to pay for the travel of Umar Patek and his wife to Afghanistan. He also purchased new guns for his men and easily recruited more fighters. He and Doc Abu were known as men who shared their wealth with the rank-and-file and played Robin Hood to the poor in Jolo. According to Indonesians who fought with them, many young men wanted to join the logistics unit where there was a chance of getting a shiny new motorcycle. Sometimes parents would hand in their children as potential members of Abu Sayyaf so that they too could share in the spoils.<sup>42</sup>

But it was also money that ended Albader Parad's life. His involvement in terrorism led the U.S. to put a price of \$1 million on his head, and from late 2009 the military had made him a target of Operation Bagong Buwan II in Jolo. On 2 February 2010, a member of Abu Sayyaf, tempted by the bounty, gave the AFP information on his whereabouts. The next day, soldiers went to his hideout in Gunung Tukay. In the shootout that followed Albader and five of his men died.

A month later in March 2010, Dulmatin, who by this time had been living in Indonesia for

37 Ibid.

38 Albader Parad was responsible for the April 2000 kidnappings of tourists in Sipadan, Malaysia. In April 2007, in retaliation for several attacks, Albader abducted several workers on a government road project in Parang, Sulu and beheaded them. In August 2008, he and his men attacked an army patrol around Manimbang, Sulu and killed nineteen soldiers. In early 2008, his notoriety grew with the kidnappings of a local businesswoman named Maria Rosalie, and in June 2008, broadcast journalist Ces Drilon. In early 2009, his men kidnapped three ICRC workers. He was killed in Sulu in 2010.

39 Interrogation deposition of Umar Patek, 2011 (exact date removed from hard copy in IPAC's possession).

40 IPAC interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015. For more about Marwan's wives, see Maria Ressa, "Marwan's Ties that Bind", Rappler.com, 2 and 4 February 2015.

41 Interview with Indonesian Mindanao veteran who requested anonymity, February 2015.

42 Ibid.

three years, was tracked down and shot dead by Indonesian police in South Tangerang, Banten, after they discovered he had played a major role in setting up a terrorist training camp in Aceh—in many ways the successor to Pawas. From the arrests that followed the breakup of the camp, police discovered that Umar Patek had also returned to Indonesia. This was the first the Philippine authorities knew that the two were no longer in Jolo, and they redoubled their focus on Marwan—perhaps because the opportunities for getting huge bounties were dwindling.

From 2010 onwards, the operations to hunt down Marwan intensified. In December 2010, the SAF received word that Marwan was hiding in Parang, Sulu. By the time they arrived, however, Marwan had fled. On 2 February 2012, Philippines planes, assisted by U.S. intelligence, bombed a hamlet near Parang where they thought he was hiding. The bombings killed Doc Abu, his son and several followers. The military claimed they had killed Marwan, but in fact, he and Muawiyah, who had been very close by, managed to escape, and Abu Sayyaf members helped them get to Patikul, Jolo.

Radullan Sahiron, the ASG commander there, was angry, however, because he saw Marwan as the cause of Doc Abu's death. As far as he was concerned, Marwan and Muawiyah only brought trouble in the form of military attacks, and he ordered them to leave Jolo. In late February, Marwan, aided by Isnilon Hapilon, left for Mindanao. He lived around Butig, Lanao del Sur, near the MILF's Camp Bushra. The area was within the MILF's 103<sup>rd</sup> Base Command but it was not clear who precisely was protecting him.

Marwan's presence in Butig was detected in mid-2012, and in July, the SAF mounted Operation Smartbomb. The plans appear to have leaked after the SAF asked the MILF's permission to enter the area. By the time the SAF arrived, Marwan was gone. From then onwards, he moved around constantly between Butig and Marawi City.

While he was in Lanao del Sur, he reportedly was involved in several bombings, including one carried out by his brother-in-law, Reener Lou Dongon, at a hotel in Cagayan de Oro. The main target had been a media outlet that had reportedly broadcast the anti-Islamic film made in the U.S. called "The Innocence of Muslims", first uploaded to YouTube in July 2012, that deliberately insulted the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>43</sup> Marwan was also said to have recruited a Malaysian militant named Mohd Noor Fikrie through social media. They had had long chats over the Internet, and eventually, in April 2012, Fikrie left for Mindanao to join Marwan. In December 2012 he was killed by Davao police when he tried to undertake a bombing there.

In 2013 Marwan moved back to Maguindano, where he lived under the protection of Amirul Umbra Kato. Kato had broken with the MILF in 2010 over its decision to return to peace negotiations with the Philippines government and set up his own group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Most of the BIFF fighters came from the MILF's 105<sup>th</sup> Base Command, but not all members of the latter elected to join. Abdul Wahid Tundok, for example, stayed with the MILF.<sup>44</sup> In late 2014, another split occurred when a BIFF leader, Ali Muhammad Tambako, was expelled for his involvement in the beheading of several farmers in Midsayap, Cotabato province. Tambako together with dozens of followers then formed the United Islamic Movement for Justice (UIMJ). Basit Usman reportedly chose to continue to stay with Marwan under BIFF's protection in Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

The SAF continued to launch operations throughout 2013 to try to capture Marwan and Basit Usman, but they failed, sometimes because of problems with police-military coordination, sometimes because information leaked to the fugitives or their protectors. In April 2014, the SAF had pinpointed their exact location in Mamasapano, but they failed to get support from the

43 Maria Ressa, "Marwan's ties that bind: Ren-Ren Dongon", Rappler.com, 4 February 2015.

44 On 25 January 2015, as commander of the MILF's 118th base command, Wahid Tundok was involved in belated efforts to work out a ceasefire between the SAF and the MILF.

military. According to Getulio Pascua Napeñas, then SAF chief:

On April 25, 2014, I supervised the operations against Marwan and Usman in Barangay Libutan, Mamasapano, Maguindanao. This was the one we called ‘Oplan Wolverine.’ Unfortunately, the same was aborted after the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the AFP withdrew its commitment to provide mechanized brigade units to support the operations.<sup>45</sup>

Another operation was launched in May, but it was aborted. In June, according to Napenas, the 6<sup>th</sup> ID/Mechanised Brigade of the Philippine Army conducted its own operation to try and capture the two but failed to coordinate with the SAF.<sup>46</sup> Two more attempts took place in August and November 2014.

Finally on 25 January, the SAF launched “Operation Exodus” in Tukananipao, Mamasapano, and Marwan was killed, but at an enormous cost. Hearings are still going to determine why the operation ended so disastrously but some facts have emerged. Marwan was hiding in an area controlled by BIFF but surrounded by an MILF-controlled area. The SAF did not use mechanisms set up under the peace process to inform the MILF command of the operation until it was well underway, fearing news would leak. The military was not told beforehand for the same reason. MILF claim their territory was “invaded” and they engaged in self-defence. The misunderstandings that resulted were fatal. The 84<sup>th</sup> Seaborne company of the SAF, assigned to kill Marwan, did so about 4:15 am but came under fire as it was leaving. The 55<sup>th</sup> company, several kilometres away, was assigned as the “blocking force” but was encircled by heavily armed MILF fighters and had no way out. No military reinforcements had been prepared and none could get to the area on short notice. Surrounded by hostile forces, the 55<sup>th</sup> company eventually ran out of ammunition after eight hours of shooting, and lost almost all its men, some of them shot at close range. Their guns and in some case their uniforms were taken. Only one SAF trooper in the group survived. The MILF lost eighteen men; a few BIFF members may also have been killed.

## V. MAMASAPANO AND THE PEACE PROCESS

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The carnage came at the worst possible moment for the peace process. On 15 October 2012, after seventeen years of talks, the Philippines government and the MILF had reached a Framework Agreement on the creation of an autonomous substate, to be called Bangsamoro. On 27 March 2014, after details on four annexes were finally worked out, both sides signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).<sup>47</sup> The agreement had to be enshrined in domestic law, so both sides hammered out a draft Bangsamoro Basic Law that was submitted to the Philippines Congress on 10 September 2014. Most expected a relatively smooth passage, even with inevitable delays, but it was on a very tight timetable even before the 25 January debacle. Leaders of both chambers of Congress initially had agreed to pass it before the end of 2014. Once adopted, a plebiscite would have to be held in the provinces designated to be part of the substate, followed by a year’s transition and finally elections to a new Bangsamoro Assembly in May 2016, designed to coincide with national elections. With various delays, debate on the law had been pushed back to February and then March; with each delay, the time to prepare for the plebiscite grew shorter.

But after the deaths in Mamasapano, passage is no longer assured, even though both sides have reiterated their commitment to peace, and Congress has set a new deadline of 30 June.

<sup>45</sup> Statement by Getulio Pascua Napeñas to Philippines Senate, op.cit.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> The annexes were on Transitional Arrangements and Modalities; Revenue Generation and Wealth Sharing; Power Sharing; and Normalisation. For the texts of these annexes, see [www.opapp.gov.ph/milf/annexes-framework-agreement-bangsamoro](http://www.opapp.gov.ph/milf/annexes-framework-agreement-bangsamoro).

Several inquiries are underway, including within the police and within the MILF. Hearings in the Philippines Senate, which began in February, have made clear that some senators now have serious questions about the good faith of the MILF, raising questions about its knowledge of Marwan's presence, its insistence on disciplining its own fighters rather than turning any over to a formal judicial process, and the ability of the leadership to control its own forces. The MILF for its part has said the firefight would never have happened had the government activated the Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) in time.<sup>48</sup>

All of these issues will be debated and discussed in the coming weeks. But one other issue also needs to be on the table—the intersection of counter-terrorism and peacemaking. Whether or not Marwan was a big fish, it is worth asking whether the possible impact of a counter-terrorism operation on the peace process should have been more systematically taken into account.

From 2005 onwards, the government's willingness to share information with the MILF on "rogue elements" resulted in the expulsion of JI and ASG members from MILF territory and for the most part, the avoidance of clashes with the government while pursuing them. The most important of the foreign jihadis—Umar Patek and Dulmatin—fled first to Abu Sayyaf territory in Jolo and then went back to Indonesia. It did not mean that violence stopped. There were plenty of other causes, from land disputes to politically-motivated actions of private armies, most notably in the so-called Maguindanao Massacre of 23 November 2009, to attacks by groups in Mindanao unhappy with the peace process, exemplified by the 2013 Zamboanga siege.<sup>49</sup> But the MILF leadership made clear that foreign jihadis were not welcome.

By the time Marwan moved back to Maguindanao in 2013, the MILF had already splintered, and BIFF, sympathetic to the global jihad, had emerged—and itself soon broke into several factions. In August, the BIFF faction that was protecting Marwan swore allegiance to al-Baghdadi's "Islamic State".<sup>50</sup>

But by this time, the hunt for Marwan had taken on a momentum of its own, driven in part by the bounty, in part by what appears to have been a single-minded focus on his death—not his arrest—that may have militated against any serious effort to think about impact. One newspaper article based on interviews with SAF members reported:

Since January 2014, the entire elite SAF force was asked the same question almost every day: "At the end of the day, what makes you happy?" And the response was always a resounding: "Kill Marwan!! Kill Marwan!!!"<sup>51</sup>

Even with rock-solid information about the Malaysian's location, President Aquino, SAF members, and others involved in the operation should have carefully considered the costs and benefits of going after him without informing the MILF, just as the Bangasamoro Basic Law was finally coming up for debate. If he had escaped yet again, there would be another chance to capture him. It is not clear there will be another chance for peace if this one collapses.

The MILF also needs to consider its moves. Its leaders see themselves now as the aggrieved party, blindsided by a counter-terrorism operation that no one told them was coming. But if inquiries find that any of the trapped forces of the 55<sup>th</sup> company were executed after they were wounded, then the MILF fighters responsible have violated basic principles of humanitarian law and do need to be held accountable.

48 SAF commander Napenas reportedly first called the government chair of AHJAG at 5:37 a.m. on 25 January, after Marwan had already been killed. See Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, "Chronology of Events: Tukanalipao, Mamasapano Incident, Account of the Ceasefire Mechanisms under the GPH-MILF Peace Process", undated, available at [www.opapp.gov.ph/sites/default/files/chronology-events-mamasapano-incident.pdf](http://www.opapp.gov.ph/sites/default/files/chronology-events-mamasapano-incident.pdf).

49 The Zamboanga siege was undertaken by a disgruntled group from the MNLF, lasted for a month, and displaced some 100,000 people.

50 "BIFF, Abu Sayyaf pledge allegiance to Islamic State jihadists," Agence France Presse, 16 August 2014.

51 "US Drone Watched Mamasapano Debacle", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 8 February 2015.

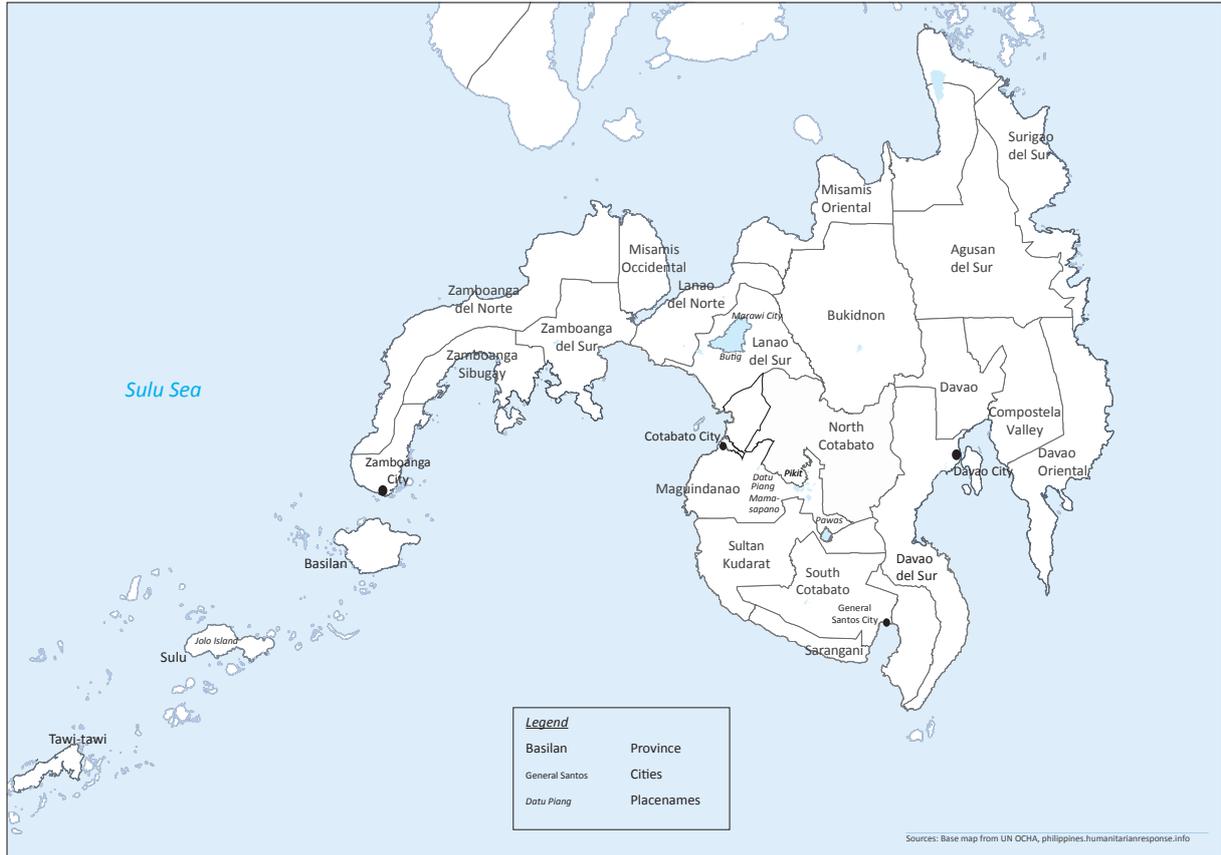
The value of the Rewards for Justice program should also be examined as inquiries proceed. The huge bounties placed on the heads of foreign jihadis have helped to burnish their reputations as world-class terrorists, perhaps out of proportion to their actual roles. They encourage killing high-value targets rather than making any effort to arrest them alive. They have led to many false alarms. Other aspects of the U.S. role have been examined since the Mamasapano incident took place, but Rewards for Justice has not come under much scrutiny.<sup>52</sup>

Terrorism is not going to go away in the southern Philippines. Basit Usman and others remain at large, and concerns about ISIS support in the region are growing. The fact is that the territory of the proposed Bangsamoro substate includes the areas where known extremists are most likely to be active. Marwan is not the last criminal who will choose to hide out in central Mindanao. The only possible solution is to strengthen existing mechanisms like AHJAG for government-MILF coordination in pursuing people like him. Without the MILF's active involvement, no long-term solution to extremism in the Philippines is thinkable.

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52 "DFA clears US of involvement in Mamasapano", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 February 2015.

### Appendix A: Map of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago



## INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT (IPAC)

The Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) was founded in 2013 on the principle that accurate analysis is a critical first step toward preventing violent conflict. Our mission is to explain the dynamics of conflict—why it started, how it changed, what drives it, who benefits—and get that information quickly to people who can use it to bring about positive change.

In areas wracked by violence, accurate analysis of conflict is essential not only to peaceful settlement but also to formulating effective policies on everything from good governance to poverty alleviation. We look at six kinds of conflict: communal, land and resource, electoral, vigilante, extremist and insurgent, understanding that one dispute can take several forms or progress from one form to another. We send experienced analysts with long-established contacts in the area to the site to meet with all parties, review primary written documentation where available, check secondary sources and produce in-depth reports, with policy recommendations or examples of best practices where appropriate.

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