

**POST-MARAWI LESSONS  
FROM DETAINED EXTREMISTS  
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Information from the suspects in the September 2016 Davao bombing sheds important light on the radicalization and recruitment processes that led a pro-ISIS coalition to take over the city of Marawi in May 2017. Understanding those processes is critical to ongoing prevention efforts. ISIS succeeded in expanding support for violent Islamist extremism in the Philippines. While defeats in the Middle East may lead to diminished support for the ISIS “brand”, there is every reason to believe that the various regional components of the coalition can use some of the same narratives and tactics to regroup and find new sources of support. There is an urgent need for the Philippines government to organize and analyse the data it has from all those in custody in connection with pro-ISIS activities so that more effective strategies for countering extremism can be formulated.

This report shows how much can be learned from just seven individuals, all arrested in Cotabato for suspected involvement in the Davao bombing. Custodial debriefings, made available to IPAC, show how the Cotabato cell of the pro-ISIS coalition came together. It shows the ease with which a group of friends can be transformed into a radical cell if one extremist with a claim to religious knowledge is involved. It shows how well integrated at least three parts of the coalition – Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat -- were by 2015 in terms of training. Detainees from Basilan and Zamboanga could help fill out the picture of how radicalisation, recruitment and training worked there.

University students were an important part of the Cotabato cell; it is clear that universities and technical institutes need to be a part of prevention efforts. The involvement of Muslim converts (Balik Islam) is striking, as is the speed between conversion and recruitment. If the networking described for Cotabato is even partly indicative of cells in other cities, then the Philippines needs to worry not just about what happens in Marawi in the next eighteen months: it needs to worry about sleeper cells in Cagayan, General Santos City and Zamboanga, not to mention Manila.

The debriefings are also interesting for what the investigators apparently did not explore: the narratives used by radical preachers in discussion sessions; the use of social media; and the role of women, to name three. Detainees could fill these gaps in a way that could help target prevention programs more effectively.

The Philippines as of November 2017 had 47 suspects connected to pro-ISIS activities in detention, a surprisingly low figure given the fact that President Duterte imposed martial law throughout Mindanao on 23 May 2017 as Marawi erupted. Seventeen of the 47 are women. More than 300 individuals reportedly have been named in arrest orders, but in most cases, their whereabouts are unknown. Many may have been killed in Marawi but it is critical to assessing the risk of violence to try to determine who may be still alive and at large. The use of multiple nicknames, spellings and aliases does not make the task easy. All the data from the 44 ISIS-linked detainees need to be thoroughly analysed to get a composite picture, as detailed as possible, of how the pro-ISIS structure worked in terms of recruitment, training, financing, decision-making, governance and application of Islamic law both before the Marawi siege began and while it was underway.

Using interrogation depositions as source material is obviously problematic. The conditions under which those arrested gave testimony is not clear, and they may have had good reason for hiding or altering facts. When they are telling the truth, they may not remember details accurately. The value of having seven at once, however, is that the information in any one deposition can be cross-checked against the others; it can also be cross-checked with outside sources.

In the end, this report is an effort to show how much needs to be done to understand what happened in Marawi and to prevent violent extremism from re-emerging in virulent new forms in the future.

## II. THE DAVAO SUSPECTS

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The seven men taken into custody in October 2016 for the Davao bombing had all undergone basic training, but they were not experienced combatants. Only one had a background in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The decision to undertake an attack seems to have been taken in Cotabato but communicated to the nerve center of the coalition, which by September 2016 was in Butig, Lanao del Sur. The original target, set for late August 2016, was a beer parlour in Midsayap, North Cotabato, but on the appointed day, heavy rain meant that there were few customers on site. The cell's leader, TJ Macabalang, decided to abort the operation and make alternative plans for Davao. Accordingly on 2 September 2016, a thirteen-man team left Cotabato in two vehicles to plant a bomb at the Roxas night market. The bomb exploded as planned, killing fifteen and injuring more than 60.

On 4 October, the first three suspects were arrested: TJ Macabalang himself; Wendel Facturan, a young convert who placed the backpack containing the bomb in the market; and Musalli Mustapha who videoed the explosion. Four more men were arrested on 29 October. They included two converts, Jackson Mangulamas Usi and Zack Villanueva Lopez alias Haron; a young Mangindanaon, Awsan Mamasapano Abdullah; and an Indian-Maguindanaon, Boi Chenikandyil. The depositions of these seven constitute the material on which this report is based.

On 10 November, another team member, Jerico Javier de Roma alias Kokoy, turned himself in and was later formally indicted. Out of fourteen men recommended for trial after a hearing in December 2016, five were in detention at the time of this writing, all of them in Davao.<sup>1</sup> Seven, including Boi, had been released for lack of evidence; a few had turned state's witness; and seven remained at large.<sup>2</sup>

All fourteen were charged with multiple murder and multiple attempted murder. TJ, Wendel and Musalli were also charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives, a non-bailable offense. And in a first, all fourteen were also charged with terrorism under the deeply flawed "Human Security Act of 2007" which up until this case had made prosecution on terrorism charges almost impossible.<sup>3</sup>

The sections that follow provide more information about who these men were and the ties among them.

## III. RADICALISATION AND RECRUITMENT

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The depositions provide a detailed picture of how the Cotabato cell came together. Two individuals were critical to recruitment. One was an *ustadz*, or Islamic teacher, who seems to

1 The five were TJ Macabalang, Wendel Facturan, Musalli Mustafa, Zack Villanueva and Jerico Javier di Roma alias Kokoy.

2 "14 of 22 suspects in Davao night market explosion indicted", [www.sunstar.com.ph](http://www.sunstar.com.ph), 13 December 2016.

3 The main barrier was a provision that made arresting police officers personally liable for a huge sum of money if the suspects were later acquitted. See Pauline E. Eadie, "Legislating for Terrorism: The Philippines' Human Security Act 2007," *Journal of Terrorism Research*, November 2011, <https://jtr.st-andrews.ac.uk/articles/10.15664/jtr.226/>.

have had the religious knowledge and commitment to ISIS to inspire others; the second was a businessman who brought in young men who lived on his street as well as personal friends and associates.

#### A. *Fakhrudin Dilangalen's Recruits*

The teacher, whose current whereabouts are not clear, was Fakhrudin Dilangalen, better known as Abu Said, from Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao.<sup>4</sup> He was already involved in pro-ISIS activities in 2014. By January 2015, he was acting as liaison between his Cotabato recruits and Ansharul Khilafah Philippines (AKP) in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat province.<sup>5</sup> By April 2015, Fakhrudin and his younger brother, Hadid, were regular speakers after sunset prayers at the Salaf Mosque in Sousa, Cotabato.<sup>6</sup> Fakhrudin organised the young men who attended his discussion sessions into a cell and began sending small groups of them to train with AKP. They in turn formally selected him as amir in mid-2015.

The men he drew around him were mostly from the neighbourhood. Several were university students. One was 22-year-old Datu Mongkang "Mongs" Dilangalen alias Awlaki, a first-year computer engineering student at Notre Dame University, not far from the mosque. He was from the same clan as Fakhrudin but their exact relationship is not clear. Mongs, nephew of one of Cotabato's best-known politicians, former Congressman Didagen "Digs" Dilangalen, became attracted to ISIS in early 2014 and persuaded some of his fellow students to get involved as well. He left home in June 2015 telling his family he was going to General Santos City to study theology. In fact, he had already joined the AKP and was killed in a clash with the military in Palimbang in November 2015.<sup>7</sup>

Mongs encouraged other students to attend the sessions at the Salaf Mosque. One was a young convert to Islam named Jackson Magulamas Usi, then seventeen and an information technology student at Systems Technology Institute (STI) in Cotabato. Another, Musali Urbano, was a fourth-year student at Cotabato City State Polytechnic College and an award-winning mural artist. He attested to the power of Mongs' preaching and the influence of the ISIS videos. A classmate of Musali's, Khalid Rauf, a fourth-year engineering student, joined around the same time. Later they brought in another student from the polytechnic college, Wendel Factoran. Wendel converted to Islam through Jackson in June 2016 and within two weeks was in Lanao del Sur, training with the Mautes.

#### B. *T.J. Macabalang's Recruits*

Separately, a local businessman named TJ Macabalang had become fascinated by al-Baghdadi's establishment of the caliphate in 2014. TJ, then 30, was an information technology graduate of the University of the Visayas in Cebu. He had a motorcycle shop in Cotabato called Sticker Works and ran a drag racing club. He became committed to ISIS through watching videos and reading ISIS material online. In late 2014, he reached out to Fakhrudin through social media, and in January 2015, Fakhrudin invited TJ and a few friends to his home in the Rosario Heights neighbourhood of Cotabato. From there they went together with fifteen others in a

4 A Facebook page of Fakhrudin Dilangalen was last updated in 2011; see <https://www.facebook.com/fakhrudin.dilangalen>.

5 Custodial debriefing of TJ Tagadaya Macabalang@Abu Tufael, 15 October 2016.

6 Custodial debriefing of Jackson Magulamas Usi@Jam/Abu Mansour, 1 November 2016.

7 TJ testified that when he first went to the AKP camp in January 2015, a number of Cotabato residents were already there, including Mongs. But Mongs went back to Cotabato with TJ on that trip. He apparently did not permanently join the group until the following June.

commuter van to the AKP camp in Butril, Palimbang. The trip took about six hours. Most of the Cotabato contingent stayed to take part in a 40-day military training course. TJ returned to Cotabato with Mongs and two friends who had joined the meeting at Fakhrudin's house. One of these was a neighbour and fellow computer expert; another was a recent STI graduate from a prominent Cotabato family.

In December 2015, Fakhrudin met TJ in Cotabato and told him that he was breaking with AKP and its commander, Abu Sharifah alias Tokboy, over "different views and opinions". In January 2016, TJ and Fakhrudin drove to Butig, Lanao del Sur to meet Abdullah Maute. As a result of this meeting, Fakhrudin decided to move to Butig to join the Mautes. Shortly thereafter, TJ replaced Fakhrudin as amir of the Cotabato cell.

TJ lacked the religious knowledge that Fakhrudin claimed, but he had a house big enough to hold meetings in and a wide network of business associates. Several members of TJ's car club joined: one was a fellow drag racer, Boy Chenikandiyil, an Indian-Manguindanaon who worked at TJ's business. Boy brought in his brother-in-law, Coi. By the time of the Davao bombing, the cell had about 30 members. Many of Fakhrudin's original recruits had joined AKP or like Fakhrudin himself, had moved to Lanao del Sur, but TJ seems to have kept the cell active and engaged.

It is not clear who was responsible for recruiting one of the cell's most prominent members, Abduljabbar Sema also known as Datu Masla Sema, the 26-year-old son of Muslimin Sema, the former mayor of Cotabato and leader of a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The young Sema was reportedly a budding Islamic scholar; he also provided the Cotabato cell with guns and vehicles, according to one of its members, and was in on the planning of the Davao bombing. He left the country shortly after the bombing but was stopped on 24 November 2016 coming into Malaysia from Bangkok. He has been in the protective custody of Malaysian authorities ever since "in an undisclosed location that is reportedly not a police facility".<sup>8</sup>

The Cotabato cell was thus a classic example of a core group of friends each bringing others from their own personal networks into the study sessions. Many of these networks overlapped. Wendel, for example, was both a polytechnic student and the mechanic for TJ's drag racing club. His friend Jackson was also a distant relative by marriage of TJ's wife. All lived in the same neighborhood. They were not driven into violent extremism by poverty or lack of opportunity. The pull seems to have been more a combination of the appeal of the ISIS brand, persuasive preaching from inspiring young clerics and peer pressure from friends and associates.

### *C. What to Watch For Now*

The networks described above suggest that as Philippine authorities put together a counter-terrorism strategy after Marawi, they need to better understand how university recruitment took place; how ISIS recruits used social media; and how important the idea of a pure Islamic community was in the attraction that ISIS exerted. It would also be useful to identify more of the radical teachers who played the role that Fakhrudin Dilangalen did in Cotabato and the mosques or other institutions that hosted them.

If they have not done so already, investigators should question the Davao bombing suspects and others detainees about campus recruitment. The information technology field seems to have produced a disproportionate number of ISIS supporters in the Cotabato area; it would be useful to know if this was also the case in Davao, Cagayan and Marawi, the other cities where

<sup>8</sup> "MNLF leader's son jailed in Malaysia for Davao bombing," [www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com), 13 January 2017. It is a case of huge sensitivity between the two governments.

campus recruitment through *da'wah* (religious outreach) was reported. Investigators seemed to show little interest in the social media services used by the students, yet there might have been a connection between the computer skills that many of the Cotabato cell possessed and their ability to access and share ISIS material. University administrators need to understand the messages that different *da'wah* groups on campus are propagating and what applications they are using to do so. They should know which local Islamic scholars they can consult about content; those individuals might also be able to provide counseling services if faculty members identify students that they suspect may be engaged in extremist activity. It is important to recognize that men have no monopoly over recruitment; women have also been effective recruiters and propagandists.

Understanding which narratives about ISIS were most powerful may give clues to the next recruitment drive – which may well have nothing to do with an international “brand” like ISIS. Two persuasive arguments were reportedly the purity of Islamic governance as opposed to the Philippines’ version of warlord democracy, and the brutality of security forces in Mindanao. Those arguments do not require a caliphate to resonate in the Muslim population.

It would be particularly interesting to learn from those arrested who they thought had done the best job of governing by Islamic law, since this was one requirement of being recognized as a province of Islamic State.<sup>9</sup> One of the Davao suspects mentions how Fakhruddin made a point of taking him and others from the Cotabato cell to visit Palimbang during Ramadan 2016 to see how Abu Sharifa (Tokboy) was running his Islamic community.<sup>10</sup> Given the state of Philippine democracy, the aspiration to set up a pure Islamic state and fight those opposed to it could still be appealing, regardless of what happens to ISIS. It could easily form the basis of a new, more locally focused extremist movement.

#### IV. MEMBERSHIP AND TRAINING

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The depositions of the seven men paint a picture of a large, complex pro-ISIS network that by mid-2016 was already coordinating cross-regional training and by October was arranging for more recruits to be sent to Lanao del Sur. The Balik Islam (Muslim convert) component from Luzon was surprisingly prominent, including some very young recruits – these child soldiers could be a future threat. The different regional components of the pro-ISIS alliance gave it a capacity for flexibility and adaptability that made it possible for the whole to survive when a part was severely damaged. This happened in late 2015, for example, after an army attack on the AKP training camp in Butril killed a few top instructors and sent the leadership further into the hills; the recruits planning to train there simply went to Butig instead. It may be a lesson to keep in mind after Marawi that some of the cells in Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Luzon are likely to remain active. The different components also were able to mount diversionary attacks, to try and keep the military off balance but also perhaps to keep the new recruits engaged. It is therefore useful to understand the pattern of linkages that took place.

The Davao suspects were able to name 107 members of the pro-ISIS coalition, including seventeen who had been killed in clashes with the Philippine military prior to October 2016. Almost all those named were from the Cotabato, AKP and Maute components and most were

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9 Regions that wanted to be recognised as provinces of Islamic State had to “hold consultations to nominate a wālī and members for the regional shūrā assembly” and plan “a strategy to achieve consolidation in their region for the Khilāfah so as to implement the Sharī’ah.” “Wilayat Khurasan and the Bay’at from Qawqaz”, *Dabiq* No. 7, <https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf>.

10 Custodial debriefing of Jackson Magulamas Usi, op.cit.

fellow Maguindanaon. Despite recognizing Isnilon Hapilon as overall amir, they seemed to have no contact with Basilan or Sulu. They also apparently had no contact with the pro-ISIS faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF,) based in Maguindanao, though they were able to name Abu Torayfe/Toraife as the amir. The lack of contact with these fellow Maguindanaon may have been linked to the fact that BIFF followers were mostly poor, rural fighters from the central Maguindanao marshland who had little in common with the urban recruits represented by the Cotabato cell. They also almost certainly had their own training camp with instruction from former MILF combatants; they did not need basic training from the AKP or Mautes. One question post-Marawi is whether there will be any link-up between Abu Torayfe's fighters, who as of late 2017 were engaging MILF and government forces in Maguindanao, with some of the urban cells that could help with financing and logistics.

The Cotabato members did not name any women in the movement but likely were not prompted to do so by the investigators.

#### *A. AKP Training in Butril, Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat province*

Throughout 2015, as the Cotabato cell was being developed, its closest contacts were with the AKP, thanks to ethnicity and geography: it was a relatively easy drive from Cotabato to General Santos and then up into Palimbang. Commander Tokboy was senior in the hierarchy to anyone in Cotabato, and the Indonesian who acted as his deputy, Syaifullah Ibrahim alias Sucipto Ali alias Abu Fatah, was a respected instructor in both religious and military subjects. Syaifullah, before his death in November 2015, received funds from Indonesia for the purchase of weapons for Poso, Central Sulawesi and apparently was on hand to welcome a young fighter sent from Poso to pick them up in late 2014.<sup>11</sup>

The numbers trained in the AKP camp in 2014 and 2015 suggest either that it was the primary training center for the pro-ISIS coalition before the military operation in November 2015 effectively destroyed it, or that if there were separate trainings going on elsewhere, the Cotabato members were not aware of them. Three kinds of training seem to have offered at the Butril site: two-week basic training for new recruits; a 40-day commando training; and a specialized explosives course. One member of the cell said he was Batch 5 of a two-week basic training course in Butril, Palimbang, beginning in late July 2015. While this man's batch was mostly from Cotabato, there were a few trainees from Zamboanga. Each batch had around 20 men, meaning that just short of two years before Marawi erupted, around 100 men already had been recruited and trained for ISIS activities in the AKP area alone, not counting Lanao or Basilan.

TJ Macabalang describes a 40-day commando training at the same site for about 30 men in January 2015. Most of the participants were from Cotabato but others came from Polomolok and General Santos City.

The instructors for the two-week training included Tokboy, Abu Fatah and another Indonesian, Abu Zacaria. The latter was the local name for Ibnu Qoyyim alias Abu Nida, an experienced fighter who had been in the Philippines since September 2003 and had been based in Basilan with Isnilon Hapilon since 2010. (The fact that he came to AKP territory as an instructor suggests that the AKP camp in 2015 may have been the training center then for Basilan recruits as well.)

<sup>11</sup> See trial dossier of Wahyudin alias Iron, East Jakarta District Court, 8 March 2016. Wahyudin, a young fighter from Bima, Sumbawa went to Mindanao to purchase weapons for the ISIS-linked group Mujahidin Indonesia Timur in Poso, Central Sulawesi. He left Indonesia on 29 October 2014 and stayed with AKP until his return on 24 January 2015. Wahyudin says he was under the guidance of "Abu Fatas" while he was in the AKP camp; this is probably a corruption of Abu Fatah. All the arrangements for his travel were made via the Telegram encrypted messaging service.

Seven or eight of the best men in each batch were asked to stay on for additional training in explosives with Abu Zacaria.

*B. Training shifts to Butig, Lanao del Sur, December 2015*

Three factors helped move the training from Butril to Butig, the Mautes' stronghold, in Lanao del Sur in late 2015. The most important was the military attack on 26 November 2015 that led to the death of Syaifullah Ibrahim and eight other AKP members. It pushed the AKP leadership further into the hills and made organized training impossible.<sup>12</sup>

Second was the decision of Fakhruddin Dilangalen to make the "hijrah" or move to Butig because of his differences with Tokboy.<sup>13</sup> Others seem to have followed suit, because one of the Davao suspects said of the Cotabato cell in October 2016:

The current number of members [...] is thirty-four (34) personalities. The other members left the group and migrated to the Base of Abdullah Maute in Butig LDS and the other stayed in Cotabato City while the others are killed during encounter in Palimbang, SK.<sup>14</sup>

The third factor was Abdullah Maute's call for recruits, which seems to have begun during Ramadan 2016 (6 June to 5 July 2016). It may have been prompted by a military offensive that began on 24 May 2016 and that ended ten days later with the military declaring that it had secured control over a Maute base in Butig.<sup>15</sup> One of the Davao suspects says he and others from Cotabato were called up to "render duty" for a week at a time.<sup>16</sup>

The Mautes made a point of recruiting and training Muslim converts (Balik Islam) from Luzon. When one of the Davao suspects underwent his first month-long training course in Butig in July 2016, he noted:

The forces in the base are comprised mostly of Maranaos followed by forces from Maguindanao, Balik Islam from Luzon and about 9 followers of Abu Sharifah from Sarangani.<sup>17</sup>

One suspect describes being brought to Butig in June 2016 by one Ustadz Mohamad, just a few months after his conversion at the Blue Mosque in Maharlika Village, Taguig City.<sup>18</sup> He said he was given two weeks of Islamic education at the site. Several of the Balik Islam trainees in Butig were children, including two boys estimated to be about twelve and three teenagers aged

12 One of the Cotabato men who was in Butril when the attack took place says Tokboy and a group of seven moved first into a more forested area of Palimbang, then to the villages of Kulong-kulong and Libua where villagers provided them with food. In February 2016, they moved to Daliao in Maasim, Sarangani and stayed near the Maguid Day Care center.

13 Tokboy himself seems to have maintained good relations with the Mautes, however, and according to the suspects was a frequent visitor to Butig.

14 Custodial debriefing of Awsan Mamasapano Abdullah@Abu Hamsa, 30 October 2016. Among those who also moved to Butig were Fakhruddin's younger brother, Hadid Dilangalen; Abrar from Katuli, Sultan Kudarat; and Abu Muslim and Haitam/Haitham from Cotabato City.

15 "Army seizes Islamic militant camp in Lanao del Sur," [www.rappler.com](http://www.rappler.com) 4 June 2016.

16 Custodial debriefing of Awsan Mamasapano, op.cit.

17 Custodial debriefing of Wendel Facturan y Apostol@Win-win aka Muhaimin, 12 October 2016.

18 Custodial debriefing of Haron Villanueva Lopez alias Zack Haron, 31 October 2016.

fourteen to sixteen.<sup>19</sup> The inclusion of children should be of concern, first because it provides additional evidence of a more pervasive use of child soldiers by the pro-ISIS forces, but also because these boys, if any returned to their home areas before the siege, could constitute a corps of young operatives for future attacks.<sup>20</sup>

One of the converts used as a look-out for the Davao bombing was a former policeman from Antipolo, east of Manila. Jessy Vincent Guinto Original alias Abu Aisha, was arrested in December 2016 but does not appear to have been detained.<sup>21</sup> He worked with the Mautes in Butig and was not part of the Cotabato cell.

One particularly prominent convert, Jake Macuto alias Abu Rasas (also known as Yusop Macuto), traveled back and forth between Cotabato and Butig and was known to be close to TJ Macabalang. He has been named as a suspect in a series of attacks and plots that are precisely the kind of operations outside Mindanao that could be mounted as revenge attacks after Marawi's "liberation."<sup>22</sup> As of November 2017, he was said to be alive and well and active on social media.

Beginning in July 2016, several of the Davao suspects joined some 30 others at Camp Ali, Butiq for a fifteen-day course in "Close Quarter Battle" (CQB) and "combat formation training". The participants were mostly Maranao and Maguindanaon but four Balik Islam and one Tausug from Zamboanga also took part. The instructors were Tokboy, Abu Amar Romato and a convert named Abu Aisha. The use of CQB suggests the Mautes may have already been planning for urban warfare of the kind they conducted in Marawi.<sup>23</sup>

One of those participating in the CQB was a Belize national named Nadir Ali Ahmad alias Abu Nayla (referred to by the suspects as a "black American"). He had first tried to join ISIS in the Middle East before heading to the Philippines as his second choice. He told the others of how he had been stopped by Turkish troops at the Turkey-Iraq border.<sup>24</sup> Abu Nayla left Butig to join Tokboy's beleaguered forces when the training was over; he was killed there with his Filipina convert wife in January 2017.

## V. FINANCING

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Very little comes out in the debriefings about financing; this may be as much an oversight on the part of investigators as withholding on the part of the suspects. There is nothing to suggest, however, that the Cotabato cell received any funding from outside sources. It received some support from wealthier members of the group such as Datu Masla Sema and Boi, but most of its funds seem to have come from carnapping activities: stealing motorcycles in Cotabato and selling

<sup>19</sup> Custodial debriefing of Jackson Magulamas, op.cit.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the use of child soldiers see <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/172587-maute-child-soldiers-marawi>

<sup>21</sup> "Ex-cop says he's part of group behind Davaonight market blast," [www.inquirer.net](http://www.inquirer.net), 28 December 2016.

<sup>22</sup> In February 2017, Macuto was named as a suspect in the 28 December 2016 bombings in Hilongos, Leyte. The bombings, which injured more than 30 people, took place as thousands had gathered to watch an amateur boxing match, but police believe it may have been a test run for something more serious. See "Muslim convert, 3 charged for Hilongos, Leyte bombings," [www.inquirer.net](http://www.inquirer.net), 23 February 2017. He is also believed to have been involved in a foiled attack on the U.S. embassy in Manila on 28 November 2016.

<sup>23</sup> A military website ([www.military.com](http://www.military.com)) describes CQB as "Close quarters combat (CQC) or close quarters battle (CQB) is a type of fighting in which small units engage the enemy with personal weapons at very short range, potentially to the point of hand-to-hand combat or fighting with hand weapons such as swords or knives."

<sup>24</sup> One of the Davao suspects provided a possibly irrelevant but fascinating bit of information: he said that Abu Nayla, an agricultural engineer, used his spare time to teach the others about mushroom cultivation. Musalli debriefing.

them in Marawi. In Indonesia, such robberies are often justified as *fa'i*, robbery of non-Muslims in the interests of jihad, or *ghanimah*, war booty, but the Davao suspects were not asked, nor did they volunteer, if these principles were applied.

There is very little indication of who paid for all the training; it would be a useful topic for more questioning of all the ISIS detainees. In the AKP area, where information from Indonesian sources suggest that some funds were coming in from Indonesia as long as Syaifullah Ibrahim was alive, there may have been a link to Indonesians in ISIS Syria. But there is no indication that these groups were flush with cash. One of the young Cotabato recruits who had been with AKP since July or August 2015, survived the assault that killed Syaifullah Ibrahim in November 2015 and moved with Tokboy to Daliao, said that in March 2016, he wanted to go home to Cotabato. Tokboy approved his request so he sent a text to his sister to wire him funds. His sister sent 700 pesos (about US\$14) to the bank account of Tokboy's wife and he was thus able to get home.<sup>25</sup>

If investigators can return to the detainees in custody, it would be interesting to probe their knowledge about funding sources; training and travel expenses; and changes in funding available at different points in the ISIS trajectory (for example, before and after the announcement of an alliance, posted on YouTube in January 2016 but put into effect several months earlier). Farhana Maute, a prominent businesswoman in Marawi and matriarch of the Maute family who is one of those in custody, could surely reveal much about local and international funding but is probably one of those least likely to be forthcoming with information.

President Duterte has made much of the Mautes' links to drug lords, but it is in his interests to do so: terrorism becomes another justification for the war on drugs. In fact, the exact linkage remains unclear. An independent assessment, based on careful interviewing of those arrested from the Marawi area, about when, where and how the interests of drug dealers and terrorists intersected, will be critical to understanding the risk of further violence.

## VI. THE DIRE STATE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Taking anyone into custody in the Philippines is like tossing them into jail and throwing away the key. Forty-three detainees from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) have been waiting 17 years for their cases to come to trial. No one is interested in advocating on their behalf and it is not clear that advocacy would do any good. It can take years to move from a first hearing to a second. Only two courts in Manila are assigned to hear terrorism cases, and the backlog is huge. The war on drugs has made things worse. While most attention has rightly been focused on the extrajudicial killings, drug suspects are also filling up the prisons. If the prisons were 380 per cent over capacity in 2016, the level of overcrowding had jumped to 623 per cent by October 2017.<sup>26</sup> One commentator describes "a broken judicial system in which tens of thousands of people in the Philippines are detained for prolonged periods without either ever seeing a judge, or whose perfunctory court appearances stretch over years."

Jailbreaks are frequent, often through bribes to underpaid guards. Freeing imprisoned mujahidin is also a highly valued act among extremists, sanctioned by *hadith* (traditions of the

25 Custodial debriefing of Jackson Magulamas, op.cit.

26 Carlos Conde, "Injustice and Misery in PH Jails," [www.inquirer.net](http://www.inquirer.net), 8 March 2016; "Jail facilities congested by 583 percent," [www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com), 2 July 2017. The figure of 623 per cent is from an IPAC email exchange with an BJMP official, 22 November 2017.

Prophet).<sup>27</sup> The Maute brothers engineered one of the most brazen escapes in recent memory in August 2016, when on 27 August 2016, 20 men armed with guns and rocket launchers managed to free 23 prisoners from Marawi jail including eight of their relatives and top fighters who had been arrested less than a week earlier. One of those freed was the stepbrother of Abdullah and Omar Maute, Hashim Balaweg Maute alias Apol. He is one of the top leaders whose fate and whereabouts after the Marawi siege remain unclear.

Prisons thus need to be a focus of close monitoring and carefully managed rehabilitation programs, but those programs need to be based on the kind of in-depth understanding of individual detainees called for in this report – and until more serious prison reform takes root, the obstacles to success of those rehabilitation programs are high. It is worth noting that rewards for good behaviour only kick in after conviction, so those awaiting trial – which includes 85 to 90 per cent of those in prison -- are ineligible.

Of the 44 detainees arrested thus far in connection with pro-ISIS activities, five are the Davao suspects and the other 39, all arrested after the Marawi siege began, are detained in Manila. As noted, they include seventeen women, underscoring the importance of knowing more about what role women played (and continue to play) in the movement. The 44 do not include non-ISIS members of the Abu Sayyaf Group, MILF, MNLF or other groups.<sup>28</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

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Philippine authorities have not yet done the basic data gathering from detainees that could provide the basis for an effective counter-radicalisation program. They need to know the exact details of who was radicalized where and by whom. Based on that information, they can try and craft a program to counter violent extremism (CVE). Without that analysis, donors of CVE programs might as well throw their funding into Lake Lanao.

The 47 men and women now in custody constitute an invaluable databank who can help local and national authorities understand how pro-ISIS radicalization took place and why it had –and its arguments may continue to have -- such an appeal. The key to radicalization is not poverty; the university students that provided the core of the Cotabato cell are proof that many in the educated middle class ended up believing that only a resort to violent extremism would end the country's ills. The resonance of that argument is not going away anytime soon.

Among the first steps that could be taken are the following:

- A mapping of university-based recruitment into extremist based both on detainee data as well as research in tertiary institutions by researchers who understand the distinctions among different streams of Islam.
- A compilation of the narratives used to draw recruits into pro-ISIS activity, both in religious study discussions as well as during military training.
- A systematic focus on cities other than Cotabato where radical cells were known to be active, using detainee information to try and draw a more complete picture of how these cells worked. We know, for example, that the organization initially

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27 Several *hadith* say that freeing Muslim prisoners is obligatory; it is also an act that brings one closer to God. See for example <http://www.authentictauheed.com/p/muslim-prisoners.html>.

28 According to October 2017 statistics from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in the Philippines, there are some 600 individuals detained for violent extremism, including 233 ASG, 99 MILF, 221 MNLF, 3 Al Khobar, 1 BIFF, 3 AKP, 44 Maute group, 5 JIM and 1 “Jemaah Islamiyah”. The last is an Indonesian who was never a JI member but rather associated with a group called KOMPAK.

known as Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM) was founded in Cagayan de Oro by a man who became part of the Maute's inner circle in Marawi, Ustadz Humam Abdul Najid alias Owayda (also known as Wai). Mapping the connections in Cagayan and understanding Owayda's role there remain essential.

- A mapping of mosques known to have hosted discussions with pro-ISIS preachers. The Salaf mosque in Cotabato is one example but there will surely be many others. Local ulama councils may want to work out a mechanism by which they can share information about known extremists to try and prevent mosques and other institutions from being recruitment centers.
- A detailed understanding of the role of women and why and through whom women became involved as financiers, propagandists and combatants.

This information will not in itself prevent violent extremism but it can provide a better basis for future programs.

## INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT (IPAC)

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