

JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH'S MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAMS

2 November 2022
IPAC Report No. 79

Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. JI UNDER PARA WIJAYANTO	1
III. JI'S TIES TO MINDANAO: A SHORT HISTORY	2
IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNIT	4
V. PLANNING FOR A RETURN TO MINDANAO	5
VI. THE MAUTE GROUP AND THE DEATH OF SANUSI.....	7
VII. THE MILF REJECTS COOPERATION	8
VIII. TAKING CARE OF JI MEMBERS IN MINDANAO.....	9
IX. THE SYRIA-TRAINED GENERATION.....	10
X. JI'S LIMITED OPTIONS	11

I. INTRODUCTION

The capacity of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to rebuild after a punishing police crackdown may depend on its ability to protect the members it regards as its greatest assets: the dozens of young men trained in Syria since 2012. Of those trained, almost all recruited from JI-affiliated boarding schools (*pesantren*), some 40 are believed to be back in Indonesia and in hiding. These men constitute the next generation of JI leadership, since they now possess the two qualities most valued by the organisation: religious knowledge and military experience. If JI cannot keep them safe and if it cannot find new training sites for younger cadres, its continued existence could be at stake.

As of October 2022, JI – the organisation responsible for the 2002 Bali bombing -- was facing the biggest crisis of its nearly 30-year existence. Hundreds of its most senior leaders were in prison, its activities were frozen, its funding gone, its schools under surveillance and its recruitment severely disrupted. The crackdown was triggered by the arrest in December 2017 of two men deported from Turkey who turned out to be JI members, who had served in Syria. Police stepped up arrests in 2019 after Indonesia's parliament passed a strengthened anti-terrorism law that allowed for "preventive strikes", and the crackdown has continued ever since.

This report is the story of how JI, under the leadership of Para Wijayanto, pursued military training programs for its recruits, first at home in Indonesia, then abroad. After the domestic program failed, JI in 2011 set up an international relations unit that tried to resume training in Mindanao where many of JI's current leaders had trained in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This plan also failed because of the refusal of JI's old allies in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to even contemplate a resumption of contacts. JI then turned to Syria, opening channels to several different militias between 2012 and 2017. It was reportedly planning to explore training possibilities with the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba when the head of the international relations unit, Para Wijayanto's son Askary, was arrested in March 2022.

The report explores JI's efforts to recruit and train a new generation and looks at what we know about those who went abroad, those who returned home and those who have been arrested. It concludes that in its desperation to save its most valued younger members, JI might try to smuggle them out of the country to prevent their arrest. The chances that it would succeed are not high.

It should be noted that nothing in the courtroom testimonies of the hundreds of JI members convicted since 2019 suggests that any of them planned to conduct attacks in the near future. The trainees were rather to serve as an armed force for an eventual Islamic state in Indonesia. They were to be prepared to exploit political instability that might arise but would not themselves initiate violence. Whether this stance can be maintained remains to be seen.

II. JI UNDER PARA WIJAYANTO

JI's search for new training opportunities began when Para Wijayanto took over as head of JI in 2007 following a wave of arrests that netted the then-amir, Zuhroni alias Zarkasih. He

began as a caretaker and was formally chosen as amir in 2008. Para, a graduate of Diponegoro University in Semarang, had been head of JI's Central Java division. He had also taken JI's short military training course in Mindanao and staffed his inner circle with fellow Mindanao alumni.¹ His first task was internal consolidation in an organisation whose members were left scattered and rudderless after the 2007 arrests. It was not an easy feat. In addition to the threat from authorities, some members loyal to Abu Bakar Bas'asyir had left JI to join Ba'asyir's new organisation, Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT). But in two years, Para, assisted by JI leaders who themselves had many followers, met his target.² At the beginning of 2009, JI had only 80 members left but by the end of 2010, the number had risen to nearly 1,000.

The next step was to rebuild JI's military capacity that had been badly hurt by the arrests. The task was given to JI's Tajhiz (support) division led by a top commander named Chairul Anam alias Bravo, with Jimmy alias Yahya, a Mindanao veteran, as his deputy.³ They laid out a plan for a domestic military training program similar to that in Mindanao and asked Munthohar alias Tanjung, long a trainer at JI's camp in Mindanao, to work out the details.

Given the codename "Agrowisata" (agricultural tourism), the training began in a forest area near a plantation owned by a JI member in Pakue, Kolaka Utara district, Southeastern Sulawesi. It was a three-month program, like the short course known as *takhassus* in Mindanao. The trainees were new recruits; the instructors included Moro alumni. The program included field engineering, weapons training, map reading, self-defence, and battle tactics. The course was held twice, but the results were disappointing. JI evaluators decided the students did not get enough practice, caused in part by general security concerns and the lack of weapons. Para then decided to see if training in the Philippines could be resumed.

III. JI'S TIES TO MINDANAO: A SHORT HISTORY

JI's ties to the Philippines go back at least to the mid-1980s when founder Abdullah Sungkar met MILF founder Salamat Hashim, possibly in Pakistan, although the date and place of their meeting is not known. A few Indonesians had gone to Mindanao during the early 1990s, though not as part of a systematic training program, and a few Moros (Muslims from Mindanao) had trained at JI's military academy on the Afghan-Pakistan border between 1985 and 1994.⁴ In 1994, when Hashim asked for a few JI instructors to be sent to Mindanao to train MILF cadres, Sungkar readily agreed. The site chosen was on the edge of the MILF's Camp Abubakar, and JI began training MILF members in 1995. It was turned over to JI in 1997 to manage as Camp Hudaibiyah, a military training centre to replace the academy in Afghanistan that JI had had to abandon because of the civil war there. The centre ran several

¹ These included Jimmy alias Yahya, Wiji Joko alias Patria, Budi Karyanto alias Haidar, Munthohar alias Tanjung and others.

² These leaders included Abu Rusydan, Arif Siswanto and Jamaluddin, all of whom are in prison as of 2022.

³ For more on the functions of the Tajhiz, see IPAC, "The Impact of the Taliban Victory on Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah", Report No. 73, 7 September 2021, pp. 6-7. Bravo had lived in Maluku for many years during the communal conflict there, running a JI pesantren in West Ceram. At the time, he was known as Ustadz Batar.

⁴ Hambali (now in Guantanamo) and Usman bin Sef alias Fahim (arrested for the second time in 2021) were part of a group of five who went to Mindanao to live among the Moros for "life experience". Nasir Abas, *Membongkar Jemaah Islamiyah*, Jakarta, 2005, pp. 143-45.

structured programs, including short courses of one to six months, and a three-semester program of 18 months.⁵

Ties between JI and the MILF grew closer after the then president of the Philippines, Joseph Estrada, declared “all-out war” against the MILF in 2000, and the military attacked Camp Abubakar. Camp Hudaibiyah was forced to close, and JI moved further into the mountains in the border area between Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. There, it set up Camp Jabal Quba. Some of the JI instructors, including Fahturrahman al-Ghozi, joined an MILF Special Forces team to retaliate, including through bombings against civilian targets in Manila on Rizal Day, 30 December 2000, that killed 22 people. JI members were also involved in the Fitmart supermarket bombing in General Santos City that killed 13 in April 2002 and in the Davao airport and Sasa wharf bombings in 2003 that together killed 38.⁶ The key JI figure involved in these operations was Zulkifli alias Doni Ofresio. It was he who was responsible for shifting JI’s alliance from the MILF to the Abu Sayyaf group when the MILF decided to focus on peace talks.

An Afghan-trained MILF leader, Mugosid Delna, was responsible for providing refuge to some of the Bali bombing fugitives, including Dulmatin and Umar Patek, when they arrived in Mindanao in April 2003, until November 2005, when the MILF decided to expel all foreign fighters in the interests of demonstrating its anti-terrorism credentials in peace negotiations with the Philippines government. Delna had been in Afghanistan in the same batch as Umar Patek from Indonesia, and the ties between them were personal as well as institutional. Delna was arrested in 2009, long after Patek had left the MILF’s protection and joined the Abu Sayyaf. He later died in prison of natural causes.

In the meantime, MILF’s founder and JI’s protector, Salamat Hashim, died in 2003. He was succeeded by Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim, a man committed to finding a path to peace with the Philippines government. Murad saw JI and other foreign fighters as a major liability. He restricted JI members to the area around Jabal Quba and banned them from receiving any guests, fearing their activities could jeopardise peace negotiations. The MILF was particularly unhappy when the head of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Khadafi Janjalani and his deputy Abu Sulaiman, sought shelter in the JI camp in 2003-2004 after military operations forced them to flee their base in Jolo. All were expelled in 2005, together with a group of Indonesian fighters, including Umar Patek.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the JI leadership changed as arrests took place and JI men trained in Mindanao returned home. One of the latter was Slamet Raharjo alias Hasanudin. He had been sent to Camp Hudaibiyah in 1998, and after four years in Mindanao, he returned to Indonesia in 2002 to lead operations in Poso, Central Sulawesi. After the Bali bombs, Poso had become the focus of JI’s strategy, with leaders hoping that the lasting grievances from

⁵ The short courses were called Daurah Asasiyah Aksariyah Hitin (one to four months), and Daurah Asasiyah Aksariyah Yarmuk (six months). The longer program was known as Kuliah Harbiyah Daurah (KHD). The KHD participants generally had a higher level of education and were seen as future leaders.

⁶ The key figure in these attacks was Zulkifli alias Jukiqli and Dani Ofresio. He was among the first batch of JI trainees at Camp Hudaibiyah and was later appointed leader of JI’s *wakalah* Hudaibiyah, a division of Mantiqi III. He was arrested in September 2003 by Malaysian authorities off the coast of Sabah and later extradited to the Philippines. He received a life sentence in 2015 and remains in prison in Manila.

the Christian-Muslim conflict would translate into community support for an Islamic state. Hasanudin was assisted by religious teachers sent from Java, while Mindanao alumni were assigned there to strengthen local military capacity for JI operations.⁷

Under Hasanudin, JI in Poso conducted 13 terrorist attacks, including the Tentena Market bombing in May 2005 and the beheading of three Christian schoolgirls on 29 October 2005, which for the first time, because of public outrage, brought the attention of the counter-terrorism police to Poso. Between 2006 and 2007, more than 50 JI members and supporters were arrested, leading to the arrest of Zuhroni and Abu Dujana, head of military affairs.

JI as an organisation was devastated. Members stranded in the Philippines had no one to contact and no source of funds at a time when Philippine military operations had overrun Camp Jabal Quba. In 2007, four of them decided to return home. They included Budi Karyanto alias Haidar, who became a key figure in the rebuilding of JI under Para Wijayanto.

IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNIT

After the failed training experience in Sulawesi, JI leaders realised that they had to build cooperation with jihadis abroad because the best training would come from groups fighting in conflict areas – where it would be easier to obtain guns. JI cadres also needed combat experience. With the end of communal conflict in Poso and the security situation as it was in 2010-2011, it would be difficult to conduct adequate training in Indonesia. When the Syria conflict erupted in 2011, JI saw an opportunity.

Para and his friends then set up the international relations unit under its intelligence division (Alwi) to reach out to groups in conflict areas. JI had never before had such a unit. When it had the four regional divisions called *mantiqi*, their heads were responsible for outreach to groups abroad. For example, Hambali as head of Mantiqi 1 in Malaysia was responsible for relations with al-Qaeda, and Nasir Abas as head of Mantiqi 3 was in charge of relations with the MILF. The *mantiqi* system was dismantled after the collapse of the Malaysia and Singapore subdivisions (*wakalah*) in 2001 and the Philippines subdivision in 2003. From then on, a JI structure existed only in Indonesia. Para's innovation was to re-organise it according to function -- intelligence, education, logistics and so on – with the result that it was more centralised and easier to manage.

JI then appointed Wiji Joko Santoso alias Patria as head of the new unit. He was a graduate of 11 March University in Solo, majoring in technology, and was in the first batch of JI cadres sent to the military academy in Mindanao. He stayed on as a trainer for the second batch. Haidar, then head of the Alwi division and the man who brought him in to work there, had been his junior in Mindanao. Patria had two main tasks. The first was to re-establish contact with JI members who were still in Mindanao. The second was to open communication with armed opposition groups in Syria.

⁷ One of these was Ibn Khaldun, a native of Tegal, who had been part of the second batch of JI trainees in Mindanao. He had graduated from Ngruki, JI's top school in Java, and had also attended JI's only tertiary institute, Mahad Ali An-Nur in Gading, near Solo.

V. PLANNING FOR A RETURN TO MINDANAO

With the new international relations unit, JI became more serious about renewing cooperation with the MILF. Since 2005, it had tried to take care of JI members who remained in Mindanao, sending on average Rp5 million a month (about US\$500) but occasionally double that amount to be distributed among the dozen or so members in and around Marawi.⁸ A JI man named Arif Syarifudin, better known as Wito, Firdaus or Tsaqoh, who had returned from Mindanao in 2003, was responsible for sending the money and for liaising more generally with the Mindanao-based members.⁹ At the time, Para Wijayanto was head of JI's financial affairs. Abu Dujana would receive packets of cash by courier, get the money to Wito, and Wito would transfer it to Tanjung, who had become the commander of Jabal Quba.¹⁰ Tanjung managed two accounts, both in women's names.¹¹ In late 2005, he was replaced as Mindanao liaison by another Indonesian known as Abu Muamar, perhaps because he was planning to return to Indonesia. After the arrest of Zarkasih and Abu Dujana in 2007, communication between Mindanao and Java lapsed for several years.

After Para took over as JI amir in 2008, he instructed Patria to re-establish contact with those in Mindanao. Patria tried and failed multiple times, seeking help from fellow Mindanao alumni as well as from Moros from the Philippines who were studying in Indonesian schools, but all to no avail. In March 2009, however, three Indonesians returned from the Philippines. One was Triyono alias Puji, who had gone for training in JI's third batch. They were able to give Patria the names and numbers that enabled JI to get back in touch with its Mindanao-based members.

At the time, there were about a dozen of the "structural" JI who had been associated with JI's training effort at Jabal Quba. This did not include the "non-structural" JI who had fled to Mindanao to avoid arrest after the 2002 Bali bombings and were never part of the JI organisation in the Philippines. After the Jabal Quba camp fell to the military in 2006, these men sought refuge with the MILF's 101st Base Command in Buldon, Maguindanao, on the Lanao del Sur border, bringing their firearms with them.

One man who initially joined them was Sanusi, a JI preacher from Central Java who was wanted by police in Poso for a string of terrorist crimes, including the beheading of the schoolgirls in October 2005. In late 2005, he had decided to flee to Mindanao as police were closing in on him. He became commander of the remaining JI men there after he arrived in Lanao.¹²

⁸ Trial dossier of Ainul Bahri alias Abu Dujana, No. Pol.BP/51/IX/2007/Kamtrannas, September 2007 and Verdict in the case of Arif Syaifudin alias Wito alias Firdaus, South Jakarta District Court, April 2008

⁹ Arif Syaifudin had gone to Mindanao in 2000 to train at Camp Hudaibiyah in the same batch as Abu Dujana. He had been inducted into JI in 1999 in Surabaya.

¹⁰ Verdict in the case of Arif Syaifudin alias Wito alias Firdaus, South Jakarta District Court, April 2008. Wito testified that he had never met Tanjung, also known as Alib Abbad, directly but that he was someone designated by JI to receive funds. His name appears in a US cable published by Wikileaks in 2005 as an Indonesian wanted by the Philippine military.

¹¹ Ibid. These were Natividad at Metro Bank and Safia at Philippines National Bank.

¹² International Crisis Group, "Jihadism in Indonesia: Poso on the Edge", Asia Report No. 127, 24 January 2007.

Patria discovered that JI members in Mindanao faced two major problems. One was the lack of any organisational structure or leader to tell them what to do. The second was that they were living a hand-to-mouth existence and needed logistical support. With Patria's help, they began receiving Rp10 million a month in Mindanao in much-needed assistance. Their MILF protectors, moving toward negotiations with the government, had severely limited their movements, so they could not go outside the camp to look for work. (This was after the MILF had expelled the "non-structural" JI who proceeded to join forces with the ASG.)¹³

Sanusi was treated differently from other JI members in Mindanao. He was allowed to live outside the camp and even allowed to preach around Butig and Marawi. This was because soon after his arrival, he had married into the family of Aleem Abdul Aziz Mimbantas, deputy chairman of the MILF. It was unthinkable that the daughter of such a high-ranking MILF commander could live in the same wretched conditions that ordinary JI members had to face.

There were reportedly two reasons why Sanusi had been able to join such an elite MILF family. First, he had in-depth religious knowledge and had taught *hadith* (sayings and traditions of the Prophet) at Jabal Quba. To the ethnic Maranao of Marawi and Lanao del Sur, religious scholars ranked higher than military commanders, because while many MILF members had military skills, few were trained in Islam. A second factor that added to Sanusi's prestige was support from the Maute family. The Mautes had also joined the ranks of the MILF elite through marriage into the Mimbantas family. They also long had friendly ties to JI. The first contact came when Abdullah Maute took part in a training course at Jabal Quba in the early 2000s. The whole family, but particularly Farhana, the matriarch, frequently went to Indonesia to buy Muslim clothing in Jakarta's Tanah Abang market and tend to their furniture business in Jepara, Central Java. In Mindanao, several members of JI, including Hasanudin, later the JI commander in Poso, and Sanusi frequently stopped by the Maute compound in Butig, not just to visit but also to give Qur'an lessons to the children.

Sanusi's close ties to the MILF elite led JI to give him the task of lobbying the MILF to renew cooperation. In Indonesia, JI members also built warm relations with Omarkhayyam (Omar) Maute, who in 2009-2010 was living in his Indonesian father-in-law's pesantren in Bekasi, a Jakarta suburb.¹⁴ While he was there, Patria visited him to discuss MILF-JI cooperation and seek Omar's help in bringing a JI delegation to Mindanao to meet with the MILF leadership.

In June 2012, for the first time, JI instructed Ujang, a member of its international relations team, to go to Mindanao. The trip was facilitated by Omar, who had moved back to Mindanao. Ujang had three tasks. The first was to deliver a letter to the MILF leadership from Para Widjayanto, introducing himself as the new amir and inviting the MILF to explore future cooperation. Second, he was to meet with the JI members and deliver additional funding.

¹³ For more on the cooperation with ASG and the MILF's expulsion of foreign fighters, see International Crisis Group, "The Philippines: Counter-Insurgency vs Counter-Terrorism in Mindanao," Asia Report No. 152, 14 May 2008.

¹⁴ The school is Pondok Pesantren Darul Amal in Buni Bakti, Babelan, Bekasi. Omar married the founder's daughter, Minhati Madrais; she had been his classmate at al-Azhar University in Cairo.

Third, he was to learn from the MILF how to make a machine shop to produce homemade guns, so that JI could replicate the technology at home.

It turned out that Ujang's visit was poorly timed. The Philippine military was undertaking an operation in Butig codenamed Operation Smartbomb. The operation was aimed at tracking down Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan, who was hiding there at the time. Nevertheless, with Omar Maute's help, all three tasks were accomplished. Ujang gave the letter for the MILF to Sanusi to deliver. He met with about 11 JI members living in MILF-controlled territory in a place called Camp Khandaq, near Butig, and turned over the aid, staying several days in the process. He also was able to study the MILF's small-scale weapons factory and the various machines used. It was this knowledge that he brought back to Indonesia, which became the basis for JI's Tajhiz unit to try and build a gun manufacturing centre in Krucuk, Klaten in 2014.

VI. THE MAUTE GROUP AND THE DEATH OF SANUSI

Before returning to Indonesia, Ujang met with Omar Maute.¹⁵ Omar extended an invitation to the JI leadership to return to Mindanao to discuss the possibility of future cooperation. Not long afterwards, JI sent Patria to Lanao in response, both to meet with the JI members as well as to discuss a resumption of ties with the MILF.

Omar, however, told him that he had decided to break with the MILF and wanted JI to work with him instead. He said two factors had led him to form his own group. First, he was unhappy with the MILF's new leadership after the death of Abdul Aziz Mimbantas in May 2012. Mimbantas's position as deputy chairman had been filled by Ghazali Jaafar, an ethnic Maguindanaon and a relative of MILF chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim. According to Omar, many Maranao members were upset that Murad had not chosen a Maranao and seemed to be consolidating Maguindanaon dominance of the organisation. The choice of Ghazali opened the old wound left by the "overthrow" of Mimbantas by the Murad faction after Salamat Hashim's death.

Second, he was unhappy with the peace process between the MILF and the Philippines government. He felt that settling for autonomy betrayed the goals of an independent Moro state based on Islamic law.

Omar's views reflected the radicalisation that the Maute brothers had undergone. At that time, Omar and his brother Abdullah had formed a group that they called Jamaah Tauhid wal Jihad or al Ghuraba. The name Tauhid wal Jihad was an indication that they had adopted an extremist takfiri stance, although through whom was not clear. Some thought that Abdullah Maute had been radicalised while studying in Jordan, where the influential radical ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi was in prison.¹⁶ Al-Maqdisi's views had long been popular in

¹⁵ IPAC interview, confidential source, Jakarta, June 2022.

¹⁶ Al-Maqdisi was famous as the mentor to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of the ISIS precursor, Islamic State in Iraq. His most important writings were translated into Indonesian from Arabic by Aman Abdurrahman. Al-Maqdisi eventually broke with Zarqawi believing he had lost any sense of strategy. His critique was published in Indonesia as *They Were Mujahid but They Made Mistakes* (Mereka Mujahid tapi Salah Langkah).

jihadi circles in Indonesia, however, Abdullah could equally have been influenced by Sanusi, reportedly his religious mentor.

Patria and Omar did not reach any agreement. Patria listened to Omar's arguments and said he would discuss them with the JI leadership. But in the days before Patria left, an unexpected incident happened. On 21 November 2012, Sanusi was killed in a shootout when Philippine security forces tried to capture him not far from the campus of Mindanao State University in Marawi. Patria returned safely to Indonesia.

VII. THE MILF REJECTS COOPERATION

Omar's offer and the death of Sanusi were the focus of discussions between Patria and JI leaders in a meeting at the office of Hilal Ahmar Society Indonesia (HASI) in East Jakarta. Para Wijayanto and Haidar instructed JI's international relations unit to gather more information on both.

JI later received two different accounts about Sanusi's death: first, that he had been betrayed by an MILF individual looking for money, and second, that the MILF had deliberately leaked his whereabouts to the security forces as proof of its commitment to fight terrorism – a commitment that had become a condition for peace. JI intended to seek clarification from the MILF.

Meanwhile, the Mautes were becoming increasingly close to a group known as Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM), based in Cagayan de Oro. It was strongly takfiri and referred to the MILF as apostates or infidels. JI feared the Mautes would get trapped in a spiral of internecine Muslim bloodshed.

In the end, JI decided to decline Omar's offer and resume cooperation with the MILF. JI leaders believed there was more to be gained this way. For example, the MILF could help them build a machine shop for producing homemade guns, and because it controlled the territory and acted as a government there, it could become a source of assistance for JI mujahidin.

JI appointed Unais, one of its members in Mindanao as its representative to the MILF, replacing Sanusi, and asked him to arrange a meeting with top MILF leaders. In April 2013, Patria received instructions from Para Wijayanto to go to Hong Kong to meet an MILF leader. He did so, but the man did not show up. It turned out there had been a miscommunication and they rescheduled the meeting for the end of April in Mindanao. JI then instructed Nuki, a member of the international relations unit to leave for Mindanao, which he did. No MILF leader was willing to meet him, however, leaving JI disappointed and irritated.

The MILF's position was understandable. A meeting with JI could jeopardise the peace process, which at the time was entering its final phase. JI members initially had no appreciation of the damage that would ensue if the MILF was seen to be meeting with an internationally recognised terrorist organisation. Even one meeting between a senior MILF official and a JI delegate could wreak havoc on the peace process. Later, however, JI realised that the MILF had rejected any communication because of the political burden involved. It was because of this realisation that when JI members sought cooperation with various

groups in Syria, they did not mention their organisational identity but simply called themselves Al Jabahatul Syarqiyah (Eastern Front).

The MILF's refusal to meet did not tempt JI to work with the Mautes, despite the short-term advantages of having a place in Mindanao to train again and being free to recruit without being confined to the MILF camp. JI leaders were especially reluctant because the Mautes were supporting a terror campaign, beginning with the June 2013 bombing of a bar in Cagayan de Oro, Mindanao's third largest city, carried out by KIM. Eight people were killed, and more than 40 were wounded. For JI, this kind of attack was a strategic error, a lesson they had learned from the first Bali bombing. If they wanted to establish an Islamic State in the southern Philippines, then jihad had to be carried out with community support. The Cagayan bombing was the kind of terrorist act that would instead isolate the Mautes and KIM from the ummah. It was the Malaysian fugitive, Zulkifli Abdul Hir alias Marwan, formerly a member of the JI ally Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) who brought KIM and the Mautes into a single organisation shortly thereafter.¹⁷ They would soon go by the name of IS-Ranao, underscoring their identification with Islamic State.¹⁸

VIII. TAKING CARE OF JI MEMBERS IN MINDANAO

In the end, JI leaders decided on the status quo in terms of its relationship with the MILF. They instructed members in Mindanao – between eleven and fifteen men -- to follow any MILF instructions and continued to send subsistence payments to them.

In May 2014, however, Detachment 88 detected the machine shop for producing homemade guns that JI had set up in Klaten, following the MILF model. Several members of the logistical support unit (Tajhiz) were arrested, including Jimmy alias Yahya, deputy head of the unit. And the problems grew worse. In September 2014, the United Nations added several JI members to its terrorist list, including Patria, the head of the international relations unit. JI immediately deactivated them. Bravo was removed as head of the Tajhiz unit, as were several others, as JI decided to lie low.

Para Wijayanto's son, Askary, replaced Patria as head of international relations, and his unit was placed under the direct supervision of JI's deputy amir, Haidar alias Abu Aiman. Nothing changed in Mindanao. Haidar appointed a man named Darwis to take care of the members there, while warning them not to join any pro-ISIS groups, including the Mautes. JI had decided in 2014, after conducting an assessment of ISIS in Syria, not to have anything to do with al-Baghdadi's organisation, which it regarded as deviant, for its adoption of a *takfiri* ideology.

¹⁷ Several Philippines sources said that the Mautes were not involved in the establishment of KIM, which was set up by Humam Abdul Najid alias Owayda alias Abu Dar, but they later joined forces with him. Marwan, the man who forged this alliance, had been a fugitive in Mindanao since 2001, when the Malaysian government began a systematic crackdown on JI and KMM. See IPAC, "The Killing of Marwan in Mindanao," Report No. 17, 5 March 2015.

¹⁸ As the group called Ghuraba, the Mautes had sworn allegiance to al-Baghdadi in August 2014. As IS-Ranao, they renewed the vow on 20 April 2016 in a video that was posted online.

Not all JI members obeyed, however. At least one of the JI members in Mindanao joined a pro-ISIS group. This was Ahmad Syaifullah Ibrahim alias Sucipto alias Ibrahim Ali. He had been arrested in connection with the Fitmart Supermarket bombing in 2003 and was released from prison in July 2014. He immediately joined the group under Mohammad Jafar Maguid alias Tokboy that Philippine authorities referred to as Anshorul Khilafah Philippines or AKP, a splinter of the MILF. Sucipto was killed in October 2015 in a battle with the military in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat. When his body was returned to Indonesia, many senior JI members took part in the burial. No JI members were involved in the takeover of Marawi by the Mautes in May 2017. JI followed the MILF's lead in keeping its distance from the group. By this time, JI was already deeply involved in Syria.

IX. THE SYRIA-TRAINED GENERATION

JI leaders rose in the ranks after gaining combat experience, first in Afghanistan in the late 1980s and early 1990s, then in Mindanao through 2003. JI saw the Syrian conflict as a new opportunity to acquire military experience and sent about 100 men between 2012 and 2018 to train with a variety of militias – the Free Syrian Army, Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat an-Nusra, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and ISIS.¹⁹ Not all reached their destination; several were caught and deported from Turkey before they could cross the border, and a few were deported twice.²⁰ Many are believed to have returned to Indonesia. Of these, only a dozen were subsequently arrested, while some 40 are believed to be still at large.

The men sent by JI were selected by the international relations unit, most of them students in their mid-twenties, studying at JI boarding schools (*pesantren*). They underwent a psychological test and rigorous training for a year in Central Java as part of the so-called Sasana program, with instructors drawn mostly from Mindanao alumni. The focus was on close-quarters combat (*qital qorib*), in the belief that if they were to send members for training in Syria, they had to be able to offer their hosts some useful skills. Many dropped out or did not make the cut, meaning those who passed were already among the elite, even if they ultimately did not succeed in getting into Syria. When selected members were sent to Syria, they were usually accompanied by one or more instructors. Each was also given a new handphone and US\$3,000 to cover a return ticket and other expenses.²¹ Those who managed to cross the border, underwent training with Syrian militias, and safely returned to Indonesia were tapped to be instructors and advisers for a new batch of trainees.

Agung alias David alias Riko bin Suparno was one such successful trainee sent to Syria, who became an instructor upon his return. He was recruited from al-Muttaqin pesantren, a JI-affiliated school, and joined the *qital qorib* training program in 2013. After successful

¹⁹ IPAC, September 2021, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

²⁰ Azi Maulana Firdaus alias Farel, for example, was in the first batch of recruits and was sent off to Syria after a year of training, arriving on 23 April 2013. He was in a group of five, all of whom were arrested near the border in Antakiya. Another group of four left separately and was also caught. After two months in immigration detention, Farel was deported and arrived back in Indonesia. He was instructed to try again and left in March 2014 in a group of five. The others made it across, but Farel was again caught and deported. He was tried and convicted under the anti-terrorism law in Indonesia, sentenced to three years and six months. Verdict in the case of Azi Maulana Firdaus alias Farel, 15 September 2015.

²¹ Verdict in the case of Azi Maulana Firdaus, op. cit.

completion, he flew to Turkey in January 2015 with two other trainees to join Jabhat an-Nusra (JN). Once they crossed the border with the help of a contact in Turkey, they were met by an Indonesian named Ubaidah in the Syrian village of Bait Awan, whose job was to take care of Indonesian recruits. There, they joined three other JI trainees, Memet, Yahya and Widodo, who had arrived on a different flight. After two weeks of quarantine, they had 45 days of religious training, 45 days of military training, including tactics of war, assembling and disassembling weapons, sharp shooting, and introduction to explosives. The training took place in an area they called Sahil.²² Then for three months, they were assigned guard duty in the JN-controlled area around Bait Awan, using AK-47s. In October 2016, Agung and Memet asked for and received JI's permission to return to Indonesia. They were taken back across the Turkish border and returned without incident to Indonesia in November 2016. They called Askary, Para Wijayanto's son, as soon as they arrived. He met them in Jakarta and after a day of rest, they returned to Semarang, Central Java and became instructors for new recruits being trained to be sent to Syria. Two and a half years later, in May 2019, Agung was arrested, charged with terrorism and sentenced to four years in prison.²³

With his exposed identity and four years in prison, Agung would be ineligible for leadership once he is released. Others who returned, however, could play important roles in the future if JI could keep them out of prison. For this reason, finding a place of refuge would be urgent.

X. JI'S LIMITED OPTIONS

JI's options for rebuilding and regeneration are limited. Since 2019, the organisation has been in survival mode as it confronts the biggest wave of arrests in its history. Starting with the capture of Para Wijayanto in July 2019, more than 300 senior JI officials and ordinary members have been arrested, including many Mindanao alumni.²⁴ Askary, head of the international relations unit, was arrested in Bandung in early 2022. The arrests led to the collapse of the international training program and ended subsidies to the JI members in Mindanao, leaving them as they were in 2007-2009: leaderless and bereft of logistical support.

Yet some in JI see the Mindanao-based members as a lifeline, the people who might possibly help provide refuge to the Syria returnees. It is significant that even as JI dissolved other units of the organisation in the face of the police crackdown, it seems to have retained the *toliah* subsection of the *tajhiz* unit, tasked among other things with protecting members on the police's wanted list. Among its top priorities were the trainees from Syria who had returned to Indonesia.

What are the prospects for JI's survival now? In 2007, after the arrests that netted Zuhroni and Abu Dujana, JI embarked on a quiet program of *dakwah* and education that succeeded

²² This is likely al-Sahel village in the province of Rif Dimashq, Syria.

²³ Verdict in the case of Agung alias Aji alias David alias Riko bin Suparno, East Jakarta District Court, 22 April 2020.

²⁴ The Mindanao alumni arrested included Haidar, the deputy amir; Sujadi, the treasurer; Patria and others. The arrests actually began with the arrest of a few cadres returning from Syria in December 2017, but the arrests picked up substantially after the new anti-terrorism law was passed in 2018. See IPAC, September 2021, op. cit.

in rebuilding the organisation without much attention from the police. The situation is very different today. Not only are many more leaders in prison, but the police are much more aware of the importance of JI schools and their fund-raising capacity. With the 2018 anti-terrorism law and other legal tools, they also can be far more intrusive in their surveillance than they were in the past.

If JI cannot hope to rebuild under the radar, a second possibility is that it sits quietly and waits for the arrests to cease as other issues come to the fore. But Detachment 88, the police counter-terrorism unit, has grown too big to do nothing and has to earn its keep, particularly as Indonesia hosts high-profile international gatherings such as the G-20 meeting, scheduled for November 2022. The police cannot afford to neglect any security threat, and as ISIS activity declines, tracking down remaining JI members may be the task that keeps it busy.

Finally, JI may try to get its most valued members to safety. There are major obstacles to getting them out of the country, including increased vigilance on the part of police and immigration authorities in neighbouring countries. It might be safer to try and hide them in Indonesia. Zulkarnaen, after all, JI's former chief of military affairs, managed to evade the police for 18 years while working as a chicken farmer in Lampung. Para Wijayanto himself stayed out of sight in Java for more than ten years. There is some speculation that JI might be considering Mindanao as the place of refuge, but even if a few of the Syrian trainees managed to get there, it would be hard to stay with local hosts, such as the remaining JI members there, without attracting attention, particularly when they do not speak local languages. Still, if the police believe that there is a serious chance that the men on their wanted list might try to flee to the Philippines or Malaysia, they should ensure that all relevant information on the trainees is shared with counterparts in those countries in a timely manner.

In the past, JI has always been able to draw on a sizeable pool of cadres to replenish a depleted leadership. This time around, it may be more difficult.

INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT (IPAC)

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

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

We are registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Jakarta as the Foundation for Preventing International Crises (Yayasan Penanggulangan Krisis Internasional); our website is www.understandingconflict.org.