

THE JOLO BOMBING AND THE LEGACY OF ISIS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines will be living with the impact of ISIS for years to come, regardless of what happens in the Middle East. ISIS leaves behind not just the remnants of the groups that took over Marawi in 2017 but also the vision of a “pure” Islamic state as an alternative to the status quo. The challenge to that vision has to be more than military operations aimed at killing known extremist leaders. The Duterte government needs a non-military strategy aimed at addressing the causes of radicalization and preventing the regeneration of militant groups. The need is especially urgent with the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), led by former commanders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

If BARMM and the MILF succeed in providing a level of governance that is at least no worse and with a little luck somewhat better than past governments while at the same time giving a meaningful role to ex-combatants, violent extremism could find less fertile ground. If, on the other hand, disputes over access to jobs, resources, land and contracts proliferate and disillusionment sets in, pro-ISIS components could get a new lease on life.

One MILF leader said in February 2019 said BARMM was the last chance the MILF had for peace. This MILF-led autonomous political entity was what it had been promising its followers for years. The leaders had played their last card. He put it in the starkest terms: “If this fails, you liquidate hope”.

Stronger support for pro-ISIS components is only one of several possible outcomes of a failed BARMM but it could be the deadliest. The single most important goal of counter-terrorism programs and funding in the Philippines now should be trying to ensure that BARMM succeeds in meeting the huge challenges it faces.

It is also important to stand back and assess the current state of ISIS in the wake of the 27 January 2019 bombing of Our Lady of Mt Carmel cathedral in Jolo in which 23 people died. This report is a very preliminary attempt to look at what that bombing tells us about leadership, reorganization of pro-ISIS groups and the presence of foreign fighters. It underscores the need to look back at past attacks for clues to how the various pro-ISIS components, including extremist Balik Islam elements, might interact in the future.

Indonesia and Malaysia both have a strong interest in seeing Philippine counter-terrorism efforts succeed but lingering distrust and many bureaucratic obstacles prevent the sharing of critical information. Donor efforts to facilitate exchanges and joint workshops with officials from the three countries should intensify, even if the Jolo bombing temporarily widened the gulf between the Philippines and Indonesia.

It would help to lessen misunderstanding if the Philippines had a better coordinated communication strategy on terrorism issues, so that one agency only was authorised to assess the available facts and speak to the media.

The report is based on discussions in Mindanao and Manila with civil society leaders, police and military and journalists as well as documentary materials.

II. ISIS LEADERSHIP AFTER MARAWI

Many components of the pro-ISIS alliance that took over Marawi in May 2017 are still active, some clearly collaborating, others acting more autonomously. Before examining the current state of play, it is worth a short review of how ISIS in the Philippines evolved over time, with

three distinct phases.¹

- Phase I, 2013 to 2015: The key ISIS bases were in Basilan and Sultan Kudarat, with support from Hajan Sawadjaan, a leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Jolo through Sawdjaan's son-in-law, Amin Baco. Several commanders swore allegiance to Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi as soon as Islamic State was declared in June 2014. Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the ASG on Basilan, was acknowledged as overall amir in late 2015. Beginning in late 2014, the group known as Anshar Khilafah Philippines (AKP) in Sultan Kudarat was providing regular military training to recruits from central Mindanao, Jolo and Basilan as well as to recent converts to Islam (Balik Islam) recruited from other parts of the Philippines, including Manila. Several foreigners were already involved, including three Malaysians and an Indonesian on Basilan, and an Indonesian and a Belizean with AKP.
- Phase II, 2016 to October 2017: After a key AKP camp was overrun in December 2015, ISIS training shifted to Butig, Lanao del Sur with Abdullah and Omar Maute increasingly taking responsibility for operational decisions until by November 2016, the ISIS nerve center had moved from Basilan to Butig. Marawi was seized on 23 May 2017. Isnilon Hapilon officially remained the amir until his death in Marawi, shortly before the city was declared "liberated".
- Phase III, October 2017 to early 2019: After Hapilon and the Maute brothers were killed in the final days of the siege, the surviving fighters dispersed, reportedly agreeing to continue the war for an Islamic state from their home areas. Under the circumstances, a decentralised structure made sense. Three main nodes emerged: Lanao del Sur, under Benito Owayda Marohombsar alias Abu Dar, an ethnic Maranao; Maguindanao, under Esmael Abdulmalek alias Abu Torayfe, an ethnic Maguindanaon who leads a faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF); and Jolo under Hajan Sawadjaan, an ethnic Tausug. By 2018, Sawadjaan was being increasingly cited in the media as a host to foreign fighters and a possible successor to Hapilon, and both the 31 July 2018 Lamitan bombing and the Jolo cathedral bombing appear to have originated in his camp in Patikul, Jolo.

The question of overall leadership mattered more in Phases I and II, when ISIS in the Middle East was at its height and the pro-ISIS coalition in the Philippines was still hoping for recognition as its East Asia province (*wilayah*). The Philippine clusters needed to demonstrate unity as a condition of recognition, and unity was also important in terms of seeking funds abroad. The imperative of having a single amir may gradually diminish, but for now it seems to be still important as evidence that commitment to the cause of Islamic State transcends ethnic and regional divisions. That said, there appeared to be two contenders as of February 2019: Hajan Sawadjaan and Abu Dar.

A. *The Case for Sawadjaan's Leadership*

Hajan Sawadjaan, in his sixties and based in Patikul, Jolo, is one of the ASG's most powerful leaders, but this should be understood in the context of ASG being "a network of networks, an alliance of smaller groups around individual charismatic leaders who compete and cooperate to

¹ For a more detailed analysis of how ISIS in the Philippines and the "East Asia Wilayah" evolved, see IPAC, "Pro-ISIS Groups in Mindanao and Their Links to Indonesia and Malaysia," Report No.33, 25 October 2016 and "Marawi, the 'East Asia Wilayah' and Indonesia," Report No.38, 21 July 2017, both available at www.understandingconflict.org.

maximize their reputation for violence.”² A former member of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Sawadjaan joined Abu Sayyaf when it broke away from the MNLF in 1991.³ Somewhere along the way he acquired the title “Hatib” or *khatib*, usually referring to a local Islamic cleric who gives the sermon at Friday prayers. He is also referred to locally as “Imam Hajan”. He has no advanced religious training and may not have finished grade school, but he has a sawmill business and several of those arrested in connection with the Jolo bombing worked as loggers. He himself reportedly once worked briefly as a logger in Sabah, Malaysia and speaks some Malay as a result.

Sawadjaan’s group was long associated with ASG’s nominal leader, Radullon Sahiron, but reportedly broke with him over support for ISIS and his willingness to host foreign jihadis.⁴ The group was also responsible for a string of high-profile kidnappings, including the September 2015 abduction on the resort island of Samal of two Canadians, who were eventually beheaded, and a Norwegian, who was eventually released.

It is not clear when Sawadjaan swore allegiance to al-Baghdadi, but his was one of the few groups in the ASG that both supported ISIS and continued kidnapping for ransom operations. He was in Sulu for the duration of the Marawi siege, as far as we know, though his fighters were responsible for periodic diversionary attacks on Philippine soldiers. His son-in-law, Malaysia-born Amin Baco, was more actively involved in the siege and may have helped lead a large contingent of survivors back to Patikul before the military’s final assault.⁵

Top Philippine officials and unnamed U.S. sources have asserted that Hajan Sawadjaan became the new overall amir in around May 2018, based on a video which reportedly shows his installation in Patikul. The video was described to IPAC by an officer of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) as depicting representatives of ASG Basilan, ASG Jolo and Abu Torayfe’s group forming a *shura* or council to elect a new leader to replace Isnilon Hapilon. Those present at the meeting not only elected Sawadjaan but reportedly agreed that if anything happens to him, Furuji Indama, an ASG leader on Basilan who served as Isnilon Hapilon’s deputy, will take over as amir.⁶ That designation, if true, is significant, because several officials interviewed in mid-2018 suggested that Indama was not ideologically inclined and perhaps more likely to lead the much-diminished Basilan ASG back to kidnapping.

While it is true that Sawadjaan was chosen, it is also noteworthy that there were apparently no representatives from Lanao del Sur present, meaning that Sawadjaan may not be acceptable to Abu Dar – who has better credentials as a scholar-fighter – and the ethnic Maranao still fighting under him. There apparently was also no one from Salahuddin Hassan’s group, another significant absence. Hassan, one of the pro-ISIS alliance’s most experienced bomb-makers and extremist operatives, may not want to be subordinate to anyone in Sulu though he has partnered with ASG factions in the past.⁷ He has also worked closely with Abu Torayfe but operates independently of BIFF.

Sawadjaan thus may lead what amounts to the southern faction of the pro-ISIS coalition, but if Abu Dar sees him as a usurper, competition between the two could spark a deadly round of one-upsmanship. Abu Dar was reportedly wounded in the right arm in a clash between some

2 International Crisis Group, “The Philippines: Counter-insurgency vs Counter-terrorism in Mindanao,” Asia Report No 152, 14 May 2008, p.7.

3 See Jim Gomez, “Amid loss of leadership, unknown militant rises in Philippines, Associated Press, 22 February 2019.

4 Sahiron was never interested in the global jihad and saw the presence of foreign fighters as only leading to targeting of his people by the U.S. and Philippine militaries.

5 IPAC interview with community leader in Zamboanga, February 2019.

6 IPAC interview at Westmincom, Zamboanga, February 2019.

7 A former MILF leader, Salahudin Hassan was a founder of the al-Khobar group, known for its terrorism and extortion activities in the early and mid-2000s. He operates mainly around the Liguasan Marsh in Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces but also reaches into Davao.

30 of his men and the military in Sultan Dumalondong, Lanao del Sur on 24 January 2019. The injury was not thought to be life-threatening.

B. Ajang-Ajang and Other Clusters in the Sawadjaan Network

Sawadjaan has several clusters working with him, reinforcing the idea of the ASG as a network of networks. One that has drawn particular attention since the Jolo bombing is Ajang-Ajang, because the military claimed that five of its members allegedly surrendered after they were named as suspects.⁸ Whether the five surrendered or were captured, however, and the extent of their involvement in Ajang-Ajang remains unclear.

In IPAC's previous visits to Mindanao, "Ajang-Ajang" was used as a generic term referring to fighters whose relatives were killed in military or police operations and who wanted to avenge their deaths. In the first days after the Jolo bombing, police seemed to be using it synonymously with "Lucky 9", an ASG kidnapping and extortion group led by the late Ninok Sappari until his death in February 2017. The group had no known ideological commitment to ISIS but was responsible for a series of criminal activities and ambushes of military personnel, stretching from Tawi-Tawi to Zamboanga. Its members were indeed mostly the children of killed fighters, although that description probably applies to many of the ASG groups active today.⁹

The branding of the local bombers as Ajang-Ajang was apparently based on police reports that one of those sought was a fugitive named Kamah. According to police chief Albayalde:

The suspect really is Kamah because we have an operation against him days back and we had an encounter with them... Kamah has been threatening this specific cathedral ever since he came back from Sabah.¹⁰

One of the group reportedly involved in the bombing but still at large, Barak Ingog, is the younger brother of an ASG leader, Surakah Ingog, who was killed in August 2018; he would thus fit the profile of Ajang-Ajang. Makrim, another fugitive of the same group, was reportedly an escapee from the Jolo jail who had been involved in the 2015 Samal kidnapping. The link of the others to Ajang-Ajang is not clear. Three of them knew each other because they all worked as loggers in Bastiong, Patikul, near the Sawadjaan camp and appear to have been firmly within the Sawadjaan circle rather than part of a separate but allied group like "Lucky 9."

Sawadjaan can also draw on younger leaders of his clan. They include his nephews, Jamil Sawadjaan and Mundi Sawadjaan from different brothers. Another nephew, Mujiv, took over as commander of his father's sub-group after his father was killed several years ago. Mundi has been involved in some of the crimes attributed to Ajang-Ajang, such as the 2014 kidnapping of German nationals Stefan Okonek and Henrike Diesen from their yacht that was sailing near Palawan.¹¹ Jamil and Mundi were also reportedly involved in the September 2018 kidnapping of two Indonesians, leading to speculation that funds from the ransom payments may have been

8 "Ajang-Ajang suspects in Jolo cathedral blast surrender," inquirer.net, 4 February 2019. The five, who have since been indicted, were Said Alih alias Pamong, Albaji Gadjali, Rajan Gadjali, Kaisar Gadjali and Kammah Pae. Others who were indicted but remained at large as of February 2019 were Usman Absara, Bapah Absara, Barak Ingog, Makrim Habisi and Ebing.

9 Statistics provided by Westmincom to IPAC show that from 2013 through 2018, 650 suspected ASG were killed while 326 were arrested. The ratio of killed to arrested may be even higher for the mid-1990s when the fathers of some of these men were active. Western Mindanao Command, "Matrix, 2013-2018 Accomplishments Against Threat Groups", obtained February 2019. A Tausug leader interviewed by IPAC said one striking aspect of Ajang-Ajang was the number of young men with different fathers but the same mothers, because when men are killed, their widows are expected to remarry inside the group. (The same principle applies in Indonesia among extremist groups: widows of "martyrs" acquire an enhanced social status and they become desirable brides for senior or up-and-coming leaders.)

10 "Main suspect' in Jolo Cathedral bombing surrenders," rappler.com, 4 February 2019.

11 "5 Abus charged for kidnap of German couple," www.philstar.com, 7 November 2014.

used to fund the bombing.¹² As with everything else in this case, however, there is as yet no hard evidence.

Another person whose name has been linked to Sawadjaan and the Jolo operation is a subcommander named Taha (sometimes erroneously spelled Talha) Jumsa who was initially reported to have hosted the two Jolo bombers on the day before the bombing. He reportedly had been with the subcommander Alhabsy Misaya until the latter's death in April 2017 and then joined the Sawadjaan camp.

Sub-group leaders rarely command more than seven to ten armed fighters but their numbers can swell dramatically if the group is threatened. In the immediate aftermath of the Jolo bombing as the military intensified operations in Patikul, a clash took place between troops of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion with an estimated 150 ASG in Sitio Sungkog, Bgy. Kabbon Takas, Patikul. The firefight reportedly lasted for almost two hours and the military reported five Rangers killed.¹³ Any armed group that can call up that many fighters is clearly not a spent force.

The Sawadjaan group continues to have what other pro-ISIS units lack – a steady source of funding. Abu Dar may be continuing to rely on funds taken out of Marawi, estimated at the time to be in the millions of dollars, though some must have been redistributed and much spent. Abu Torayfe is believed to be in need of funds, to the point that one source suggested he had sold bombs, including those used in the 31 December 2018 bombing of a Cotabato shopping mall, for P50,000 each to raise money.¹⁴ Hajan Sawadjaan, however, has his kidnapping-for-ransom networks, which started up again in September 2018 after a long period of relative inactivity.

The Philippine military has repeatedly underestimated the regenerative power of extremist groups, believing that systematically killing top leaders diminishes a group's strength. It does, but only temporarily, and the lesson from Mindanao is that almost no one is irreplaceable.

III. THE JOLO BOMBING

The bombing of the cathedral on 27 January shocked the region. The shock was not just because it was designed to kill as many civilians as possible at mass on a Sunday morning, but because Indonesian suicide bombers were immediately named as the perpetrators and because it happened under martial law, when the cathedral was supposed to be tightly guarded by military personnel. It also happened only days after the 21 January plebiscite to approve or reject the new autonomous region, BARMM. Sulu was the only province in Muslim Mindanao that voted to reject, and there was some initial speculation that the bombing was somehow linked.¹⁵

A month after the bombing, nothing is clear, though Interior Secretary Eduardo Año on 7 February told the press the case was closed:

We already consider the case as solved with the identification of the perpetrators and the arrest or the placing into custody of the five suspects. Some people are still at large and three suspects are dead, including two suicide bombers.¹⁶

The identity of the man and woman who apparently placed the bombs remains unknown as do key details of the planning process and the source of funds. It is not even established beyond doubt that the couple in question detonated the bombs, though both were killed.

12 "Sayyaf ransom used to fund Jolo cathedral bombings," *Mindanao Examiner*, February 4-10, 2019.

13 "5 Scout Rangers killed in battle with 150 Abu Sayyafs," *www.mintfo.com*, 2 February 2019.

14 IPAC interview, MILF official, Cotabato, 10 February 2019. IPAC could not independently verify the information.

15 See for example Syed Huzafah Othman Alkaff and Jasminder Singh, "2019 Jolo Bombing: Bid to Derail BOL Peace Deal?," *RSIS Commentary*, No.25/2019, 18 February 2019.

16 "DILG Chief Eduardo Año on Jolo bombing: 'Case closed'", *Philstar.com*, 7 February 2019.

A. *The Target*

If one of the suspects is to be believed, the bombs were prepared just over a week before the bombing, and at the time, several other possible targets were on the table, including the Jolo-Zamboanga ferry and a supermarket. The cathedral, however, had been in ASG sights for some time, as the military, acting on a serious threat in August 2018, had cordoned off a section of the road in front of the cathedral. This had caused major economic disruptions because the road was the main artery going into and out of Jolo. In December, security increased further, with the military removing Muslim vendors who had set up kiosks around the church. One local official speculated that this might have made the cathedral more attractive as a target because there were likely to be fewer Muslim casualties.¹⁷ According to one of those arrested, however, the final choice of the cathedral as target was only determined on 24 January.¹⁸

The aim of mass casualties in a crowded setting was thus similar to what now seems to have been the original target of the 31 July bombing in Lamitan, Basilan: a parade of thousands of schoolchildren and teachers to celebrate the competition of a nutrition program. In the Lamitan case, a Moroccan-German known as Kathir al-Maghribi drove a van loaded with explosives toward the parade but was stopped unexpectedly at a checkpoint, where some local militia members inspected the van and saw suspicious cargo in the rear. They called the nearby army post to come and check it out, and it was as the soldiers were approaching that al-Maghribi detonated the massive bomb, killing ten in addition to himself. It remains unclear whether he had intended to die or whether he was planning to detonate the bomb from a distance once he had reached the parade area.

Al-Maghribi had been living in the Sawadjaan camp, as Associated Press reported having seen a video from before the bombing showing him there with Hajan Sawadjaan.¹⁹ In early September, police announced that eight suspected accomplices in the bombing had been arrested.²⁰ Most if not all were Furuji Indama's men, based on Basilan, and at least one – Julamin Arundoh alias Mammin Totong – was wanted in a 2011 kidnapping led by Indama. The eight had reportedly played roles from purchasing and painting the van to loading the explosives to escorting al-Maghribi to within two kilometers of the site.

From the Jolo bombers' perspective, the cathedral on Sunday morning was an ideal target: an iconic building, packed with people, and representative of the kafir "Crusaders" that ISIS has deemed the enemy. The biggest problem would have been penetrating the security cordon around the building, but the Sawadjaan team found a way.

B. *The Perpetrators*

Just as the Lamitan bombing involved a foreigner to plant the bomb and a team of local accomplices, the Jolo bombing seems to have involved two foreigners, whom witnesses and the Philippine government declared to be an Indonesian couple, and a team that purchased the material and prepared the bomb.

Witness testimony, not forensic evidence, convinced Philippine officials that the bombers were Indonesian. On 4 February, national police chief Oscar Albayalde, explaining the chronology

17 IPAC interview, government official, Zamboanga, 13 February 2019.

18 Testimony of Said Muhammad Alih as translated to IPAC in Zamboanga, 13 February 2019.

19 Gomez, *op.cit.*

20 "8 suspects in Lamitan City bombing arrested," www.sunstar.com.ph, 10 September 2018. The suspects were Musa Jallaha, alleged to have helped purchase and paint the van; Hadji Hurang, who agreed to keep the van seats that were removed to make room for the bomb; Nasir Nuruddin alias Battuh Murah [could this be "Batu Merah" and could he be an Indonesian or Malaysian?], who helped load the van and escorted it part of the way; Al Basir Ahmad, who helped load the van and ran errands; Abdurahim Lijal alias Mike Usman, who helped prepare the bomb; Julamin Arundoh alias Mammin Totong, the main bomb-maker; and Saad Tedie alias Boga, who assisted Mammin.

of the bombing, said:

An unidentified Asian couple believed to be holed [up] in Lampinigan island for a few days sailed to Jolo on January 24 by pump boat.²¹ (see Appendix 1 for full text).

One of the five suspects arrested for the Jolo bombing said he was in the jeepney on 24 January that picked up the couple and their young daughter after their arrival. He reportedly said they were speaking Indonesian, and he knew the language because he had stayed in Indonesia for six months many years ago in connection with martial arts activities.

The couple stayed in a house in Patikul that night, then were taken to Sawadjaan's camp the next morning. A different group was assigned to fetch the man and woman on Saturday and take them back to Jolo town for the night, then accompany them to the cathedral on Sunday morning.

The police chief statement notes:

At 8:28 am the following morning, it is believed that the Indonesian woman detonated the 1st IED inside the Jolo cathedral while the man detonated the 2nd IED at the church entrance seconds later.²²

The second blast killed mostly soldiers on security duty. There was little effort to preserve the crime scene, as soldiers and relatives of the church-goers tried to retrieve the dead and wounded. A visit by Duterte the day after the bombing with the media in tow did not help. By the time senior police investigators arrived, three days after the attack, critical evidence may have been lost.

While some human remains were recovered that may belong to the two bombers – including a woman's scalp found on the second floor of the cathedral – there was nothing that could give a clue to their identity: no faces, fingerprints, passports or other identification documents, SIM cards or possible DNA matches. If indeed the bombers left behind a child, her testimony (and DNA) could be critical, but she is presumably being protected in the Sawadjaan camp.

In addition to the witnesses arrested after the cathedral bombing, there is testimony from Mammin, the ASG member arrested in connection with the Lamitan bombing, that a Filipino, an Arab (presumably al-Maghribi) and an Indonesian all volunteered to drive the van used in Lamitan in July. They drew lots, and the Arab "won". The same Indonesian might have subsequently volunteered for the cathedral bombing.²³

The conviction that the bombers must have been Indonesians therefore seems to be based entirely on plausible but fairly vague testimony, reinforced by a strongly-held perception in the Philippines security community that in the region, only Indonesia produces suicide bombers. The May 2018 bombings in Surabaya involving three families were widely reported in the Philippines and strengthened the conviction that if a woman was involved, it must be an Indonesian.

C. The Bomb: Suicide or Remotely-Detonated

The police statement attached as Appendix I explains what is known about the bombs: the materials used and the fact that it bore the "signature" of many other ASG bombs. The military immediately deemed the attack a suicide bombing while the police held back. A preliminary but

21 Press Statement of Police Director General Oscar D Albayalde, 4 February 2019. Lampinigan Island is a 30-minute boat trip from Basilan.

22 Ibid.

23 Excerpt of Mammin testimony shown to IPAC via WhatsApp photo, 4 March 2019.

detailed analysis by police bomb experts dated 30 January says unambiguously that the bombs were remotely detonated, not suicide bombs held by the bombers themselves.²⁴ Bolstering those findings, one of the ASG suspects in custody told police that a man named Makrim had been designated in one of the planning meetings as both the look-out and the person to set off the bombs. Once President Duterte said on 29 January that suicide bombers were responsible, however, alternative versions of events were largely shelved.²⁵

The ISIS statement that followed the bombing was unequivocal. Under a headline “120 Christian Crusaders Are Killed and Wounded in 2 Istishhadi [Suicide] Attacks on a Temple in Mindanao”, the statement read:

Putting their trust in Allah, two of the knights of Shahadah set out towards a Christian temple in Jolo city in Mindanao island. The first one detonated his explosive belt at the gate during the gathering of the Crusaders to perform their polytheist rituals, while the other detonated his explosive belt in the parking garage of the temple. The attacks resulted in 40 Crusaders being killed, including 7 security guards, and approximately 80 others being wounded, and all praise is due to Allah.²⁶

The person who sent it to ISIS got some of the details wrong but it was posted so soon after the event that it is likely that the ISIS coalition – still calling itself the “East Asia Wilayah” – has at least one designated media person, perhaps based in Cotabato or Zamboanga, who is tasked with drafting and posting messages. (It is worth remembering that the Cotabato cell of the coalition, responsible for the September 2016 bombing of a Davao night market, included several computer technology students.²⁷)

Some have suggested the question of whether the bombers detonated themselves or had their bombs detonated by someone else is basically irrelevant because the impact is the same and the bombers’ intention was to kill. The only operational difference is that if they had intended to plant the bombs and then somehow get away before they exploded, it would have required additional logistical support from the Sawadjaan team, something that investigators could easily determine from debriefings of the arrested suspects. A remotely-detonated operation could also mean that Sawadjaan was interested in preserving the bombers for another mission.

IV. FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Even before Marawi, there were concerns that the southern Philippines could or had become a safe haven for fugitive ISIS fighters. The Jolo bombing produced the usual wildly conflicting statements on the number of foreign fighters believed to be still active in Mindanao. On 21 February 2019, Secretary Año suggested “more than ten” – a more reasonable assessment than many of the much higher figures circulating.²⁸ Año suggested that 40 fighters had been involved in the Marawi fighting but that at least half had died. (From Indonesia alone, six are known to have

24 Philippines Bomb Data Center, “Special Technical Intelligence Bulletin 2019-22”, 30 January 2019, p.13.

25 “Duterte says wife, husband suicide bombers behind Jolo bombing” www.rappler.com, 29 January 2019.

26 The statement was widely circulated on social media but also appeared in the ISIS publication, An-Naba and in the English version, “From Dabiq to Rome”.

27 Sidney Jones, “Radicalisation in the Philippines: The Cotabato Cell of the ‘East Asia Wilayah’”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 30(6), 2018, pp.933-943.

28 One particularly egregious example was a suggestion that more than 100 foreign fighters had arrived in Mindanao since the Marawi siege had ended. See “Philippines: 100 foreign fighters joined ISIS in Mindanao since the Marawi battle”, *Defence Post*, 5 November 2018.

been killed, two arrested afterwards and several unaccounted for.²⁹)

The Sawadjaan camp hosted many of those who fled Marawi, but as of February 2019, only an Egyptian known as Abdul and several minors were confirmed to be left in the camp, though there may be others on Jolo. A few foreign fighters were also reported to be fighting with Abu Torayfe's faction of BIFF. While reports of BIFF fighters usually include the Singaporean known as Muawiyah, it is not clear that Muawiyah is an active combatant; for the last several years he has preferred lying low and avoiding capture. More problematic is an Indonesian known as Zacaria or Kayyim in Mindanao but as Ibnu Qoyyim alias Abu Nida in Indonesia. He has been in Mindanao since 2003, was formerly a member of KOMPAK and served as a military instructor for pro-ISIS groups in Sultan Kudarat province in 2015 and Basilan in 2016 and 2017. It is not known whether he fought in Marawi but he may have, since he was personally close to Isnilon Hapilon. He could well be alive and still fighting in central Mindanao, even though his base from 2010 until the Marawi siege began was Basilan.

There is some confusion as to whether in addition to the couple who placed the bomb, there was another "Indonesian" at the Sawadjaan camp. According to the testimony of a former hostage, a foreign Asian known as "Abang" arrived at the camp in May 2018 and was still there when the hostage was released in December 2018. "Abang" is a term for elder brother widely used as an honorific in Sumatra and parts of peninsular Malaysia. It is possible that "Abang" was the bomber but also possible that he is the Indonesian who posts on Facebook under the moniker El Ghuraba, with a new number every time his page gets taken down (so El Ghuraba III, IV, V and VI). El Ghuraba is an Acehnese who claims to be in Patikul, Sulu and occasionally posts in the Acehnese language. If he is really in Patikul, and this still has to be confirmed, he clearly remained active after the Jolo bombing, given the number of posts on his sites.

Around 19 February 2019, a photograph appeared on SITEIntel, a group that tracks pro-ISIS activity online, of five young Indonesians holding guns and claiming to be in Sulu. After examining the photo closely, however, Philippine officials said it was unlikely to have been taken in Sulu because the guns used were different than those used by the ASG. It is possible it was taken in central Mindanao.

All of this suggests that for a handful of Indonesians, the jihad in Mindanao is still an attraction, but the surprising fact is how few have tried to join. Of the Indonesians who have been stopped from traveling to Mindanao since the Marawi siege ended, almost all have been motivated by a desire to pick up the 30 firearms purchased by Jamaah Ansyarud Daulah (JAD) member Suryadi Ma'soed in 2015-16 that no one has been able to bring back to Indonesia. The guns will continue to be a magnet for JAD members, but in terms of jihad itself, Afghanistan may be exerting a stronger pull.³⁰

The discovery of several persons with Middle Eastern links in Mindanao or trying to get to Mindanao, in addition to the Lamitan bomber, suggests the difficulty that officials face in trying to determine who is a possible foreign fighter and who has legitimate reasons for being there. Those arrested in 2018 include:

- Abdelhakem Labidi Abid, a Spaniard of Tunisian descent, arrested in January 2018 in Basilan. He was arrested implausibly for illegal possession of explosives but he also had

29 The Indonesians known to have died are Al-Ikhwan Yushel, left for Mindanao on 28 March 2017; Anggara Suprayogi, left 3 April 2017; Yayat Hidayat Tarli, left 3 April 2017; Yoki Pratama Widyarto, left 3 March 2017; and Muhammad Gufron, left 21 February 2017. There is also a mysterious "Sheikh Ayman al-Marjuki" whose name appeared on an early list of 33 killed fighters submitted to President Duterte by Mindanao Development Authority Secretary Datu Hj. Abul Khayr Alonto in late May 2017. Al-Marjuki was identified as an Indonesian, but no one in Indonesia ever claimed any knowledge of him. The two Indonesians arrested are Minhati Madrais, wife of Omar Maute, who had been living in Marawi since 2011 but was arrested in Iligan, and Ilham Saputra, arrested on 1 November 2017. He had been in Mindanao since November 2016.

30 Hari Kuncoro, an Indonesian recently released from prison in Indonesia who spent five years in Mindanao, was stopped at the Jakarta airport in December 2017 trying to get to "Khorasan", the ISIS branch in Pakistan-Afghanistan.

a highly implausible story for how he got to Basilan.

- Fehmi Lassoud, an Egyptian with ISIS connections who was arrested in February 2018. Prosecutors found that police had rigged the evidence against him so the case collapsed, and he was deported in October 2018.
- Mohammed Shaabab Abdelaziz, Egyptian, arrested 24 January 2018 in a boat off Basilan. He was found to be a legitimate employee of the Uthman bin Affan Foundation for Development, Relief, Da'wah and Education based in Iligan and was released without charge.
- Two Germans of Middle Eastern descent were stopped from going to the Philippines in April 2018. One, Harun M, 18, was from the same town in Germany as the Lamitan bomber. The second, Emre U, was stopped in Bangkok and deported back to Germany.³¹ Harun, Emre and the Lamitan bomber were all part of a religious group led by radical cleric Ibrahim Abou-Nagie that the German government has since been banned.³² The interest of all three in going to Mindanao demonstrates that the Philippines remains an option for pro-ISIS mujahidin from Europe looking for new theatres after Syria.

Various officials in Manila have suggested that fighters from Yemen, Pakistan, Malaysia and elsewhere are also present in Mindanao. Rather than speculating on the number and nationalities of foreign fighters, however, authorities should be systematically returning to all recent detainees and surrenderees as well as other informants to pool available information on where foreigners are believed to be active and where and what clues exist as to their identity.

V. THE BIG PICTURE

Every time an incident like the Jolo bombing takes place in the Philippines, it is as if the story of extremism begins afresh, disconnected from what went before. It remains critical, however, to look back at past events and see if new patterns can be discerned that might shed light on current activities and future plans. It also is important to go back to extremists in custody and see if they can provide any insights as new areas of questioning open up in the light of new attacks.

The foiled Bohol attack of April 2017 is a case in point. It looks very different now in the light of Marawi and Jolo than it did at the time. On 6 April 2017 eleven heavily armed ASG fighters left Indanan, Sulu in three motorized pump-boats to make the unusually long voyage to Bohol in the Visayas – far outside the ASG's normal area of operations. The team included some of the ASG's most feared operatives, include Muammar Askali alias Abu Rami who worked directly with Hajan Sawadjaan, and Edimar Isnain, a master bomb-maker. Askali was responsible for the beheading of two Canadian hostages in 2016 and a German hostage in 2017 for failing to come up with the demanded ransom on time.³³ He was also said to head the Ma'arkah al-Ansar Battalion, a group that had appeared in a 4 January 2016 video with Isnilon Hapilon and two other ISIS leaders.³⁴

The departure of the boats was picked up by the Philippine military, however, and on 11 April, the army launched an airstrike on the house where the team was staying in Inabanga,

31 "Mit One-Way-Ticket" zur Kampfausbildung?", www.tagesschau.de, 13 August 2018.

32 "The German preacher who heads global Islamist network," www.thelocal.de 15 November 2016.

33 "ASG leader behind foreigners' kidnap killed in Bohol," Rappler.com, 12 April 2017.

34 The others were AKP leader Ja'far Maguid alias Tokboy and Malaysian fighter Abu Anas. See IPAC, "Pro-ISIS Groups in Mindanao and their links to Indonesia and Malaysia," Report No.33, 25 October 2016, p.7. At the time the video was released, the name of the leader of Ma'arakah al-Ansar was reported as Abu Ammar, not Abu Rami.

in the interior of Bohol. In the firefight that followed, five militants, including Askali, some wearing ISIS black flag patches; three soldiers; a police officer; and two villagers were killed. Several other fighters escaped.³⁵

On 22 April, four of the fugitives were killed in Clarin, Bohol, including Joselito Melloria alias Abu Alih, a Balik Islam convert and native of Bohol who had guided the ASG fighters to Inabanga after their 300-mile trip.³⁶ Then on the same day, Renierlo Dongon, another convert and ISIS member who had been involved in a 2013 attack in Cagayan de Oro, was arrested in Bohol carrying food and medical aid in what he said was a mission aimed at rescuing the remaining fugitive. His wife, a police officer who had once been his handler, was arrested with him. His mother – who was the mother-in-law of Isnilon Hapilon and two other top ASG leaders – was in the car but was released. The Bohol operation from beginning to ignominious end involved very senior people.

Bohol is a popular tourist destination, and the attempted attack came just before the Easter holiday, meaning more foreigners than usual would be there. At the time, the general assumption was that the ASG must have been planning a major kidnapping operation, possibly aimed at the towns of Loboc and Panglao. But after the Jolo bombing and the involvement of Sawadjaan's men, some Philippine observers started thinking again. Why would the ASG involve their top bombing experts if this was just a kidnapping operation? It was more likely to have been planned as a major bomb attack against foreign tourists that would make international headlines and would have been followed within weeks by the takeover of Marawi, well and truly putting the East Asia Wilayah on the map of international jihad.

It also had the involvement of a top Balik Islam operative and was surely carried out in coordination with the local ISIS leadership that by this point was already in Marawi. If it was planned as a one-two punch with Marawi, then the local ISIS fighters were thinking big – and the thinking involved the Sawadjaans in what seems to be their virtually impregnable fortress in Patikul. Both Bohol and Marawi also involved multiple parts of the pro-ISIS alliance, as it seems in retrospect to have been important that ISIS components demonstrate they could work together.

After the Jolo bombing, police determined that the 31 July 2018 Lamitan bomb was also carried out under Hajan Sawadjaan's direction. It was a different kind of one-two punch, though both involved foreigners. The question is whether a pattern is beginning to emerge. If the three groups that elected Sawadjaan were ISIS-Basilan, ISIS-Sulu and ISIS-Maguindanao (Abu Torayfe), and if the first two have each carried out attacks in the name of ISIS, does that mean that Maguindanao (or the city of Cotabato) could be next with Abu Torayfe's fighters taking the lead? There is also a possibility that the not-very-professional 31 December 2018 bombing of the South Seas Mall in Cotabato was the latter's contribution, though local officials are more inclined to see it as an effort by those opposed to the Bangsamoro plebiscite to strengthen the "no" vote.

In terms of going back to talk to detainees, it should be a priority to gather as much information as possible about the current network and patterns of recruitment of pro-ISIS Balik Islam as well as more detailed information about foreign fighters. For example, it might be worth returning to question Julamin Aruindoh alias Mammin, the ASG fighter who described drawing lots for the Lamitan attack, about the Indonesian and other foreign fighters present when he was there.

Finally, one question is what has become of the AKP now. Officials in early 2018 reported variously that the group was decimated, maybe down to a handful of people, or had merged

35 Jim Gomez, "Philippines: Foiled attack staged by IS-linked extremists," Associated Press, 15 April 2017.

36 Ibid. Gomez writes that ISIS-Philippines may have designated Melloria as the successor to AKP leader Tokboy after the latter was killed in January 2017.

with a criminal syndicate known locally as the “Nilong Group”. By mid-2018, however, militant activity in the Sarangani-Sultan Kudarat area had picked up, suggesting that new recruitment was taking place. One lesson of Bohol perhaps is to never discount the AKP base, which has a history of links to Indonesia as well as hosting important training sites.

In short, history matters. The process of investigation should perhaps be seen as akin to GPS software that when a car takes a wrong turn, says “Recalculating, recalculating” and sets the driver on a new route. Looking back can be very helpful in connecting the dots.

VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING BARMM WORK

The key to reducing the appeal of Islamic State is to produce a more attractive alternative for Mindanao’s Muslims. This is one of the many hopes vested in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), a new political entity that officially came into being after plebiscites on 21 January and 6 February 2019. It has significantly greater powers and territorial reach than the autonomous region it replaces, known as ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao). It also puts executive and legislative power in the hands of the MILF leadership, in exchange for the latter’s agreement to decommission its combatants. The new BARMM is the culmination of a peace process between the MILF and the Philippines government that has been going on in fits and starts since 1996.

It is also a point of no return. At every other juncture during the long years of negotiation, if the process broke down, it was always possible to pick up the pieces because the final goal of genuine autonomy had never been reached. Now both sides have no choice but to make it work because there are no other options on the table. There is an enormous amount of public goodwill and donor support to try and make that happen. There are also innumerable potential spoilers. They include (and this list is not exhaustive):

- The Moro political clans whose power could be significantly reduced by a functioning BARMM, since it would take away their sources of patronage.
- MNLF leaders, many of whom are unhappy with what they see as an inequitable transfer of power to the MILF.
- Maranao MILF members, unhappy with ethnic Maguindanaon dominance.
- MILF commanders outside the boundaries of BARMM who may not have access to as many benefits as those within. The leadership has tried to compensate for this by appointing some of these individuals – notably Abdullah Macapaar aka Kumander Bravo of Lanao del Norte – to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) that will govern the region until elections are held in 2022.
- Some members of the security forces unhappy with turning over power to former rebels.

The “intense lobbying” around appointments to the BTA was an indication of some of the competing interests at stake.³⁷ MILF leader Al Haj Murad, now Interim Chief Minister of BARMM, and his new cabinet have an enormous challenge. They have to try and keep this new machinery united and corruption-free, while at the same time overseeing the decommissioning of combatants and preparing for the 2022 elections that are aimed in part at breaking the power of the clans. All this has to be accomplished by former rebels, most with little experience in

³⁷ See Carolyn O. Arguillas, “Bangsamoro in transition: where is the appointment paper of CSO leader from Tawi-tawi who took her oath?”, www.mindanews.com, 28 February 2019. The MNLF faction led by Yusop Jakiri reportedly was deeply unhappy about receiving fewer slots on the BTA than it had hoped.

governance or administration.

One thing MILF base commanders do have, however, is knowledge of why fighters get angry or discouraged enough to join more militant splinters, so both the BTA and the national government should seek out their views on workable strategies to prevent alienation as the new government finds its way. The obstacles to success are formidable but the consequences of failure could be devastating.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

More than any other country in the region, the Philippines will feel the lasting impact of ISIS. Indonesia may have more of the ideological hardcore extremists, but an effective government and anti-terrorism unit of the police can keep them in check. The Philippines remains the only country in Southeast Asia that has both pro-ISIS extremists and large swathes of territory in rebel, insurgent or warlord hands. Its ISIS members have more overlapping identities, with tighter links to armed combatants, than their counterparts in Indonesia or Malaysia. This vastly complicates the counter-terrorism task of Philippine authorities. A monumentally dysfunctional legal system does not help nor does the fact that skilled law enforcement professionals often find themselves undermined by politicised bureaucracies.

ISIS may be shifting to a decentralized operation just as BARMM is getting off the ground and experimenting with a new police force and decommissioned fighters. Since 2005 the MILF has had a strong track record for denouncing terrorism and rejecting foreign fighters, and its forces have been fighting Abu Torayfe extremists since even before the Marawi siege ended in late 2017. Now, amid all the other challenges it faces, it will need to focus on prevention efforts. That includes giving a high priority to rebuilding Marawi and assisting those who remain displaced to get permanent housing and compensation. It also means giving serious attention to radicalization and recruitment efforts, including by ensuring that various sectors of the community, including schools and universities in the BARMM region, know whom to alert if they see something amiss. As noted, the MILF commanders will be an important source of useful suggestions.

Much of the machinery set up for the peace process, including the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and the Coordination Committee for Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) are set to be phased out, but this should not happen too quickly. There will inevitably be disputes along the way in the “normalization” process and these bodies can still play a useful role in resolving them so they do not get worse.

BARMM authorities should work with the military to end the system of bounties placed on the heads of wanted extremists. The bounties set up counterproductive competition to get the money and encourage the killing of suspects rather than capturing them alive and getting important information about their networks.

All those working on extremism in the Philippines need to pay particularly close attention to the pro-ISIS elements in the Balik Islam community. There were dozens trained by the AKP and the Mautes and there are reported to be several converts with the Sawadjaans and Abu Torayfe. These are the people that can provide channels to attacks outside Mindanao as they did in Bohol in 2017.

The need for information-sharing on extremism among Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia has never been higher, but it does not work as well as it should. The Jolo bombing and the statements of senior Philippine officials that Indonesians were involved before there was solid evidence has not helped the Philippine-Indonesia relationship. Donors can help by encouraging as many trilateral training programs as possible in a way that brings together counterparts from

different sectors: immigration, police intelligence, senior investigators and crime scene analysts, social media analysts, prosecutors, prison administrators and others.

Extremism in the Philippines is not going to go away, and ISIS has left a legacy that only makes it more lethal.

APPENDIX I

Press Statement of
POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL OSCAR D ALBAYALDE
Chief, Philippine National Police
February 4, 2019

Aking pinapaabot ang malugod na pagbati ng pambansang pamunuan sa naging matagumpay na pagdaraos ng malawakang pagkilos laban sa karahasan na ginanap kahapon sa Quezon Memorial Circle na kinabilangan ng mga kinatawan mula sa ibat-ibang sektor ng lipunan na pinangunahan ng mga pinuno ng pananampalataya ng kapwa Kristiyano at Muslim.

I believe that our collective voice to condemn all forms of terrorism and violence has been heard in all corners of the country for everyone to know that we will remain resilient and strong, and we will not be cowed.

After a full week since that unfortunate incident of a deadly explosion in Jolo, sulu, I share the optimism of the people of Jolo to return to their normal activities and to move on.

I am pleased to announce the surrender over the weekend of Kammah Pae and four other persons, who performed individual roles in that incident.

The five surrendered due to the massive hot pursuit operations by troops from the Patikul Municipal Police station, 52nd Special Action Company, Sulu Provincial Mobile Force cCompany, 14th Regional Mobile Force Battalion, CIDG9, RIU9, and 35th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine army.

During paneling at the house of Kamah, EOD/K9 and SOCO discovered assembled IED and IED components which were subsequently disrupted and recovered.

surrendered include:

1. Kammah L. Pae @ Kamah
2. Albaji Kisae Gadjali @ Awag,
3. Rajan Bakil Gadjali @ Radjan,
4. Kaisar Bakil Gadjali @ Isal, and
5. Salit Alih @ Papong.

A case for multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder will be filed today against the five suspects before the provincial prosecutor of Sulu.

The five suspects belong to a group of 22 Abu Sayyaf personalities led by Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan that are believed responsible and conspired for the terrorist attack at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel cathedral where 23 person died and 95 other were wounded.

Fourteen more suspects remain at-large, including the mastermind Sawadjaan, while three others, including the two Asian suicide bombers had been killed.

Among the suspects at-large are: Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Makrim J Habbisi @Makrim, Barak Ingug @Barak Abdulgani, Usman Aka Ubin, a certain alias Arab Puti, and nine John Does. Another member of the group, Ommal Yusop was killed in an earlier follow-up operation in Patikul.

SITG Mt Carmel has established the sequence of events leading to the January 27 bomb attack, beginning on January 8, 2019 when a certain Muksin and Usman attempted to assemble

an IED in Barangay Latih, Patikul, Sulu, but later abandoned the effort. Four days later, Sawdjaan met Usman and Barak in Bastiong, Patikul and gave them funds for the bombing mission.

On January 21, 2019, an unidentified Asian couple believed to be holed [up] in Lampinigan Island for a few days sailed to Jolo on January 24 by pump boat.

Upon arrival in Jolo, the couple boarded a tricycle to Caltex Tiam at 7:10pm. At 7:30pm the couple were met by suspects papong, Awag and Radjan at Caltex Tiam and all of them boarded Awag's jeepney along with five minor boys who later disembarked along the way.

Upon reaching Usaw in Barangay Langhub, Patikul near the house of Usman, the group was joined by Kamah, Barak, Makrim and Usman and later proceeded Sitio Bastiong, Brgy Langub, Patikul, Sulu.

The couple alighted at Bastiong and walked towards the forested area escorted by Kamah and Barak where they met Sawadjaan to further plan the bombing. Also present during the planning were Barak, Kammah, Awag, Usman, Makrim, Isal, Radjan and Papong.

At 5:00pm on January 26, the couple, each toting black trolley bags were escorted to Barangay Latih, Patikul Town by Usman, Barak and nine other unidentified armed men where the couple boarded Awag's jeepney to Jolo. Upon reaching Jolo at 5:10pm, the couple disembarked in front of SULECO bldg to an undisclosed location within Jolo.

At 8:28 am the following morning, it is believed that the Indonesian woman detonated the 1st IED inside the Jolo cathedral while the man detonated the 2nd at the church entrance seconds later.

From fragments and components recovered at the scene, forensic technicians reconstructed the two detonated IED made from common GI pipes that served as casing that contained possibly ammonium nitrate-fuel oil (anfo) compound as primary explosive charge and possibly boosted by secondary high explosives possibly PETN, TNT OR RDX (subject to further laboratory analysis) – that characterized the shattering effect of the explosions.

This particular type of IED, by design, is identified with the Abu Sayyaf Group as nine similar IEDs have been involved in at least five recent incidents in Basilan and Sulu in 2016 and 2017.

One incident in Sulu on March 12, 2017 along Scott Road, Bgy San Raymundo, Jolo, involved an IED similar to the ones detonated in the Mount Carmel cathedral last week.

Two similar IEDs were also detonated by the Abu Sayyaf in Lamitan city on March 19 and 20, 2017, while four more similar IED were defused by the military in Barangay Magcawa, Al-Barca, Basilan on May 20, 2016.

The signature of the Abu Sayyaf Group, therefore, is patently present in the IED used in this latest terror attack in Jolo.

The investigation of the Jolo cathedral explosion is far from over as there are more pieces of evidence that need to be carefully examined to test its consistency with other facts and circumstances surrounding the incident.

Elsewhere in Mindanao, following the successfully-concluded BOL plebiscite in Lanao Del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi; and in the cities of Cotabato and Basilan, the PNP is now ready to assume election duties anew for the 2nd BOL plebiscite in the municipalities of Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan and Tangkal in Lanao Del Norte; and in 39 barangays in the municipalities of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pigkawayan and Pikit in North Cotabato on February 6, 2018.

Tomorrow there will be a ceremonial send-off in Cagayan De Oro city of police security forces that will perform election duty in the 2nd BOL plebiscite on February 6.

Under a similar operational template applied in the 1st BOL plebiscite in January 21, the PNP is fielding a smaller contingent of 3,209 police personnel in 588 polling centers for the February

6 BOL plebiscite that will be supervised thru the plebiscite monitoring action center at the pro 12 headquarters in General Santos City.

On other matters, I am pleased to take note of the speedy police action of the NCRPO and QCPD that led to the early solution of the murder of Punong Barangay Crisell “Beng” Beltran of Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City.

This well-executed investigation leading to the arrest of key suspects in this high-profile murder provides a working template for other pnp units and in handling similar cases of heinous crimes.

Available on PNP Facebook page: https://m.facebook.com/pnp.pio/photos/a.479051708802757/2544389382268969/?type=3&__tn__=EH-R

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