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Abu Sayyaf and US and Australian military intervention in the southern Philippines

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Introduction

Carolin Liss of Murdoch University writes that under a new Status of Forces Agreement “Australia will only be the second country to be allowed to send substantial numbers of military personnel to the Philippines”. US forces operate alongside Philippines government forces (AFP) targeting the Islamic insurgency in the southern Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf in particular. However, AFP operations “have led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. These operations have therefore contributed to the suffering of the local population and have undoubtedly increased local support for groups such as the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf”. Liss concludes that “insufficient economic and humanitarian assistance and the continuous use of military force to ‘pacify’ and integrate the south into the main body of the Philippine nation-state, is unlikely to succeed”.

Essay: Abu Sayyaf and US and Australian military intervention in the southern Philippines

The southern Philippines regions of Sulu and Mindanao, have given rise to three major Islamic-based insurgent organisations, of which the most radical today is the Abu Sayyaf. Successive Philippines governments have responded with force, and occasional bouts of negotiations. This article provides an overview of the violent history of the Abu Sayyaf and examines the increasing involvement of

foreign forces, namely US and possibly Australian troops, in the conflict between the Philippine government and Muslim insurgents. The paper questions the success of the involvement of foreign military forces, suggesting that it may in fact aggravate an already volatile situation.

Forerunners of the Abu Sayyaf

When the Spanish colonial forces arrived in the sixteenth century in the archipelago that is today known as the Philippines, they referred to their enemies, the various Islamised groups in the south, collectively, as 'Moros'. The term carried connotations of backwardness and inferiority and became synonymous with savagery, barbarism, piracy and the like. When the American colonial forces attempted to impose their sovereignty on Mindanao and Sulu in 1898, they also met staunch opposition from Muslim people in the southern part of the Philippine archipelago. The conflict between the American forces and the Muslim population led to the emergence of the notion of the so-called `Moro Problem´, a social and political concept which became an integral part of American colonial vocabulary and policy in the southern Philippines. The term 'Moro' still has a wide currency in the Mindanao-Sulu region, but with a significantly different connotation. Since the late 1960s a deepening Islamic consciousness and an increased unity among Muslim Filipinos, in the face of the politics of integration in the Philippines, has led some Philippine Muslim nationalists to refer to themselves collectively as Bangsa Moro ('the Muslim people'). In this usage the term 'Moro' has thus been transformed into a positive symbol of collective identity.

In the early 1970s, broad-based separatist movements began to emerge in the southern Philippines as a result of the political, social and economic marginalisation of the Muslim population of Mindanao and Sulu. As Muslims in a Christian-dominated state, Islam has been an important ideological-cultural aspect of the separatist struggle in this area.[1] Increased globalisation, and its associated rapid exchange of money, goods and ideas, including the dissemination of radical ideologies and political tactics, as well as the increased travel of Muslims between the Middle East and the southern Philippines, also played a pivotal role.[2] The first major group to emerge in 1971 in the southern Philippine was the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari. The initial aim of this group was to establish a separate Moro homeland with "a democratic system of government which [does] not allow or tolerate any form of exploitation and oppression of any human being by another or of one nation by another",[3] and the preservation of Islamic and indigenous culture.[4] However, internal fighting divided the group from the outset and over the years a number of factions split from the MNLF. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), identified with the Islamic scholar Hashim Salamat, separated from the MNLF in 1984, stressing the ideological importance of Islamic renewal as part of the struggle for Muslim self-determination.[5]

Like separatist movements in other parts of the world, the MILF and MNLF chose armed struggle to further their aims. Successive Philippine governments answered in kind, with some presidents using extreme forms of violence, including the use of napalm, against the local population in the south.[6] Over the years the ongoing conflict between these groups and the successive Philippine governments resulted in considerable destruction of villages and towns in the area and the displacement of the local population, including Christians, Muslims and Bajaus.

Guerrilla warfare was the predominant pattern of armed struggle used by the MNLF and the MILF, with troops of both groups controlling parts of the countryside and establishing fixed bases in the southern Philippines. However, in both organisations individual leaders and their idiosyncratic tactics caused problems. Rogue elements within both the MNLF and MILF were accused of being responsible for kidnappings, extortion and robberies in the Philippines and occasional pirate attacks off the country's coast.[7]

Since the 1970s, attempts have been made by the MNLF, MILF and the Philippine government to

end the conflict in the south. In 1996, after decades of negotiations, the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Philippine government. However, due to corruption within the MNLF and, perhaps more importantly, because the government did not keep its promises regarding economic assistance and the fact that numerous former MNLF fighters were left without employment, unrest persisted.[8] In fact, many dissatisfied MNLF members defected to the MILF, particularly after 1996, due to their frustration over the outcome of the agreement. Therefore, by 1996 (if not earlier) the MILF became the most powerful insurgent movement in the southern Philippines. The Philippine government had recognised the importance and influence of the MILF early on and in 1992 began negotiations. However, while a number of agreements between the government and the MILF were reached over the years and a cease-fire signed in 2001, the situation remains volatile and negotiations are still ongoing.[9]

Dissatisfaction with the MILF and MNLF and the failure of the Philippine government to either solve the Mindanao-Sulu problem politically, or truly abide by the tenets of the various peace agreements reached with the MNLF and MILF, enhanced the radicalisation of some young Muslims. This radicalising process and political frustration on the part of Muslim youth was demonstrated by the emergence and rise of the extremely militant group, Abu Sayyaf.

The Abu Sayyaf

The Abu Sayyaf was founded in the early 1990s by a former MNLF member Abdurajak Janjalani. A charismatic leader and an eloquent speaker, Janjalani was also a committed Muslim scholar who had studied, among other places, in Mecca and Libya. After his return to the Philippines from the Middle East, Janjalani broke with the MNLF, as he, unlike the MNLF leadership, remained committed to the notion of *jihad* for an independent Islamic state, and founded his own organisation – the Abu Sayyaf.[10]

Since the early 1990s the Abu Sayyaf is believed to be responsible for a spate of attacks and robberies in the southern Philippines, including bombings, extortion, raids of villages, attacks on military posts and kidnappings. The military blamed the Abu Sayyaf for committing 102 terrorist acts between 1991 and 1995 alone, and claimed it amassed 20 million Pesos through kidnapping in that period.[11] The government reacted in force against the Abu Sayyaf. By the mid-1990s, sporadic battles between the Abu Sayyaf and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were severely affecting the civilian population on the island of Basilan, the stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf,[12] as well as on surrounding islands, resulting in the displacement of thousands of people in the area.[13]

In 1998, Abdurajak Janjalani was killed in a gun battle with the police and the organizational and ideological structure of the Abu Sayyaf changed. After considerable internal struggle, Abdurajak Janjalani was succeeded by his brother Khaddafy Janjalani, who lacked the ideological and religious moorings of Abdurajak.[14] Not all commanders and fighters of the Abu Sayyaf accepted Khaddafy as their new leader, and the group developed into an even more radical movement consisting of several loosely connected factions, without a clear set of doctrines and principles.[15]

However, even before Abdurajak Janjalani's death, the Philippine government repeatedly characterised the Abu Sayyaf as a group of bandits with no political agenda, profiting from the general state of lawlessness on the edge of the frontier in the southern Philippines. Indeed, it often appears difficult to draw a clear line dividing political aims from criminal purposes in regard to the Abu Sayyaf. There is no doubt that kidnapping and ransom have played an important part in the group's strategy and tactics. Yet the group's basic aim was clearly defined as the establishment of an independent Islamic state in the southern Philippines. Judging by demands made during kidnapping incidents throughout the 1990s, other, perhaps more realistic aims, were also of critical importance to the group. These included the exclusion of undesirable foreign influences, such as Christian

missionaries, from the southern Philippines, the banning of foreign fishing boats and fishermen from the waters of the Sulu and Celebes seas, and the teaching of Islam in Philippine schools.[16] These demands indicate that the group is not just 'in it for the money' but has been fighting for fundamental political and economic objectives and changes.

More difficult, though, is determining whether the group is primarily religiously or politically motivated. During Abdurajak Janjalani´s leadership, Abu Sayyaf members and the group's aims were heavily influenced by Janjalani´s teachings and his interpretation of *jihad*. However, the group's emergence out of the backwater of historical-political neglect of the Muslim population in the southern Philippines, as well as economic-environmental demands such as the banning of foreign fishermen, indicate that the Abu Sayyaf´s agenda was first and foremost political in nature, even under Janjalani´s leadership. After Khaddafy took over the reins of leadership in 1999, the group lost some of its Islamic ideological base, and political aims became even more explicit and prominent. Nonetheless, Islam and the plight of the regional Muslim populace remained an important part of Abu Sayyaf ideology.[17]

A Change of tactics - Operations across borders

Until April 2000 the Abu Sayyaf had confined its operations to the southern Philippines. The audacious kidnapping of 21 international tourists and resort workers from the Malaysian resort island of Sipadan therefore marked a new phase in Abu Sayyaf operations and strategy.

The kidnapping occurred at a time of unrest in the southern Philippines. President Estrada had addressed the problems in the southern part of the country primarily with military force, thus intensifying the armed conflict. Despite peace-talks in late 1999, the conflict between the AFP and the MILF escalated in early 2000, resulting in a full-scale war in the south.[18] While the AFP offensive against the MILF was in progress, the on-going conflict between the Abu Sayyaf and the military on Basilan also intensified. On March 20, an Abu Sayyaf group, headed by Khaddafy Janjalani, attacked an army outpost on Basilan. As the attack failed, fleeing Abu Sayyaf members seized more than 50 hostages from two nearby schools for use as human shields. Many of the schoolchildren abducted were released shortly after their capture, but the group held on to about 30 hostages, among them a parish priest and 17 schoolchildren. Following this wholesale abduction, the Abu Sayyaf began issuing demands for such basic supplies as rice and blankets and requested that the movie actor and Muslim convert Robert Padilla be sent as a negotiator. Padilla, visiting the Abu Sayyaf camp, persuaded the group to release two of the children, but the conflict intensified once again when a Christian vigilante group kidnapped eleven members of Khaddafy Janjalani´s family, including his mother, his one-year old daughter and his pregnant wife. Although Khaddafy's wife and daughter were released soon after in exchange for hostages held by the Abu Sayyaf,[19] the group and the military remained locked in a standoff. Under tremendous pressure, the Abu Sayyaf published a new set of demands with an international appeal, calling for the release of Ramzi Yousef, the alleged World Trade Center bomber and Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, convicted of masterminding terrorist attacks, both imprisoned in the United States. The group further demanded all Christian crosses be removed on Basilan, the banning of foreign trawlers from the island's fishing grounds, and the teaching of Islam in public schools to be adopted across the southern Philippines.[20] On April 19, the Abu Sayyaf announced they had beheaded two teachers as a 'birthday gift' to Estrada, who turned 63 that day, and warned that other hostages would also die unless the government rapidly initiated steps towards meeting their political demands. Disregarding this threat, Estrada refused to negotiate with the Abu Sayyaf and launched an all-out assault on Janjalani´s hideout on April 22, sending in government troops, helicopters, and bombers.[21] The following day, another faction of the Abu Sayyaf, based on the island of Jolo, kidnapped 21 international tourists and resort employees from a Malaysian holiday resort on Sipadan Island.

In the course of this daring event, members of an Abu Sayyaf faction led by Ghalib Andang (alias Commander Robot) raided a diving resort on the island of Sipadan and escaped with 21 hostages, among them two South Africans, a Lebanese, two Finns, a French couple, and three members of a German family. They were taken to the southern Philippine island of Jolo, where they were held captive for several months while political and financial demands for their freedom were negotiated. The kidnapping was an ordeal for all the hostages. They had to move from camp to camp on the island to evade attacks by the AFP and adapt to life in the jungle of Jolo. However, the Abu Sayyaf also allowed visitors to enter the camp. This included their own relatives, other Abu Sayyaf members, interested locals, vendors selling food and other goods to the hostages, a Christian sect called the 'Jesus Miracle Crusaders' who came to pray with the hostages for their release, as well as representatives of the local and international media. Indeed, throughout the next month, 20 television crews, 24 photographers and countless journalists from all around the world, but primarily from the hostages' home countries, visited to report 'live from the hostage camp'.[22] Through the regular visits of journalists and the subsequent media coverage, the identity and fate of the hostages became known around the world. However, the visits of the media in the hostage camp also caused problems, as journalists were themselves kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf members or factions and other rogue groups while visiting the hostage camps.[23]

Meanwhile, the negotiations for the hostages' release were ongoing, with the media coverage putting additional pressure on the Philippine government to ensure the safe release of the captives. The initial demands of the kidnappers were reportedly political in nature and included the establishment of an independent Islamic state in the Southern Philippines and the establishment of a human rights commission to investigate human rights abuses against Muslim Filipinos in Sabah.[24] However, the Sipadan hostages were eventually released in small groups after the kidnappers accepted substantial ransoms and the promise of major developmental projects to be implemented in the Sulu-Mindanao region. With estimates regarding the ransom paid for the hostages varying between US$15 to US$25 million,[25] the kidnapping was undoubtedly highly successful for the Abu Sayyaf. While the group did not accomplish their principal political goals, their demands have (at least to some extent) been discussed in many parts of the world, and an extraordinarily large amount of ransom money was paid, leaving the group with necessary funds to buy more equipment and recruit new members. In order to 'crush' the now strengthened group, the government's military offensive against the Abu Sayyaf continued unrestrained in the wake of the Sipadan kidnapping. However, on May 27, 2001, the Abu Sayyaf abducted yet another 20 people, including three Americans, from a holiday resort on the island of Palawan in the western Philippines. Announcing that she had no intention of suffering the humiliation experienced by her predecessor Joseph Estrada in dealing with the terrorist group, President Arroyo immediately ruled out both negotiations and ransoms, and warned the kidnappers to free their hostages unconditionally and surrender or 'die in a hail of bullets'.[26] However, a ransom was eventually paid to free the US hostages, but the money did not reach the Abu Sayyaf faction holding the hostages. After the failed ransom attempt, the AFP, acting on US intelligence, attacked the hostage camp in June 2002. Two hostages, among them one American captive, were killed, while the other US hostage was freed.[27]

Despite government pressure, the Abu Sayyaf continued to conduct attacks. However, after this spate of kidnappings, the group began to concentrate more on bomb attacks in cities and at sea. Among the most devastating acts committed by the group in recent years was the bombing of the *SuperFerry 14* in February 2004, in which more than 100 people lost their lives. On this occasion, an Abu Sayyaf member brought a package with a TV filled with explosives onboard the ferry sailing from Manila to Bacolod and Davao. The perpetrator placed the bomb in the cheapest and busiest passenger section and left the boat before it cast off. An hour after its departure, the bomb, triggered by a timing device, exploded and started a fire that engulfed the ship.[28]

The aftermath of 9/11 and the involvement of the US and Australia

Since 9/11, the nature of the conflict in the southern Philippines has changed. After the attack, President Arroyo offered full support for the international coalition against terrorism and linked the international efforts to combat terrorism to the struggle against the Abu Sayyaf and other terrorist groups in the Philippines.[29] In return, the Philippine government received financial and moral support from the US to fight against terrorism in general and the Abu Sayyaf in particular. US interest in addressing the Abu Sayyaf threat was strengthened by the kidnapping of US nationals and alleged links between the group and al-Qaeda. The Abu Sayyaf is believed to have received funding and support from al-Qaeda in the early 1990s. However, the link weakened after 1995, resulting in a shortage of funds for the Abu Sayyaf, with the group resorting to kidnapping for ransom. There are different assessments regarding the strength of the current links between the Abu Sayyaf and al-Qaeda. While some observers suggest that the connections between the two groups are weak, others, among them members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, believe that the ties between the two groups have been substantially strengthened after 9/11, and that the Abu Sayyaf has been receiving training, arms and other support in recent years. Also of interest to the US is that the Abu Sayyaf is cooperating with other radical groups and individuals, such as radical members of the MILF and the Indonesian based terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which is also believed to have links to al-Qaeda. Members of JI have been found in the southern Philippines. Abu Sayyaf, JI and MILF members have conducted joint operations, including bombings.[30] Furthermore, camps have been established in the southern Philippines where militants from various Southeast Asian groups have received training, with the number of people trained there now believed to equal the number of militants trained in Afghanistan.[31]

All these factors strengthened US interest in combating the Abu Sayyaf and led to increased deployment of US military personnel to the southern Philippines to assist the AFP in its campaign against the Abu Sayyaf. This cooperation between the US and the Philippines is conducted under the two countries' Visiting Forces Agreement signed in 1998. As early as 2002, 1,300 US military personnel supported the AFP in the Abu Sayyaf stronghold of Basilan as part of Operation Balikatan. The role of the US was restricted to non-combat operations, despite offers from the US of more direct involvement. President Arroyo, was forced to decline this offer due to widespread criticism and concern voiced by local politicians, the media and various NGOs.[32]

After the US supported operations in Basilan ended in 2002, US military assistance to the Philippines continued. In 2005, for example, two major operations involving US military personnel commenced and still continue today. Both operations target the Abu Sayyaf, with the first focusing on western Mindanao, and the second on the island of Jolo, a further stronghold of the group. US support in western Mindanao reportedly included intelligence and communication assistance for the AFP and the "deployment of Navy Seal and Special Operations personnel with AFP ground units".[33] In Jolo, US personnel assisted the AFP in mine clearing. Additionally, in February and March 2006, a joint Philippine-US military exercise was held in the Sulu islands. The exercise involved 5,500 US military personnel, 250 of which participated in non-combat exercises on the island concentrating on civic action projects such as medical services. After the exercise, the US troops did not leave the southern Philippines as "the exercise carried over into a long-term US support operation in Jolo", which has reportedly expanded over time.[34] While the US troops have continued to play a non-combat role, some US military personnel have been allowed to accompany AFP troops on their missions. On such assignments, the armed US troops are allowed to defend themselves if attacked.[35] However, reports concerning the number of US troops in the Philippines and the nature of their engagement vary widely, with the presence of US forces in some parts of the country only made public after their presence was accidentally discovered.[36]

Regardless, the additional personnel, training and equipment from the US certainly contributed to some of the successful operations against the Abu Sayyaf, which weakened the group in some of its strongholds. Among the successful operations of government troops were the killings of a number of leading Abu Sayyaf members, including Khaddafy Janjalani in September 2006. Yassar Igasan, a founding member of the group, succeeded him as leader of the Abu Sayyaf in mid 2007.[37]

While the US is still the most significant country in terms of foreign military engagement in the Philippines, Australia has also strengthened its military relationship with the Philippines. Australia and the Philippines signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in May 2007 after three years of negotiation. SOFA is a reciprocal agreement which provides a new legal framework to support Australian and Philippines troops engaged in military cooperation activities in both countries. Under this agreement, new equipment and training will be provided to the AFP and a significant number of Australian military personnel can be deployed to the Philippines. The actual number of visiting forces will be determined by the two countries and can vary considerably between operations. Nontheless, Australia will only be the second country to be allowed to send substantial numbers of military personnel to the Philippines. However, like US military personnel in the Philippines, Australian troops will be restricted to a non-combat role. Despite this restriction, SOFA is a significant change in military cooperation between the two countries.[38] While Australia and the Philippines have had military ties in the past, collaboration has been limited to comparatively small-scale education and training assistance and joint exercises, including annual bilateral counter-terrorism training exercises.[39] SOFA will therefore significantly strengthen military cooperation, with President Arroyo expressing hopes that Australian assistance will professionalise and modernise the AFP and improve the security situation in her country. Australia will also benefit from the agreement, with Australia's assistant defence secretary Ben Coleman, for example, stressing the common interest of the two countries in addressing the threat of terrorism in Southeast Asia.[40] However, SOFA still has to be ratified by the Philippine Senate before it will come into force, with the Philippine Defence Department asking the senate to swiftly ratify the agreement as recently as mid November 2007. Despite this delay, talks have already begun regarding joint exercises in the southern Philippines, and Australia has offered 30 river boats to support the fight against the Abu Sayyaf and JI in the south of the country.[41]

Foreign military involvement: The way forward?

Since 9/11 the Philippine government has, once again, received military assistance from foreign countries, particularly the US, for its military campaign in the south. This assistance, which included the presence of US military personnel in the southern Philippines, has not been welcomed by all. Opponents have, for example, voiced concern about the sovereignty of the Philippines. The deployment of US troops to the southern Philippines has also triggered protests, with activists fearing that the US presence could aggravate the volatile situation in the south rather than improve the living conditions and security of the local population. Accusations of human rights abuses by the AFP working with US forces and the raping of a Filipino woman by US soldiers have added additional fuel to such protests.[42]

The proposed involvement of Australian troops has also already caused concern and protests. Some activists have, for example, questioned the motivation behind Australia's proposed involvement in the southern Philippines, accusing the Australian government of instigating SOFA to protect Australian commercial interests in the Philippines. The interests of Australian mining companies are of particular relevance here, with numerous Australian companies already active in the Philippines. Furthermore, at the time SOFA was signed, Arroyo had been meeting with representatives of the mining industry, including executives of Melbourne-based BHP Billiton to discuss a multi-billion dollar nickel project in Mindanao.[43]

Other critics of SOFA have voiced concern that the presence of Australian troops will have an adverse impact upon security in the southern Philippines. Indeed, it is questionable whether or not Australian military involvement in the Philippines will help to solve the conflict. First of all, the presence of Australian troops will support a military approach to the conflict. Military force has, however, in the past decades failed to resolve the conflict. At present, with negotiations between the MILF and the government ongoing, increased national and foreign military presence may be particularly problematic. MILF members have already criticised the presence of US troops in the southern Philippines and will be unlikely to welcome Australians. Also, it remains difficult for US (and also in the future Australian) military personnel to distinguish between MILF and Abu Sayyaf fighters.[44]

Furthermore, military solutions in the southern Philippines have not been successful because, throughout the last decades, the AFP has been accused of human rights violations in the south and government operations have led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. These operations have therefore contributed to the suffering of the local population and have undoubtedly increased local support for groups such as the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf, which could not operate (or be as successful as they are) without assistance from the local population. Also, direct links between the Abu Sayyaf and corrupt members of the AFP reportedly exist, with guns and other military equipment sold by AFP members to the Abu Sayyaf. Evidence of collusion between AFP commanders and the Abu Sayyaf emerged, for example, in 2001. At the time, the AFP had surrounded an Abu Sayyaf faction holding US and Filipino hostages. Without apparent reason, some AFP units pulled out of the encirclement, allowing the terrorists and their captives to escape. An investigation by the government later concluded that “strong circumstantial evidence” exists that AFP commanders had cooperated with the Abu Sayyaf.[45]

AFP operations have not only been controversial in the south of the country. Indeed, the AFP has been accused of human rights abuses and the killing of political activists in other parts of the Philippines. While one objective of closer Australian-Philippine military cooperation is to professionalise the AFP, it will be difficult to ensure that a better-equipped and trained AFP will use their new equipment and skills in a responsible way that respects the rights of the local population. Also, with AFP members colluding with the Abu Sayyaf, it remains a concern that old and new military equipment may find its way into the hands of the Abu Sayyaf.

Military support of the AFP may therefore not be the best way forward. Other forms of assistance, such as aid for humanitarian, infrastructure and other civilian projects may be more suitable. This is of importance because some of the provinces and islands in the southern Philippines are among the poorest in the country. Basilan, home of the Abu Sayyaf, is one example. More than 50 per cent of the population of Basilan live just on or below the poverty-line, the literacy rate is low, and social services hardly exist.[46] While the Australian government is already contributing substantially in terms of aid to the Philippines, an increase in such assistance rather than direct military involvement may be more successful in solving the conflict in the southern Philippines. Indeed, even if the Abu Sayyaf is financially or ideologically supported by the al-Qaeda network or JI, it is crucial to remember that it is the socio-economic problems of the southern Philippines that have primarily contributed to the birth of the Abu Sayyaf. In fact, grave issues of underdevelopment, which cut across national identities, still encourage many young Muslim Filipinos to sympathise with or join the Abu Sayyaf or similar organisations. Also, the developments of the last decades have demonstrated that insufficient economic and humanitarian assistance and the continuous use of military force to ‘pacify’ and integrate the south into the main body of the Philippine nation-state, is unlikely to succeed,[47] because, as MILF vice-chairman Ghazali Jafaar already clearly pointed out in 1995: “As long as Muslims continue to be oppressed, there will always be Abu Sayyaf.”[48]

Information about the author

Carolin Liss is a PhD candidate at Murdoch University. (c.liss@murdoch.edu.au). This paper is based on research conducted for her B.A. Honours thesis "The Sipadan Kidnapping 'Drama' (April - September 2000). The Rise of the Abu Sayyaf, International Terrorism, and the Global Media." and her recently submitted PhD thesis: Maritime Piracy in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh, 1992-2006: A Prismatic Interpretation of Security.

Other policy forums by Carolin Liss:

- The Challenges of Piracy in Southeast Asia and the Role of Australia, 25 October 2007, Austral Policy Forum 07-19A
- The roots of piracy in Southeast Asia, 22 October 2007, Austral Policy Forum 07-18A

Endnotes

[1] W.K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism. The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 12. Efforts were also made by Muslims to solve their problems and maintain their identity by peaceful means. See: Macapado Abaton Muslim, *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: The Nonviolent Autonomy* Alternative, Marawi City: Mindanao State University, 1994. Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels. Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 197-233. On Moro identity see Charles O. Frake; 'The Genesis of Kinds of People in the Sulu Archipelago', in: Anwar S. Dil (ed); `Language and Cultural Description. Essays by Charles O. Fraké, Stanford, California 1980, pp. 314-315. Rad D. Silva; `Two Hills of the same Land, Mindanao-Sulu, Critical Studies & Research Group, 1979, p.31. James Francis Warren; `Moró, in: Ainslie T. Embree (ed); `Encyclopaedia of Asian Historý, Volume 3, New York 1988, p.39 .

[2] Other factors include political developments in the Philippines, such as the declaration of martial law by President Marcos.

[3] Nur Misuari, quoted in Man, p. 87. The argument against oppression and exploitation was not only aimed at the Philippine government, but also against the US, whose involvement in the Philippines was seen as neo-colonial and imperialistic.

[4] McKenna, pp. 163-4.

[5] Anthony Davis, 'Evolution in the Philippine war' *Jane´s Intelligence Review*, July 2000, p. 29. Rainer Werning, 'Viel Widerstand, wenig Anpassung', *Südostasien*, Jg.16, Nr.3, September 2000, p. 70.

[6] Rainer Werning, *US-Imperialismus auf den Philippinen. Der Mindanao Konflikt*, Muenster: Wurf Verlag, 1983, pp. 89-91.

[7] Lela Garner Noble, 'The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines', *Pacific Affairs* 49, no. 3, Fall 1976, pp. 412-18.

[8] David Wurfel, 'The Philippines: Collateral Damage in the War on Terrorism? Domestic and International Realities', CANCAPS Bulletin du CONCSAP, no. 33, Canadian Consortium on Asia Pacific Security, May 2002, p. 2.

[9] Larry Niksch, 'Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation', CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Updated 24 January 2007, p. 2.

[10] Christos Iacovou, 'From MNLF to Abu Sayyaf: The Radicalization of Islam in the Philippines', 11 July 2000, http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=116, accessed 24 January 2001. Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, Quezon City: Ateneo Centre for Social Policy and Public Affairs, Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000, p. 211.

[11] Vitug and Gloria, pp. 219-20.

[12] It remains difficult to establish the approximate number of persons who belong to the group. Estimates vary widely, from around one hundred to one thousand armed men. Some observers believe the Abu Sayyaf swelled from an initial band of twenty to a group of 600 between 1992 and 1998, before rapidly declining to about 200 members. However, it seems possible that the Abu Sayyaf has never numbered more than 300 armed men. Nonetheless, in addition to the fighting core the group has an unknown number of active civilian supporters alleged to engage in recruiting, training and other non-combat activities, as well as an unascertained number of local-regional sympathisers. Mark Turner, 'Terrorism and Secession in the Southern Philippines: The Rise of the Abu Sayyaf", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 17, no. 1, June 1995, p.15. 'A Past Traced in Terror - Abu Sayyaf´s short but violent history', part of: `The Koenighsa Assignment. (ASG)-(Part 2)', *The Global Spy Magazine*, 2001, http://www.spynews.net/AbuSayyafGroup-2.html, accessed 21 April 2001.

[13] Turner, pp. 7-8.

[14] 'Bearer of the Sword. The Abu Sayyaf has nebulous beginnings and incoherent aims, Part of: The Koenighsa Assignment. (ASG)-(Part 2)', *The Global Spy Magazine*, 2001, http://www.spynews.net/AbuSayyafGroup-2.html, accessed 21 April 2001.

[15] Haikal Mohamed Isa, 'Govt Negotiators Pocketed Ransom Money, Abu Sayyaf Claims', *Bernama*, http://global.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=9907845...Fmt=3&Sid=4&Idx=26&Deli=1&RQT=309&Dtp=1, accessed 25 May 2001. 'Military Sees Diminished Threat from Extremist Group', *Businessworld Manila*, 7 May 1999, http://global.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=9907885...mt=3&Sid=5&Idx=387&Deli=1&RQT=309&Dtp=1, accessed 25 May 2001. See also: Rommel Banlaoi, 'Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organisations in Southeast Asia: The Abu Sayyaf Case', Paper presented at International Symposium: The Dynamics and Structures of Terrorist Threats in Southeast Asia, 2005.

[16] Turner, p. 15.

[17] Some observers have argued that the Abu Sayyaf is, under Khaddafy, only a group of bandits.

[18] Ronald J. May, `Muslim Mindanao. Four Years after the Peace Agreement´, *Southeast Asian Affairs 2001*, Singapore 2001, p. 270. Observers believe that more than 600 civilians were killed and 237,000 Muslims and Christians were displaced in the MILF-AFP conflict until the end of May alone, when the conflict once again intensified.

[19] Julie Alipala-Inot; `Treated Well, Say Vigilantes´, part of: `The Koenigha Assignment. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)´, http://www.spynews.net/AbuSayyafGroup-1.htm, accessed 26 April 2001; `Abu Rejects Aventajado as Hostage Negotiator´, part of: `The Koenigha Assignment. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)´, http://www.spynews.net/AbuSayyafGroup-1.htm, accessed 26 april 2001.

[20] The demands changed over time. In June it was reported that the Abu Sayyaf demanded that public schools in Sulu hire more Muslim teachers, the compulsory wearing of veils by Muslim students in Sulu, as well as a cessation of Christmas parties and proms in public schools. See: Hadja Amy Malbun, `They Express Conditions for Freeing Basilan Hostages´, http://global.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=9907870...mt=3&Sid=5&Idx=254&Deli=1&RQT=309&Dtp=1, *Businessworld,* Manila, June 27, 2000, accessed 25 May 2001.

[21] `Trouble in Paradise´, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/highlights/hostage/storydb/f3.html accessed 04/26/01. `Philippine Troops Press Attack on Rebels, Defying Threats to Kill Hostages´, *New York Times*, April 24, 2000, http://global.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=9907883...mt=3&Sid=5&Idx=368&Deli=1&RQT=309&Dtp=1 accessed 25 May 2001. `Filipino Army Attacks Rebels Holding Hostages´, *New York Times*, April 23, 2000, http://global.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=9907883...mt=3&Sid=5&Idx=369&Deli=1&RQT=309&Dtp=1 accessed 25 May 2001.

[22] Werner Wallert , *Horror im Tropenparadies*, München: Goldmann, December 2000, pp. 51-5.

[23] `Auch Reporter gerieten in Gefangenschaft´, *Spiegel Online*, 2 Juni 2000, accessed 24 January 2001.

[24] Wallert, pp. 71-3.

[25] `Killing Fields´, *Spiegel*, 5. September 2000, accessed 12 March 2001. Andreas Bänziger, `Macht durch Lösegeld´, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11. September 2000, p. 2. `Faszination des Terrors´, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23. April 2001, p. 9

[26] Alex Perry, `Crossfire. A Bloodbath Erupts in the Philippines after Muslim Kidnappers Try Once Too Often´, *Time*, June 11, 2001, pp. 28-30; `No More Ransoms. Kidnapping in the Philippines´, *Economist*, 2 June 2001, http://web1.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/...yn=10!xrn_38_0_A75175670?sw_aep=murdoc accessed 28 June 2001.

[27] Niksch, p.11

[28] Labog-Javellana and Tubeza, 'SuperFerry 14 Bombing Solved, Says Arroyo', p. A1.

[29] Penny Crisp, `The War of the Worlds´, *Asiaweek*, vol 27, no 38, September 28, 2001, p.24

[30] Niksch, pp. 5-6.

[31] Kit Collier and Malcolm Cook, 'The Philippines' Sanctuaries of Terror', Project Syndicate, 2006, accessed 10 August 2006.

[32] See: Niksch

[33] Niksch, p.14

[34] Niksch, p. 14.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Wurfel, p. 3.

[37] 'Testing Confirms Abu Sayyaf Death', BBC News, 20 January 2007, accessed 20 June 2007. 'New Abu Sayyaf Leader "Is Islamic Scholar"', CNN, 27 June 2007, accessed 28 June 2007.

[38] Michael Lim Ubac, 'RP, Australia Sign Security Agreement', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 June 2007. Sandra O'Malley, 'Fed: Aust Boosts Counter-terror Assistance to the Philippines', *Australian Associated Press General News*, 31 May 2007.

[39] Australian Government Department of Defence, 'Annual Report 2003-04. Defence Cooperation. Southeast Asia. Performance Summary', accessed 26 October 2007.

[40] 'Australia-Philippines Military Pact Sealed this Week', *Agence France Presse*, 29 May 2007.

[41] 'Defense Chief Urges Ratification of SOFA with Australia', GMANews, 11 November 2007, accessed 23 November 2007. Emma-Kate Symons, 'Diggers to Target Filipino Terror', *Australian*, 29 January 2007.

[42] Niksch, p. 16. 'Basilan Residents Protest US Military Presence', Kyodo News International, 6 February 2002, accessed 15 November 2007.

[43] Lim Ubac, n.p.

[44] Wurfel, p. 4.

[45] Niksch, p. 8.

[46] Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*, p. 207. Turner, 'Terrorism and Secession in the Southern Philippines', p. 13. For more general information see: 'The Philippine Province of Basilan', http://www.philippine.org/01prov/basilan.html accessed 5 April 2001.

[47] There are various suggestions to solve the conflict peacefully. A remarkable number of them suggest that a federal system be implemented.

[48] Rigoberto Tiglao; `To Fight or Not To Fight´, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 158, no 10, March 9, 1995, p. 21

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org