

**SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES BACKGROUNDER:
TERRORISM AND THE PEACE PROCESS**

13 July 2004



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SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES BACKGROUNDER: TERRORISM AND THE PEACE PROCESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Persistent reports of links between the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror network overshadow and put at risk the peace process between the MILF and the Philippine government. While the MILF leadership continues to deny any ties, all evidence points to ongoing operational and training links. What is uncertain is whether top leaders are aware of the activity and unwilling to admit it, or whether members of JI and other like-minded jihadist groups have established their own personal ties to individual MILF commanders without the knowledge of the MILF leadership.

This background report, which continues a series on terrorism in South East Asia, examines the history of the JI-MILF alliance, the depth of its past cooperation and the state of the present relationship. A central paradox of the southern Philippines peace process is that it presents both the main short-term obstacle to rooting out the terrorist network and an indispensable element in any long-term remedy to terror. Attempts to move directly against terrorists embedded in MILF-controlled territory risk an escalation of violence and a breakdown of talks. Yet without a successful peace agreement, the region will continue to be marked by a climate of lawlessness in which terrorism can thrive.

The short-term imperative is to prevent a re-eruption of the war. One possible measure would be to immediately bring into force a mechanism agreed to by both sides in 2002 but never implemented for joint Philippine government-MILF cooperation against criminals taking refuge in MILF areas. This should be strengthened to address foreign terrorists explicitly.

Improving MILF accountability to the peace process in this way could be reciprocated by appointing a

full-time, permanent Philippine government peace panel, adequately resourced to build consensus among key stakeholders on the shape of enhanced autonomy.

JI, now notorious for its activities especially in Indonesia, established a foothold in the southern Philippines in 1994, building on ties formed with the secessionist MILF in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Personal relationships between founding MILF chairman Salamat Hashim and JI leaders like Abdullah Sungkar and Zulkarnaen allowed it to set up training camps under MILF protection, replicating the Afghan camp system in which the organisation first took shape, and transferring deadly skills to a new generation of operatives.

As well as replenishing JI ranks in Indonesia depleted by post-Bali arrests, some of these graduates have carried out terror attacks in the Philippines in concert with local elements from the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf Group. ICG information suggests that the architect of many of these recent attacks was a Javanese graduate of the Mindanao camps, named Zulkifli. He was captured in Malaysia in late 2003, but not before overseeing the Davao bombings of March and April 2003, which killed 38 and remain a major obstacle to the peace talks.

The JI-MILF relationship is clearly continuing, but in a much more decentralised fashion. Since the Philippine army overran major MILF camps in 2000, MILF forces have been dispersed into smaller, more autonomous units, sometimes disavowed by the MILF leadership as "lost commands". The MILF has always been loose-knit, but its units became more independent following the offensive of 2000 and after Salamat Hashim's death in July 2003.

It is unclear at this stage how the new MILF leadership around Hashim's successor, Al-Haj Murad, regards the ties to JI. The MILF officially disavows terrorism. Given what is now known about JI-MILF ties, therefore, there are three possible interpretations of this official stance, all of which bode ill for the peace process.

If top MILF leaders engaged in peace negotiations are unaware of local level cooperation with JI or if they follow a "don't ask, don't tell" policy that leaves local commanders to their own devices, the lack of central control suggests it might not be possible to implement an agreement. If at least some top MILF officials are not only aware of JI ties, but see them as a crucial element of a "fight and talk" strategy, the good faith necessary for successful negotiations would be called into question. All three possibilities may be related to factional divisions within the MILF that appear to have deepened since Salamat Hashim's death.

Singapore/Brussels, 13 July 2004

SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES BACKGROUNDER: TERRORISM AND THE PEACE PROCESS

I. INTRODUCTION

The spectre of terrorism is haunting the southern Philippines peace process. Persistent reports of links between the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the regional Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network, and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) overshadow the negotiations between the MILF and Philippine government in Kuala Lumpur and underscore the growing entanglement of deeply-rooted domestic insurgencies with the global "war on terrorism". Mindanao is increasingly viewed as a frontline in this struggle.¹

The MILF is widely regarded as a revolutionary organisation fighting for the self-determination of Philippine Muslims (Moros). It proclaims itself as such, and publicly renounces terror. It has not been listed as a terrorist organisation by the U.S., unlike the ASG, Pentagon Gang, and New People's Army (NPA), which also challenge Philippine security forces.² Yet Manila and Washington believe the MILF has working relationships with all these groups, and most significantly with JI, which is said to train in MILF-controlled camps and whose Mindanao cell planned many of the major terrorist acts in the Philippines between 2000 and 2003. The MILF denies such ties.

The Philippines differs fundamentally from its South East Asian neighbours also targeted by JI. It has a long-standing Islamic insurgency powerful enough

to limit state capacity in much of the South, yet so decentralised that what ensues is not a shadow government, but pockets of anarchy. These enclaves are dominated by local rebel "commanders" owing varying degrees of allegiance to umbrella coalitions like the MILF or ASG, but whose power is rooted in pyramids of particularistic clan and tribal loyalties. It is unclear how much control the central MILF leadership exercises over its commanders.

Negotiations with the MILF, underway since 1996, have repeatedly broken down over the issue of "lost commands" and "lawless elements" taking refuge in MILF territory that are disowned by the MILF leadership. This report examines the relationship between the MILF and regional and local terrorist organisations, focusing most closely on JI. It highlights the special difficulties the Philippines faces in uprooting terrorist networks embedded in a domestic insurgency with its own complex dynamics. Countering these networks effectively will involve a unique combination of police, military and diplomatic measures.

The Philippines has been described as the weakest link in the effort to contain the threat of further terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia by the JI network, which has been disrupted but not put out of action by a series of over 200 arrests across the region, mostly in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Transparent trials and rapid convictions of the key Bali bombers have done much to dispel complacency about JI in Indonesia, and the wealth of evidence released has helped inform public debate about the nature of the threat.

In the Philippines, by contrast, there have been relatively few arrests, despite the presence of many top JI operatives over the years. One of the few successful convictions -- that of Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, the "Rizal Day" bomber -- was soon overshadowed by his seemingly effortless escape

¹ This report, following local convention, uses the terms "Mindanao" and "southern Philippines" interchangeably to refer to the main southern island of Mindanao together with the Sulu archipelago.

² The communist NPA and the Abu Sayyaf are classified as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). The Pentagon Gang, a kidnapping syndicate with murky ties to the MILF, is on the less stringent Terrorist Exclusion List (TEL), along with an NPA splinter group, the Alex Boncayao Brigade. See U.S. Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003".

from jail, embarrassingly on the same day that Manila signed a new counter-terrorism agreement with visiting Australian Prime Minister John Howard.³ Al-Ghozi's three-month flight across the country and violent demise in Mindanao's Cotabato province in October 2003 were dogged by controversy fueling conspiracy theories that are the staple of Philippine public debate on the JI issue.

Some arrests made in connection with terrorist bombings -- increasingly frequent in the Philippines since 2000 (see Appendix B) -- have been based on the flimsiest of evidence. There has been no sustained or coordinated effort to communicate the case against JI to a sceptical public, particularly opinion leaders in Mindanao. Instead, arrests based on inadequate detective work have too often been exploited for short-term political gain, only to be forgotten -- or deeply resented -- as the prosecutors' case falls apart. The terrorist issue is commonly dismissed as a government or military ploy to justify measures against the MILF, or even martial law.

This report takes a close look at the Davao bombings of March and April 2003 to understand why this pattern persists and how it undermines the wider regional struggle against terrorism.⁴ The Davao International Airport and Sasa wharf bombings together took 38 lives, the worst confirmed attacks in Southeast Asia since Bali, and ones in which JI played a major role. Yet, in stark contrast to Bali, these cases remain in limbo more than a year later. Confusion also surrounds a ferry disaster in Manila Bay in late February 2004, in which more than 100 passengers died. The Abu Sayyaf Group has claimed responsibility for bombing the ferry, and the self-confessed perpetrator is in custody, but a government inquiry has produced no conclusions and the attack remains unconfirmed.

The Philippines is crucial to the evolving terrorist threat in Southeast Asia for three main reasons. First, as this report describes, it has become, since

the mid-1990s, a primary training ground for JI and a number of like-minded groups that remain determined to acquire a military capacity, either to further their goal of establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia or to defend the faith against its enemies more generally. Secondly, the lack of state capacity to effectively police borders and movements of people, money and contraband, particularly in the south, continues to make it a country of convenience for "lone wolf" operators and cells of various jihadist organisations.⁵

Thirdly -- and most fundamentally -- operatives of jihadist groups, including in the past al-Qaeda, rely on the enabling environment of long-term separatist insurgencies in the southern Philippines. These interrelated conflicts remain under-reported and of great concern in their own right; an estimated 120,000 lives have been lost since 1972. The most significant threat of all for the Philippines and the wider region is the possibility of international terrorism and domestic insurgency becoming ever more closely interwoven and mutually reinforcing. This lends new urgency to the quest for peace in Mindanao.

The MILF enjoys widespread latent support in the Muslim southern Philippines, but has always devoted its greatest effort to securing diplomatic and material backing from the outside Muslim world. In an era of growing international Islamist solidarity since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, this has left the MILF vulnerable to infiltration by outside forces with their own agendas. This report demonstrates a long-standing pattern of collusion between the MILF, ASG, and JI, largely based on personal relationships developed through shared experiences of training and fighting. Many of the most important ties ran through founding MILF chairman Salamat Hashim.

Following the death of Hashim in July 2003, the MILF came to a crossroads. Its leadership is divided along various lines: tribal, generational, religious versus secular orientation, and military versus political command. With renewed negotiations imminent and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) standing by in the wings, ready to punish any

³ The Rizal Day attacks on five targets across Metro Manila killed 22 on 30 December 2000, a holiday in recognition of the Philippine national hero Jose Rizal.

⁴ This report was prepared by an ICG consultant, working with ICG staff, and is based on extensive interviews with MILF members in the Philippines; individuals who attended Camp Hudaybiyah; and officials in Indonesia and the Philippines. ICG also made use of interrogation depositions of suspects in the Philippines and Indonesia, the information from which was again cross-checked in interviews. Information from interviews and depositions was supplemented with material from publicly available sources.

⁵ The most renowned al-Qaeda cell in the Philippines was headed by Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, mastermind of 11 September, until 1995. See Simon Reeve, *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and The Future of Terrorism* (London, 1999). Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, established a network of front organisations in the Philippines in the early 1990s that remains of concern.

sign of recalcitrance from the MILF, the temptation for Manila to take one of two easy options must be strong. One option would be to avoid the difficult issues in a drive to secure a fast track agreement and reap a short-term peace dividend. This would entail pandering to the culture of denial on the JI issue apparent in some sections of government, media and civil society, and in the public statements of the MILF.

Manila's other easy option would be to play the war card, mobilising anti-Muslim sentiment, unleashing the AFP, and maximising American aid for the war on terror. This could bring satisfying short-term dividends but would likely polarise Philippine society, escalate the insurgency and consolidate the MILF around a hardline leadership committed to strengthening ties to international jihadist organisations.

The more difficult, but ultimately only promising, option is to acknowledge the reality of the JI threat and work patiently but determinedly to separate Philippine Muslims' legitimate aspirations to self-determination from those exploiting them for their own ends. This would require a far more systematic and intensive effort at intelligence collection and analysis, based on improved relations with the Muslim community, and closer coordination of police, military, diplomatic and border control functions. It would also require a stronger commitment to implementing a genuine, enhanced autonomy agreement in the Muslim south.

The MILF must also face up to some difficult choices. Will ranking leaders continue to collude with foreign sponsors engaged in terrorism, looking to outside support to bolster their claims to independence or autonomy? Will they continue to take the support of the local Muslim population largely for granted as captives to ethnic polarisation, or can they provide real services to the constituencies they claim to represent and isolate extremists? The MILF's dilemma has arisen partly out of the backgrounds and formative experiences it shared with Islamists from other countries and partly as a result of the conscious choice it has made to maintain a plausibly deniable terrorist option in its strategic toolbox. This is too dangerous a game to play in a post-11 September world, and Manila, with the support of the international community, must do what it can to help the MILF make the right choices.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES CONFLICT

Conflict in the southern Philippines has long been susceptible to entanglement in regional and global power struggles. The term "Moro" was first used to designate the Muslim population of the islands by the Spaniards, who began colonising the northern and central archipelago in 1565, with memories of their centuries-long crusade against Moorish occupation still fresh. By the time Spain lost the Philippines to the U.S. in 1898, however, large areas of the Muslim south remained largely untouched. Substantial Christian settlement only began in the early part of the twentieth century. With Philippine independence in 1946, the south's political and economic integration, and Muslim marginalisation, accelerated.

In the 1950s, growing numbers of Philippine Muslims came to a new awareness of their identity after winning scholarships to Manila or the Middle East, particularly Cairo's Al-Azhar University. Salamat Hashim, an ethnic Maguindanaon from the Cotabato region, attended Al-Azhar from 1959 to 1969, leaving with an "all but dissertation" doctorate and a ready-made web of international Islamist ties. He was founding president of the Philippine Student's Union (1962), and secretary-general of the Organisation of Asian Students, and was especially influenced by the ideas of Muslim Brotherhood radical Syed Qutb, whom Egyptian president Gamel Abdul Nasser executed in 1966.⁶ Among Hashim's contemporaries at Al-Azhar were Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, later leaders of Afghanistan's anti-Soviet mujahidin.⁷ On his return to Cotabato, Hashim became drawn to secessionist politics, and an early contender for the leadership of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which appropriated the Spanish epithet in an attempt to forge a new identity uniting the south's thirteen Muslim tribes.⁸

⁶ Interview with Hashim Salamat in *Nida'ul Islam*, April-May 1998, available at www.islam.org.au/articles/23/ph2.htm.

⁷ ICG interview with a close confidant of Hashim's, Manila, January 2004.

⁸ The Philippine Muslim population ("Bangsamoro") comprises about 5 per cent of the country's total of 83 million. They constitute a majority only in the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, which, together with Marawi City, form the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM),

Simmering communal conflict in the South became full-scale civil war after President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in September 1972, but the MNLF was well prepared. Beginning in 1969, cadres were sent abroad for military training with the assistance of disgruntled Muslim aristocrats. The first cohort, known as the "Top 90" and including the ethnic Tausug/Sama MNLF chairman Nur Misuari, spent more than a year on Pulau Pangkor, near Malaysia's Penang Island. In 1970 the "Batch 300" followed, including Al-Haj Murad, who would succeed Hashim as MILF chairman after his death in July 2003. Next was "Batch 67" or the Bombardier Group, which brought new skills in the use of light artillery from Malaysia. Libya replaced Malaysia as the principal training venue from the mid-1970s, supplemented through the 1980s by Syria, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) camps in the Mideast, and Pakistan.

From the outset, the secessionist movement was much more strongly oriented toward seeking support from the international Muslim community than toward building institutions of self-governance at home. The MNLF central committee was based in Libya from 1974-1975 onward, and Libyan weapons supplies were smuggled through the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah with the assistance of its chief minister, Tun Mustapha Harun, during the height of the war until late 1975. While field commanders mobilised support based on access to these supplies, central committee members made the diplomatic rounds of Middle Eastern and West Asian capitals and put their case to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which granted the MNLF special observer status in May 1977. Hashim led these efforts and extended his international contacts as the MNLF's head of foreign affairs.

Tellingly, it was to the OIC and Muslim World League (Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami) that Hashim's faction addressed its "Instrument of Takeover" in late 1977, when rivalry with Misuari and his Tausug followers could no longer be suppressed. It is commonly believed that the breakaway of Hashim's "New Leadership" wing, which became the MILF in 1984, sprang from its more militant, faith-based

agenda, uncompromising on independence. In fact, Hashim curried support from OIC states by emphasising willingness to abide by the terms of the Tripoli peace agreement, signed by Misuari in December 1976. This called for autonomy in the Muslim south, not independence, but Misuari reverted to his original demand for full secession after Manila insisted on a referendum on its own terms. Much of the MILF remains to this day less ideological and more pragmatic than it is commonly portrayed, but, like the MNLF before it, is prone to fragmentation, especially with its founder gone.

Although the MNLF retains OIC recognition as representative of the Moro people at government level, Hashim long enjoyed high-level personal access and patronage throughout the Middle East. While Misuari has remained closely identified with his main patron, Libya, Hashim spent the decade 1978-1987 shuttling between Cairo, Jeddah, Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore, developing both overt and covert support networks, including ties with Osama bin Laden. The primary link to bin Laden was through Hashim's Al-Azhar classmate Sayyaf. Beginning in 1980, Hashim's MNLF faction, by one account, sent up to 500 men to the Afghan-Pakistan border to train alongside other Southeast Asians.⁹ Hashim based himself in Pakistan in 1982, only returning to the Philippines in December 1987. The number of Moro trainees on the Afghan border apparently peaked between 1986 and 1988; very few came after 1991. Most arrived in batches of five or ten, sent by field commanders in Mindanao. Others drifted to Afghanistan after failing academically at Islamic schools across the region, making contact with the factions of Sayyaf, Rabbani or Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Rather than returning home without qualifications, Afghan experience offered the prospect of increased status.¹⁰

The return of Hashim and the Afghan veterans gave new impetus to the MILF, which remained the less visible wing of the movement until 1996, when a "final" agreement was struck in Jakarta between the government and Misuari's MNLF. Under the leadership of Afghan alumni like Benjie Midtimbang, an officer training school, the Abdulrahman Bedis Memorial Academy, was established in 1987, and a massive training program undertaken. Between 1987 and 1990, a former central committee member

created in 1990. The five largest tribes are the Maguindanao ("People of the Flood Plain") and Maranao ("People of the Lake"); the Iranun, from whom the former two groups diverged centuries ago when they migrated to the Cotabato and Lanao regions, respectively; and the Tausug ("People of the Current") and Sama, the mainstay of Nur Misuari's MNLF, concentrated in the Sulu archipelago and coastal southern Zamboanga.

⁹ ICG interview with MILF central committee member, March 2003.

¹⁰ ICG interviews with current and former members of the MILF central committee, March 2003 and January 2004.

claims, 122,000 MILF supporters went through basic training, and can be mobilised to back up the movement's 10,000 to 15,000 armed regulars.¹¹

The MILF's extensive network of camps began, in the months after the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, as government-recognised "bivouac" areas of the MNLF's Kutawato Revolutionary Committee (the core of Hashim's faction that would break with Misuari later in 1977).¹² Camp Abu Bakar as-Siddique, future location of the Bedis Academy and the largest of the MILF camps until its capture by government forces in July 2000, was firmly established by 1981. By 1985, there were at least seven camps across Mindanao: Abu Bakar, Busrah, Ali, Omar, Khalid, Othman and Salman.¹³ At the time peace talks broke down and the government launched its largest ever offensive against the MILF in 2000, the movement was pushing for official recognition of thirteen "major" and 33 "minor" camps.

The MILF leadership continues to shrug off evidence that it hosts foreign terrorists, including JI, in its camps. Given a long history of international Islamist associations, personal solidarities strengthened through years of struggle before the world ever heard the name Osama bin Laden, and the strength the MILF has derived from training provided by foreign Muslims, ending these reciprocal ties may not come easily. Times have changed, however, and the passing of Salamat Hashim may provide the organisation the opportunity to change with them.

III. TERROR AND THE PEACE PROCESS

A central paradox of the southern Philippines peace process is that it presents both the main short-term obstacle to rooting out the terrorist network, and an indispensable element in any long-term remedy. Attempts to move directly against terrorists embedded in MILF-controlled or influenced territory inevitably risk an escalatory spiral and the breakdown of negotiations. Yet without a successful peace agreement, the region will continue as a zone of lawlessness in which terrorism can thrive. A further difficulty for both sides in the peace process is knowing just who to negotiate with. Are counterparts in full control of their forces on the ground? Can they make a deal stick against hardline opposition from within their own team? A brief review of the peace process demonstrates the intractability of these issues.

Hopes for peace were high when the Ramos administration signed a treaty in Jakarta with Misuari's MNLF in September 1996. Aimed at the "final" implementation of the disputed 1976 Tripoli agreement, this built upon the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, born of a 1987 pact sealed in Jeddah.¹⁴ The MILF was not involved in the process leading to Jakarta, and its standing among Muslims was boosted by the disappointing results. Little of the promised aid materialised, much of what did has been lost to corruption, and the drive to conclude an agreement without thinking through implementation left its mechanisms impotent. Significant numbers of former MNLF supporters drifted away to the MILF, Abu Sayyaf and Islamic Command Council,¹⁵ which became the new vanguards of the Moro struggle. MNLF forces in Sulu loyal to Misuari have also resumed fighting since November 2001, sometimes in alliance with ASG elements.

Prior to Jakarta, the MILF was not considered a major threat, and efforts to negotiate remained half-hearted on both sides while Misuari occupied the

¹¹ Ibid. Estimates of the MILF's armed strength vary widely, due to many part-timers.

¹² Salah Jubair, *Bangsamoro: A Nation under Endless Tyranny* (Kuala Lumpur, 1999), p.168.

¹³ W.K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Oxford, 1990), p.93.

¹⁴ See Appendix C for details of these and all subsequent agreements mentioned in the text.

¹⁵ The Islamic Command Council, an MNLF faction strongest in the Zamboanga peninsula, began distancing itself from Misuari in the early 1990s, but only declared its existence in March 2000. Led by Melham Alam and Hashim Bogdadi, it was implicated together with the Abu Sayyaf in the sacking of Ipil town, Zamboanga del Sur (now in Zamboanga Sibugay), in April 1995.

limelight. In July 1993, Hashim announced that no talks would be possible until the government finished its business with the MNLF, and nothing beyond a few highly localised understandings was achieved. Meanwhile, the MILF quietly built up its forces. Once tentative discussions began in August 1996, the MILF manoeuvred for tactical advantage, while the Philippine government avoided internationalising the talks, which, it feared, could grant the MILF the same kind of quasi-belligerent status Misuari had enjoyed.

An "Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities" reached on 18 July 1997, after almost a year of low-profile meetings in provincial cities around Mindanao, became, together with its implementing guidelines, the anchor reference for all subsequent accords. The implementing guidelines established government and MILF Coordinating Committees for the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), with six members on each side. This remains the principal ceasefire monitoring mechanism (there are also Local Monitoring Teams). At the core of the MILF negotiating strategy are the ideas of incrementality and irreversibility -- that each agreement represents a small and cumulative step forward. Even after major hostilities in 2000 and 2003, the 1997 ceasefire and CCCH were resurrected. The government, by contrast, seeks a final solution along the lines of Jakarta and sometimes appears ready to abandon the established framework in the rush to an all-or-nothing resolution.¹⁶

Throughout 1997-1999, ceasefire monitoring mechanisms were gradually strengthened, while the MILF pushed for recognition of its camps. In the absence of international mediation, the rebel panel saw this as a form of embryonic Bangsamoro sovereignty, providing symbolic equality with the government prior to discussion of a comprehensive settlement. The camps were also at the centre of the MILF's very real political, religious and military power, and the ceasefire machinery provided them with an additional line of defence.

For the Philippine government, the right of hot pursuit has been a crucial concern. The 1997 cessation of hostilities agreement followed the heaviest fighting yet seen, when AFP forces, allegedly pursuing kidnappers, clashed with MILF elements in the vicinity of Camp Rajahmuda that June. The MILF dismissed the kidnappings as a

pretext for the military action. A suicide attack by two Arabs on an AFP division headquarters in October heightened tensions around Camp Abu Bakar, where the attackers were thought to have been based. "Providing sanctuary or assistance to criminal or lawless elements" was thus established as a "prohibited provocative act" under the November 1997 agreement.¹⁷ The absence of any specific language regarding terrorism was remarkable: unlike the alleged abductions in Rajahmuda, the suicide attacks did not prompt an AFP offensive.

The MILF gained "acknowledgement" of camps Abu Bakar and Busrah in February 1999, and of five more camps -- Bilal, Rajahmuda, Darapanan, Omar and Badr -- in October 1999. Inspection and verification of another 39 camps claimed by the MILF was scheduled to end with their acknowledgement by 31 December 1999. For the government, the purpose was to define the boundaries of MILF influence so as to hold the group accountable should lawlessness or clashes occur. For the MILF, however, each acknowledgement was another step towards *de facto* belligerency, and its panel insisted on completion of the process as a precondition for formal talks.

The Estrada administration, aligned with local politicians and members of the Philippines Congress who had resisted the Jakarta agreement and vehemently opposed further concessions to the MILF, began to dig in its heels over the acknowledgements. By the time formal talks were inaugurated on 25 October 1999, conditions on the ground had seriously deteriorated, and the negotiations never reached the substantive stage. A ferry bombing off Ozamis City on 25 February 2000 killed 39 passengers and led to a major escalation. Once again, the suspects were said to have found sanctuary in an MILF camp: John Mack in Inudaran, Lanao del Norte. The camp commander, Abdullah Macaapar, alias Commander Bravo, responded to an AFP assault by occupying downtown Kauswagan on 17 March 2000. Pitched battles ensued.

The conflict in Lanao spread to Maguindanao in April 2000 as the AFP announced its determination to clear the Cotabato-Marawi ("Narciso Ramos")

¹⁶ ICG interview with MILF negotiator, Cotabato City, March 2003.

¹⁷ Article 1, paragraph 4 (b), Implementing Operational Guidelines of the GRP-MILF Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities, 14 November 1997. This language is reiterated in the Implementing Guidelines on the Security Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001 (article 2, paragraph 3.2.2), and the Joint Communiqué on Criminal Interdiction of 6 May 2002, further discussed below.

highway of MILF forces manning checkpoints and collecting road tolls. The subsequent all-out war displaced more than 900,000 civilians and culminated in the fall of Camp Abu Bakar on 9 July 2000. President Estrada's triumph was short-lived, however. A corruption scandal led to his own overthrow in a military-civilian uprising in Manila on 20 January 2001. He was succeeded by his vice-president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who, even before her accession to power, had begun liaising with Malaysia regarding third party mediation. The MILF, which had withdrawn from talks on 15 June 2000, demanded foreign involvement as a precondition to resume.

Following meetings in Kuala Lumpur and Tripoli, Libya, the two sides established a substantive agenda by June 2001, building on past agreements and structured around three aspects: security, rehabilitation and ancestral domain. They had made progress on the first two when the war erupted again on 11 February 2003. As in 1997, the AFP justified its multi-battalion assault on the "Buliok complex" - which had replaced Camp Abu Bakar as Salamat Hashim's headquarters -- as a clearing operation against a kidnapping syndicate, the Pentagon Gang, taking refuge in the Rajamudah area. However, its scale, ferocity and timing -- government negotiators were to present a draft "fast track" peace proposal the same day -- deepened popular Muslim, media and civil society scepticism about AFP motives. The legacy is a damaging credibility gap as concerns over terrorism eclipse the issue of MILF "criminal coddling" in official discourse.

In the year before the Buliok offensive, bomb attacks on provincial towns and cities in Mindanao took a steady toll in lives: General Santos City, Tacurong, Kidapawan and Zamboanga were all repeatedly hit (Appendix B). Although some police investigations pointed to direct MILF involvement, and arrest warrants were issued against suspects including the MILF leadership, as long as negotiations continued, the latter enjoyed immunity under safety and security guarantees signed in 2000.¹⁸ Following Hashim's call for "all-out jihad" in the wake of Buliok, the tempo of attacks increased. Six bombings in the first four weeks hit Kabacan, Cotabato City airport, Koronadal, Davao City airport, Tagum and Tacurong.

Several of these attacks were poorly executed and caused few casualties. Mindanao has a long history of hand-grenades and "pill-boxes" being thrown into plazas or basketball courts, casual violence usually rooted in parochial disputes. This background noise obscured a new quality to the violence, increasingly apparent since 2000 but ignored until after the 4 March 2003 bombing of the Davao City International Airport. That attack killed 22, brought the conflict into the heart of metropolitan Philippines, and put the terrorist threat on Manila's agenda in a new way.¹⁹

The Arroyo administration has sought to insulate the MILF conflict from the war on terror, prevailing on the United States not to add the organisation to its blacklist.²⁰ Following a second major bombing in Davao on 2 April 2003, however, and in Koronadal on 10 May, and MILF attacks on Maigo, Lanao del Norte and Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, which killed dozens of civilians, Arroyo threw down the gauntlet. Ordering air and artillery attacks on "embedded terrorist cells" in the MILF before departing on a state visit to Washington on 17 May 2003, she called on the organisation to "renounce all terrorist ties" by 1 June, or risk designation as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation.

MILF spokespersons continue to deny any such ties. On her return from the U.S., Arroyo again chose negotiation, and a new Mutual Cessation of Hostilities was signed on 19 July 2003. Five rounds of exploratory talks in Kuala Lumpur through late February 2004 laid the groundwork for a Malaysian Advance Survey Team to spend a week in Mindanao from 22 March 2004, preparing for the deployment of an OIC-led International Monitoring Team. It is unclear whether these international observers are to precede or follow a comprehensive agreement. The United States Institute of Peace has

¹⁸ Formal negotiations were broken off in March 2002 but have continued under "back-channel" auspices up to the present.

¹⁹ The Rizal Day bombings that struck Manila on 30 December 2000 were not immediately understood. Speculation at the time, encouraged by MILF statements, was tied to military manoeuvring and the impending fall of President Estrada. Only after the capture of Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi more than a year later did the connections to JI and the MILF emerge.

²⁰ This despite the administration's close military cooperation with the U.S. against the Abu Sayyaf, and in Iraq. The six-month joint "Balikatan" exercises on Basilan island from February 2002, aimed at flushing out the ASG stronghold where numerous local and foreign captives were held for ransom, evolved into an ongoing U.S. civil-relations and military training effort, "Bayanihan", based in Zamboanga City. Further joint training has been announced to begin on 26 July 2004 until mid-August 2004. The MILF has maintained a cautious official neutrality on these moves, emphasising only its desire for prior "coordination" should U.S. forces approach MILF "areas".

offered facilitation services and a \$30 million assistance package in the event of an agreement but is careful not to impinge on Malaysia's leading mediation role.²¹ Separate "post-conflict" assistance has been pledged by World Bank donors and Japan. But resumption of formal talks in Kuala Lumpur has been repeatedly postponed since August 2003.

The prospects for a settlement are murky. In the short term, the issues of the Philippine military's withdrawal from the Buliok complex, criminal charges against the MILF leadership in relation to the Davao bombings, and MILF links to terrorism are the main stumbling blocks to resumed negotiations. These issues are periodically discussed at CCCH and "back-channel" meetings, but an Ad Hoc Joint Action Group under the CCCH, mandated to interdict "lost commands" in May 2002, has yet to be operationalised.²² Once formal talks do begin again, the remaining agenda item in the 2001 Tripoli framework -- ancestral domain -- will be the most difficult. Ultimately, each side seeks a different kind of solution. The Philippine government views economic development as the key to long-term stability, and that this will occur naturally once the guns fall silent. The MILF's goals are irreducibly political -- but Manila will never compromise on sovereignty.

Faced with this stand-off, both sides have shown themselves to be comfortable with continuing low-intensity conflict. Fighting while negotiating has allowed the MILF to build its forces, while restricting countermeasures by the AFP. The ambiguous semi-belligerent status won by the MILF in its camps has obliged the AFP to cloak its response to this build-up, as in 2000 and 2003, in the language of criminal pursuit. Retaliatory urban bombings have diverted security forces, and amplified calls for peace from "doves" in government and civil society while

aggravating their differences with "hawks". The government also aims to divide the MILF, winning over "moderates" with promises of development, as in 1996, while sustaining military pressure on "hardliners" -- what some observers call a "salami" strategy of peeling away opposition layer-by-layer.

The rising incidence of terror attacks since 2000 has complicated this long-running, low-level stalemate. To the extent that terrorism brings new international urgency to solving the southern Philippines conflict, it may represent one element in a mixed political strategy pursued deliberately at the highest levels of the MILF -- dangerously raising the stakes in the post-11 September climate. Another possibility is that terror attacks are an independent initiative of more militant MILF factions, in alliance with Abu Sayyaf, JI or other external elements, which is encouraged or tolerated by MILF leaders. Finally, it may be that some or all the top MILF leadership with which Manila is negotiating is actually unaware of, or unable to control, terrorist activity that makes use of MILF territory, resources or manpower. Assessing these alternatives requires closer examination of MILF internal dynamics.

²¹ For details, see *PeaceWatch*, United States Institute of Peace, Vol.X, N°1, December 2003. Unless otherwise indicated, all figures denoted in dollars (\$) in this report are U.S. dollars. Due to lack of progress in the peace talks, the \$30 million package was at risk by July 2004. "RP loses \$30-M US fund for Mindanao", *Manila Times*, 7 July 2004.

²² The text of the 6 May 2002 agreement mandating the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group is attached as Appendix D. At the fifteenth CCCH meeting on 7-8 February 2004, it was agreed to "formalise" a joint Interim Action Team (I-ACT) "as a transitional mechanism pending the operationalisation of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG)". It is unclear why the AHJAG has not been formed more than two years after it was agreed on, and unclear whether the interim team has actually begun functioning.

IV. TERROR AND FACTIONALISM IN THE MILF

Although it is South East Asia's most formidable armed separatist group, the inner workings of the MILF remain poorly documented and understood. It is often presented as monolithic. Such is the secrecy surrounding its leadership that Hashim's death on 13 July 2003, shortly after his 61st birthday, was not publicly revealed until 5 August, when the new chairman, Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim, was announced. Hashim, who had a heart condition, asthma, and a peptic ulcer, was in declining health after being evacuated from his headquarters, the Islamic Centre in Buliok, Pagalungan, Maguindanao province, in advance of the AFP's February 2003 offensive. The belated news of his death in a remote camp surrounded by a handful of trusted aides was soon followed by reports of growing factionalism in the MILF, adding to uncertainty surrounding the resumption of peace talks.

Hashim's anointed successor was apparently not Murad but Alim Abdulaziz Mimbantas, 58, like him a graduate of Al-Azhar University (B.A. 1974), and father of his first wife. As vice chairman for internal affairs, Mimbantas, also known as Abu Widad, was the most trusted of Hashim's three key lieutenants, controlling the MILF's Internal Security Force (ISF), its local intelligence network, and the chairman's praetorian guard, the Internal Brigade. However, Mimbantas does not possess the extensive personal contacts in the Muslim world or depth of religious learning which were central to the founding chairman's prestige.

Nor, as a pure ethnic Maranao, can he bridge the tribal divisions within the movement in the same way as Hashim, whose father was Maguindanaon, and mother Maranao/Iranun. Mimbantas has strong support among the Maranao *ulama* -- many led by Hashim's Al-Azhar classmate, Mahid Mutilan (also vice governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and former governor of Lanao del Sur) -- and from more militant Maranao field commanders, but his personal armed following probably does not exceed a few hundred. This compares with up to 5,000 armed men owing personal loyalty to his rival for the chairmanship, Murad.

"Kagi" Murad, as he is also known, 55, was Hashim's long-standing vice chairman for military

affairs and is backed by less religiously inclined field commanders and rank-and-file fighters, especially among his fellow Maguindanaon. His rise to the top of the MILF began 30 years ago, when he replaced Commander Ali "Cassius Clay" Sansaluna as military affairs chairman of the MNLF's Kutawato Revolutionary Committee (KRC). Commander Clay, who was in charge of procuring weapons through Sabah-based MNLF chieftain Nur Misuari, was assassinated by a bodyguard in June 1974, probably as a result of rivalry with the KRC's political affairs chairman, Commander Amelil "Ronnie" Malaguio, a Top 90 batchmate. When Malaguio surrendered to the government in April 1980, scuttling nascent negotiations with the Marcos regime and receiving a plum political post in return, Murad took his place as overall chairman of the KRC. Murad's personal popularity with the movement's mass base did much to help Hashim's "New Leadership" wing of the MNLF recover from the setback of Malaguio's defection before it was renamed the MILF in March 1984.

Two decades later, the delayed announcement of Hashim's death masked an even more significant turning point for Murad and the MILF. Although Mimbantas has said that he voluntarily gave up the chairmanship to Murad and that the transition was smooth,²³ the length of the three-week interlude -- during which Mimbantas is thought to have suffered cardiac problems himself -- suggests otherwise. Eventually, Mimbantas gained Murad's former post overseeing military affairs, while Murad assumed overall leadership with the support of the MILF's third vice chairman, Ghazali Jafaar, also a Maguindanaon. Jafaar, in charge of political affairs, is a cousin of Murad's through the former's maternal uncle, Sheikh Omar Pasigan. As Grand Mufti of Kutawato, Pasigan is himself an influential elder figure on the central committee, handling *dawah* (Islamic outreach). This relationship helps bring many Maguindanaon *ulama* in to Murad's camp.

An important check on Mimbantas's power as new vice chairman for military affairs, which may reflect ethnic-based factional manoeuvring, is the separation of his position from that of chief of staff of the MILF armed wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). While these positions were concurrent throughout Murad's tenure as vice chairman, the new chief of staff is Sammy Al-

²³ "GMA does not listen to peace advisers", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 14 December 2003, pp.1, 21.

Mansour (Sammy Gambar), another Maguindanaon, who was previously Murad's deputy chief of staff. Mimbantas's former position of internal affairs vice chairman, meanwhile, appears to have been left vacant and the ISF consolidated as an integral part of the regular BIAF, thus coming -- formally at least -- under the command of Murad and Gambar.²⁴

These changes on the approximately seven-member Jihad Executive Council, which runs day-to-day affairs on behalf of the much larger central committee, follow upon a significant organisational shift in the wake of the government's offensive in 2000 that could contribute to post-Hashim centrifugal pressures within the movement. Prior to 2000, most of the MILF's six-division standing force occupied fixed positions in defence of its camps, the largest of which, Abu Bakar and Busrah, stretched across several municipalities. These served both as models of the Islamic community to come, and as symbols of the de facto belligerency status toward which the movement was negotiating.

This strategy provided for ease of communications and a relatively cohesive command structure. With the loss of the lower portion of Camp Abu Bakar in July 2000, however, the large standing units previously based there -- the General Headquarters and National Guard divisions -- were unsustainable, and were dispersed into smaller formations. By the middle of 2001, the old divisional structure loosely patterned after the AFP was replaced by a system of Base Commands more closely resembling the guerrilla forces of the communist New People's Army (NPA), which has conducted a nation-wide rebellion since the late 1960s. Rather than tying a conventional force down in static defence, this shift was intended to allow for more mobile hit-and-run tactics and easier evasion.

Although most division commanders were retained with similar rank under the new structure, they now enjoy more autonomy from the General Staff headed by Murad, as do lower-level leaders vis-à-vis the Base Commands. Under the previous arrangement, each of the six BIAF divisions was formally composed of six brigades, and each brigade of six battalions. These six divisions, plus the ISF, have become nine Base Commands, divided into unit commands and sections. Rebel division commanders have always been "power centres in themselves,

mostly moving under their own steam", as was written of the MNLF a quarter-century ago, and their areas of operation and locally-rooted armed followings tend to outlast organisational renaming.²⁵ Thus Commander Jack Abdullah's 1st Field Division has become the 105th Base Command, centred on the Liguasan Marsh, and Tops Julhanie's 2nd Field Division in the southern Cotabato region now functions as the 104th Base Command. Commander Gordon Saifullah's Headquarters Division has been reorganised as the 101st Base Command in the Camp Abu Bakar area, and at least one battalion of Samir Hashim's National Guard Division remains under his command as part of the 106th Base Command, centred on North Cotabato. Former 206th Brigade commander Amelil Umbra continues to operate around Camp Omar, Maguindanao, as 109th Base Commander.

While Commander Jack operates across reasonably accessible terrain in the Maguindanaon heartland of the rebellion and likely retains relatively tight lines of communication with the Murad leadership, Julhanie's area encompasses *lumad* tribal highlands and Christian population centres, stretching to the coastlines of Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani provinces.²⁶ This region has been the focus of AFP pursuit operations against fugitive Abu Sayyaf leader Kadaffy Janjalani as well as a series of urban bombings over the last two years. Commander Gordon is known to have had direct ties with JI in the late 1990s, and Iranun fighters still allegedly providing security for JI elements in the Maguindanao-Lanao borderlands are probably under his command. Samir Hashim, younger brother of the late chairman, is said to resent Murad's accession, harbour ambitions of his own for the top post, and no longer follow instructions from the centre.²⁷

Also potentially problematic for the central leadership are the far-flung 107th and 108th Base Commands, operating in the Davao and Zamboanga regions, respectively. The Muslim population of Davao is slight and scattered, unable to support a standing division of its own. Cosain "Sonny" Soso's 107th Base Command here is built around the old

²⁴ ICG interviews with MILF central committee members, Cotabato and Manila, December 2003-January 2004.

²⁵ T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics* (Oxford, 1980), p. 230.

²⁶ *Lumad* refers to non-Muslim indigenous tribes such as the Tiruray, Subanen and Tboli, usually animist but sometimes also Christianised.

²⁷ "MILF refutes military claim of internal rift", *Mindanews*, 2 April 2004.

101st Brigade (1st Division). In Zamboanga, even more, the minority Muslim Maguindanaon, Tausug, Sama, Iranun and Kalibugan tribes are haphazardly intermixed with *lumad* and dominant Christian populations. This lends a distinct, anarchic character to the Moro rebellion in the peninsula, which is led by the MILF's Commander Aloy Al-Ashrie. ASG elements and a violent MNLF splinter group, the Islamic Command Council, add to the region's volatility.

The sparse and disorganised Muslim mass base in the Zamboanga peninsula limits the influence of the movement's political wing and reduces ties to the centre and proceeds from the Islamic practice of *zakat* or alms payments. Ashrie's 108th Base Command (formerly the 4th Field Division) is known to seek alternative sources of revenue through kidnapping and extortion, sometimes enforced by maverick military tactics such as hostage taking and the pillaging of majority-Christian provincial towns. While criminal racketeering is hardly unknown in the MILF heartland either, it is more routinised and amenable to control by the central leadership there, should they choose to restrict it in the context of a new peace agreement.

The greatest challenge for Murad, however, are the Maranao forces formerly organised as the 3rd Field Division under Alim Solaiman Pangalian, and ISF elements under Abdulaziz Mimbantas. These are now dispersed across the 102nd and 103rd Base Commands reportedly led by Rajahmuda Balindong and Yayah Luksadatu -- the latter also deputy chief of staff to Gambar. If intertribal unity between the archipelagic Tausug and mainland Maguindanaon proved unsustainable in the MNLF of the late 1970s, the sense of difference between Maguindanaon and Maranao holds similar potential for the MILF today. "The people in Lanao are different from us", a ranking Maguindanaon member of the Jihad Executive Council says quite frankly. "Their *ulama* are divided into so many groups, and many feel that Lanao is already liberated because there are no Christians in government, so there's little need to organise". But this also means that some Maranao, particularly younger people, are "attracted to extremist groups as the next level of struggle". Quite a number of Maranao, he says, are "fanatics".²⁸

As in Zamboanga, weak grass-roots organisation in Lanao limits the institutional cohesion of the MILF and political oversight of the military wing. There are deep historical roots to this contrast between Maguindanaon and Maranao politics; while the Maguindanaon had long experience of relatively centralised authority under two main sultanates, Maranao power has always been more fractured, with innumerable petty fiefdoms competing for influence. This is reflected today in the endless subdivision of municipalities around Lake Lanao, each with a far smaller population than is found anywhere else in the country. MILF field commanders in Lanao, too, seem to operate with a special degree of autonomy from the centre.

Such tendencies toward political fragmentation are important in the light of what is already known about the MILF's ties to terrorist activity. The testimony of Saifullah "Mukhlis" Yunos, captured on 25 May 2003, indicates that it was elements of the predominantly Maranao 3rd BIAF Field Division that were instrumental in executing the Rizal Day bombings in Manila, in partnership with JI operative Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, and under the loose supervision of Hambali, Southeast Asia's most wanted terrorist until his arrest in Thailand in August 2003. According to Mukhlis, the five coordinated bombings across the Philippine capital on 30 December 2000, which killed 22, were carried out in accordance with 3rd Division commander Solaiman Pangalian's instructions to his "special staff" -- to implement Salamat Hashim's call for jihad following the Abu Bakar offensive by taking the struggle to enemy territory and easing pressure on MILF camps.

Ranking MILF officials Ghazali Jafaar and Sammy Gambar, as well as spokesman Eid Kabalu, are on record as denying Mukhlis' association with the MILF.²⁹ According to Mukhlis, however, he continued to serve with the 102nd and 103rd Base Commands as a trainer in guerrilla tactics and explosives during 2001-2003, and even took part in the MILF attack on Maigo town a month before his capture. There are several possible explanations for the official MILF stance, all of which have worrying implications for the peace process. One possibility, of course, is that these MILF officials are simply not telling the truth, or parsing it on the basis of obscure technicalities. It is also conceivable that ranking officials are insulated from knowledge of potentially

²⁸ ICG interview, December 2003.

²⁹ *Today*, 28 May 2003 and *Philippine Star*, 29 May 2003.

compromising operational details. If this is by their own design, it may no less imply that terror is a matter of policy at the highest levels of the MILF.³⁰

The reality is likely to be more complicated. Given the loosely-knit, personalised nature of the MILF, it is probable that top leaders around Salamat Hashim decided at an early stage to make a virtue of necessity, and allow individual units to pursue their own strengths guided only by vague directives. There could be a parallel here with the adoption by the New People's Army (NPA) of a strategic line known as "centralised leadership, decentralised operations" in 1974. The scope this allowed for local initiative led to the growth of an urban insurrectionist faction in Mindanao, which, by the mid-1980s, was the group's leading stronghold. When the Maoist orthodoxy of "surrounding the cities from the countryside" was reimposed in the early 1990s, the insurrectionists bolted or were purged, and the Communist Party of the Philippines, which leads the organisation, split.

In the case of the MILF, skills in the use of explosives, sometimes acquired on the Afghan border, were first deployed on the battlefield in Mindanao through the manufacture of improvised landmines and rocket-propelled grenades and through sabotage operations such as the demolition of power pylons. Systematic training in bomb-making in MILF camps dates from at least the late 1980s, and a growing number of graduates saw new opportunities for fund-raising in these skills. Bus companies and department stores in provincial Mindanao towns have been frequent targets of extortion demands backed up by bomb threats since the early 1990s. Some units, particularly the Special Operations Groups (SOGs) attached to BIAF divisions and brigades, may have become increasingly dependent on such revenue from commercial terrorism, while helping to subsidise the MILF's overall operating expenses.

In the same entrepreneurial spirit, local SOG commanders like Mukhlis welcomed the support offered by former comrades from Afghanistan to

develop their specialist programs. These were drawn upon by MILF division commanders in time of need, but most of the initiative lay with the specialists, whose activities took on a momentum of their own and reflected a mixed agenda. The motives for any given bombing might include a combination of the banal (extortion, personal score-settling), the tactical (diversionary or destabilisation attacks) and the jihadist (with foreign sponsorship). As in the NPA experience with urban insurrection, this growing terrorist sub-sector was regarded benignly by the MILF leaders so long as it served their purposes. Just as the fall of the Marcos regime transformed the NPA's strategic environment and ultimately brought tensions between Maoists and insurrectionists to a head, however, 11 September and Bali may have turned the MILF's capacity for terror from tactical asset to strategic liability. This could aggravate the existing ethno-factional differences outlined above.

As pressure mounts on the MILF's new leadership to wind down its capacity for terrorism, the relationship with the terror specialists and MILF unity are likely to be tested. Because much MILF involvement in terror has been pragmatically motivated and based on personal relationships, it would not be entirely accurate to represent this as a conflict between Maguindanaon "moderates" and Maranao "extremists". Nonetheless, the assertion of central control by a Maguindanaon-dominated leadership, which would be necessary to bring the terror specialists to heel, is likely to impinge most on these leaders' Maranao rivals, who guard their autonomy jealously. If Murad were to strike a peace deal with the government on the basis of an enhanced autonomy package, an option he is said to be open to, marginalised militants would likely seek to reinforce ties with foreign jihadist allies.³¹ It is to the origins of those ties that we now turn.

³⁰ An alternative explanation -- that Mukhlis is being used to incriminate the MILF in terrorist activity -- is favoured by some MILF sympathisers. This view is not supported by transcripts of Mukhlis's interrogation made available to ICG, which reveal a reluctance to implicate the MILF and cross-check in crucial respects with statements by other terror suspects, such as al-Ghozi. Mukhlis withdrew an earlier guilty plea in the Rizal Day case on 9 September 2003, claiming he had been tortured and had not understood court procedures. See "Moclis recants: I'm a fall guy", *Manila Times*, 10 September 2003.

³¹ ICG interviews, Marawi City, January 2004.

V. CAMP HUDAIBIYAH AND THE ISLAMIC MILITARY ACADEMY

The MILF's ties to al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah, and other jihadist groups were forged in Afghan training camps in the mid-1980s, and it is the effort to replicate that experience in Mindanao that now presents perhaps the gravest threat to the peace process. An al-Qaeda cell was established in the Philippines in 1991, but more through contacts with the Abu Sayyaf Group than with the MILF. By the late 1990s cell members were in communication with top MILF commanders, but the exact nature of the relationship remains unclear.³² Only with the arrests of fifteen suspects in Singapore in December 2001, and the capture of Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi in Manila in January 2002, did the Jemaah Islamiyah network begin coming to light. In an earlier report, ICG outlined JI's training program in Mindanao.³³ New information obtained by ICG provides greater detail of the importance of this effort for educating a next generation of recruits in terrorist skills, such as making explosives, and for extending JI influence in the Philippines and the wider region.

The alliance with JI, while pragmatic rather than ideological, was much deeper than with al-Qaeda. It was cemented through Salamat Hashim's agreement with the JI leadership in 1994 to establish a JI-run training camp for MILF recruits, called Camp Hudaibiyah, within the MILF's Camp Abu Bakar in Maguindanao and later, in 1998, to set up a military academy, also within the Camp Abu Bakar complex.³⁴ That arrangement continued until July 2000 when the Philippine army overran Camp Abu Bakar. As a result of that assault, JI was forced to move its operations out of Abu Bakar and further

into the mountains where a new training camp, known as Jabal Quba, was set up.

After the 2000 offensive, JI and MILF operatives cooperated in a number of operations, including the Rizal Day bombings in Manila in December 2000, and in ongoing military training in Mindanao, albeit on a smaller-scale and in more diffuse fashion than before. The exact nature of the MILF's working relationship with JI after the Bali bombs of October 2002 remains murky, but it appears that Camp Hudaibiyah alumni have played a key role in a number of terrorist attacks in the Philippines, including the Davao bombings of 2003. JI continues to send young men to train in Mindanao, as do other small Indonesia-based jihadist groups, but it is not clear whether agreements are worked out with individual commanders or with the MILF as a whole. Understanding the history of the training program in Mindanao, however, may offer clues to the current arrangements.

The men who trained or became instructors in Camp Hudaibiyah include many of the JI members most closely associated with the Bali bombings and other atrocities in Indonesia and the Philippines. Some of them -- Hambali, Thoriquudin, Faiz Abu Bakar Bafana, Mustofa (Mustopa, Mustafa), Utomo Pamungkas alias Mubarak, and Nasir Abbas -- are now in custody or actively working with the police. Others, like al-Ghozi, are dead. But many are still at large. These alumni embody strong reciprocal bonds between Southeast Asian and Moro jihadists. And it is these bonds that now present perhaps the most serious obstacle to a peace agreement in the southern Philippines.

A. ORIGINS OF JI-MILF COOPERATION

Links between militant Indonesian Islamists and Mindanao go back to before the creation of either the MILF or Jemaah Islamiyah. The Indonesian island of Sulawesi has trading ties to Mindanao that stretch back centuries. In the 1960s, after the defeat of Kahar Muzakkar and his Darul Islam (DI) rebellion in South Sulawesi, many supporters fled to the southern Philippines, as well as to Malaysia (Sabah, especially Tawao), and elsewhere in Indonesia, especially Balikpapan and Samarinda in East Kalimantan. Of the estimated 7,000 to 8,000 Indonesians in the southern Philippines today, concentrated in and around General Santos City, Cotabato and Davao cities, and the Sarangani and

³² Anthony Spaeth, "Rumbles in the Jungle", *Time Asia*, 4 March 2002. The existence of an al-Qaeda cell came to international attention in 1995 when Ramzi Yousef, later convicted in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing, was forced to flee from an apartment in Manila after chemicals used in making bombs caught fire. The bombs were to be used in a plot to blow up eleven aircraft over the Pacific. That cell, founded by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Khalifa, is believed to have been set up through contacts with the Abu Sayyaf Group, rather than with the MILF. But in November 2001, two Palestinians and a Jordanian believed to have been part of the same cell were arrested and found to have been in contact with MILF Vice Chairman Ghazali Jafaar as well as other leaders.

³³ ICG Asia Report N°63, *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, 26 August 2003.

³⁴ One of the men involved in establishing Camp Hudaibiyah stressed that it was set up to have JI train the MILF rather than other JI members. Communication from Jakarta, July 2004.

Balut islands off Mindanao's southern tip, the vast majority are law-abiding and, contrary to a common Filipino stereotype, Christian.³⁵ A handful may have links to the old DI fighters, and others continue to facilitate illicit movements of people, weapons and explosives, between Indonesia and the Philippines, particularly through Indonesia's Sangihe and Talaud islands, off the coast of North Sulawesi.

The most systematic collaboration between Philippine and Indonesian jihadist groups has been that between the MILF and JI. As noted, it originated in the mid- to late 1980s in Afghanistan, where Philippine fighters trained under Indonesian instructors, most of them Darul Islam members, in camps belonging to the Saudi-funded Afghan leader Abdul Rasul Sayyaf.³⁶ Four Moros are thought to have joined the 60 or so Indonesians making up DI's second batch at Sayyaf's military academy in Camp Saddah, Parachinar, Kurram Agency, near the Pakistani border with Afghanistan. This second batch began training in 1986 and included Mustofa, who would later oversee the Mindanao training program as head of JI's Mantiqi III region. Two of the Moros in this second batch became trainers for those who followed, including Mukhlis Yunos, who belonged to the Afghan military academy's fourth batch, and Nasir Abbas, Mustofa's future successor as head of Mantiqi III.

In January 1993, Abdullah Sungkar, a DI leader and co-founder with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir of al Mukmin religious school (also known as Pondok Ngruki) outside Solo, Central Java, broke with Darul Islam and established Jemaah Islamiyah. Not long afterwards, as continued training in Afghanistan became untenable, he and other JI leaders decided to shift to Mindanao where military training would be closer and cheaper. Several JI leaders were already

personal friends with Salamat Hashim, including Sungkar himself, and JI's head of military operations, Zulkarnaen, who had met Hashim in Pakistan around 1984.³⁷

Accordingly, in October 1994, Zulkarnaen ordered five JI men to go from Afghanistan to Mindanao to set up a new camp to help train MILF fighters. They were Mustofa, former head of both JI's Mantiqi III and its special operations unit, sentenced to seven years in prison in May 2004; Nasir Abbas, arrested in April 2003 and later sentenced to ten months; Qotadah alias Basyir, an explosives expert; Okasha alias Zubair, a Malaysian from Sabah; and a man named Nasrullah, who had been to Mindanao in 1989-90 and served as their guide.³⁸

They arrived in Camp Abu Bakar only to find that their MILF colleagues had made no preparations for the training program, which was supposed to include rigorous instruction in the use of grenade launchers, mortars, anti-tank weapons and howitzers, as well as small arms. Nasir Abbas, with Hashim's blessing, took the initiative to search out a site where the training could take place in relative safety and seclusion. He found one in the upper portion of Abu Bakar, near the provincial borders of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, and it was he who gave the name Hudaibiyah to the new camp.³⁹

The first group of 60 trainees at Camp Hudaibiyah, all Moros from the MILF, had to use machetes to clear the land. It was such rigorous physical labour that there was no need for other forms of exercise or drills. They stayed for two months, and then another group came in. By March-April 1995, the new camp was up and running. In May 1995, Zulkarnaen provided money, about 60,000 pesos (then about \$2,500), for the construction of two barracks at Hudaibiyah, one for instructors, the other for students.

In December 1996, Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, a Javanese JI member and Afghan veteran, arrived in Mindanao for a month to take Nasir Abbas's place and further develop the training program. Al-Ghozi had become close to two MILF fighters, Solahudin and Habib, while teaching at

³⁵ ICG interview, Davao City, January 2004. The Indonesian Consulate General has surveyed 6,900 Indonesians in Mindanao, with only parts of Central Mindanao not yet covered due to lack of funds. An estimated 85 per cent are Christian.

³⁶ See ICG Report, *Jemaah Islamiyah*, op. cit. No training camps actually existed inside Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, 1979-1989. Sayyaf's training camp was called Military Academy of Afghanistan - Mujahidin Ittihad-e-Islamiy, after his political party, *Ittihad-i Islami Bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghanistan*. In Pushtun, it was called Harbi Pohantun Ittihad-e-Islamiy Mujahidin Afghanistan; in some Indonesian documents, there is reference to training at "Pohantun" but it means the Sayyaf camp. Sayyaf's party had the weakest network inside Afghanistan of the seven main mujahidin parties, but gained the early support of Pakistani intelligence and wealthy Saudi patrons. See Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (I.B.Taurus, 2003), p.66. Indonesian members of JI who had trained with Sayyaf set up their own camp in Torkham, Afghanistan, in 1993.

³⁷ ICG interview, May 2004.

³⁸ Three of the men departed after one month, leaving Nasir Abbas and Qutadah as the instructors.

³⁹ ICG interview, January 2004. The camp was named in honour of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, Muhammad's truce with the Quraysh in 628 which allowed him to proselytise freely.

a JI-run camp in Torkham, Afghanistan, in 1993-1994.⁴⁰ These old friends greeted al-Ghozi on his arrival at Camp Abu Bakar, and were later to join him in carrying out the Rizal Day bombings in Manila in December 2000.

With Nasir recalled by Zulkarnaen to Malaysia to help with JI's religious-cum-recruiting school, the Lukman al-Hakim Pesantren, in Johor, Qotadah took over as primary instructor at Hudaibiyah through mid-1997. In July of that year, JI, which until then had had only two regional divisions, established Mantiqi III to provide closer support for increasing JI activity in the Sabah-East Kalimantan-Sulawesi-Mindanao region. Qotadah was succeeded as chief instructor by Ilyas, alias Hanif, a JI member from Kudus, Central Java. Hanif was replaced in late 1997 by Omar Patek, a Bali bombing suspect still at large, who stayed through mid-1998.

From 1994 to 1998, then, the MILF actively assisted JI in setting up a military training academy, modelled after its parent in Afghanistan, where Filipinos and Indonesians were both trainers and students. All this was taking place before JI members had engaged in any acts of terror in the region, and at the time, there was no solid evidence of MILF links to al-Qaeda, though the latter certainly had a well-established presence in the Philippines. It would have been difficult for anyone to argue at this stage that the MILF was aiding and abetting terrorism in the region.

B. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAMP HUDAIBIYAH

By 1998, a full-fledged military academy was in operation on the grounds of Camp Hudaibiyah with an officer cadet training course (*Kuliah Harbiyah Dauroh-1* or KHD-1).⁴¹ It consisted of three semesters, each six months, with two-week breaks at the end of the first and second semesters. Men entering the academy were

supposed to be unmarried, between eighteen and 23 years old, senior high school or *madrasah aliyah* (Islamic high school) graduates with decent grades and a mastery of fourteen religious subjects. They also had to have been JI members for at least two years, although it seems selection criteria later became less rigorous.

Faiz Bafana, a JI detainee in Singapore, described the academy as a "project of the *markaziyah* (JI central command) and a responsibility of Abu Bakar Baasyir's", and operational expenses were provided accordingly. In early 1998, Hambali, then head of JI's Malaysia-based Mantiqi I, told Bafana to send RM20,000 (\$5,200) via Maybank to Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, who now served as camp treasurer. Bafana, as treasurer of Mantiqi I, raised an additional RM40,000 (\$10,400) by levying a special fee on its members, specifically to fund arms purchases for the training in Mindanao. When Bafana visited Camp Hudaibiyah in June 1998, twenty cadets from Mantiqi II were undergoing firearms training, sharing twelve M-16 rifles. Bafana reports hearing from Hambali that the levy became a regular RM40,000 contribution required from Mantigis I and II and from the *markaziyah* every six months, exclusively for the needs of the Mindanao camp.⁴²

By early September 1998, Camp Hudaibiyah had grown to include five permanent structures, with a billet for students, accommodating twenty; training staff quarters, accommodating ten; a kitchen; and a makeshift mosque with room for 30 to 40 worshippers.⁴³ Towards the end of the month, first semester training for the military academy began. An initial group of ten trainees was joined three days later by another seven who were escorted to the camp by al-Ghozi, making up the full complement of seventeen.⁴⁴ The most important member of the

⁴² Interrogation depositions of Faiz Abu Bakar Bafana, 13 December 2002, and 19 February 2003.

⁴³ Much of the detail in this section comes from the interrogation deposition of Taufiq Rifqi, arrested in Cotabato City, Philippines, in October 2003.

⁴⁴ The initial ten were: Taufiq Rifqi, Said, Anwar, Abdurrohman, Tolhah (an alias of Herlambang, arrested in connection with the Bali bombs), Musthofa, Muadz, Hamzah, Ibu Sirin, and Zubeir. The remaining seven accompanied by al-Ghozi were Zulkifli, Abu Farhan, Zaid, Usman, Mustaqim, Ibrahim and Hudaifah. Of these, Zulkifli was in custody as of September 2003; Hamzah alias Hasanuddin went back to Java, and was last known to be in Poso (he is the son-in-law of Adnan Arsal, a local mujahidin leader there); Said died in combat; Muadz was still in the

⁴⁰ Zulkarnaen set up the camp in Torkham about 1993. The instructors were exclusively Indonesian JI members, and the trainees were mostly Indonesian. They also included a few Filipinos, about fifteen Bangladeshis, about fifteen Pakistanis, three men from Tajikistan and a few Arabs. ICG interview, May 2004.

⁴¹ Wan Min bin Wan Mat, a Malaysian detained in connection with JI, gives 1997 as the date for the start of the military academy. Interrogation deposition, 11 March 2003. In 1996 Wan Min took part in a two-month supplementary program at Hudaibiyah arranged by Hambali and aimed at deepening motivation among Malaysians in JI.

latter group was a Ngruki graduate named Zulkifli, who would go on to become the head of the JI regional division, or *wakalah*, in Mindanao (called Wakalah Hudaibiyah) and the architect of many of the bombings there.

The academy's director, Mustaqim alias Muzayyin, an Afghan veteran, presided over the opening day ceremony. During the first semester, from late September 1998 to March 1999, he was assisted by Fathur Rahman Al-Ghozi, in charge of religious studies; Ihsan; Haris; Nu'im alias Abu Irsyad; and Qotadah alias Basyir, who taught tactics and explosives. Basyir -- sometimes called Abu Basyir but not to be confused with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir -- provided the overall orientation for KHD-1, which covered four new topics each week.

Faris alias Mukhlas became the director for the second semester. The instructors were Surya alias Qital alias Abu Humam; Qotadah; Al-Ghozi; and Thoriqudin alias Abu Rusdan. For the third semester, Mustofa alias Abu Tolut alias Hafiz Ibrahim took over as director, with the following instructors: Abu Dujanah alias Abu Musa; Al-Ghozi; Muhaimin alias Ziad who taught map reading; Wahyudin; and Nasir Abbas, alias Khairuddin.

Basic weapons training included use of the .45 calibre, M-1 Garand, M-16, M-14 and 7.62mm FN FAL assault rifles, and M-60, .30 and .50 calibre machineguns. Students were permitted three rounds per weapon, and familiarised themselves with 60mm and 81mm mortars through instructor demonstrations. Tactics training covered guarding, observation, manoeuvre, assault, ambush and withdrawal. Ten rounds per student were provided for practical exercises in short arms proficiency. Basic practical explosives training covered familiarisation, identification, and handling of TNT, C-4, black powder, ammonium nitrate and RDX, detonating cord and detonators, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) using 60mm mortars, black powder with blasting caps and fuses, and combining ammonium nitrate and gasoline.

The students received more comprehensive explosives training before the first practical exercises were conducted in February 2000. Those took place in groups of four, concentrating on the use of TNT, blasting caps and time fuse components, with electrical and non-electrical switches. A second set of practical exercises was held on the final day of training in February 2000, several weeks before graduation.

During the second semester, from April to September 1999, Muklas directed training, assisted by Hambali and Nuim alias Zuhroni, an Afghan veteran, explosives expert and trusted aide of Zulkarnaen, who is still at large. Thoriqudin, alias Abu Rusdan, head of military affairs for Mantiqi II and a member of the JI central command, also provided instruction.⁴⁵

At the end of the second semester, the two-week break was used to provide "jihad exposure" under the auspices of the MILF. Under a standing agreement with MILF Commander Gordon Saifullah of the General Headquarters Division, groups of eight or nine cadets were brought to Sultan Base in Barangay Upper Minabay,⁴⁶ Buldon, near the Banganan River, facing the government frontline. Upper Minabay had been the scene of fierce skirmishes between MILF and government forces between January 1997 and October 1998, and tensions there were still high. The trainees were divided into two groups, the first getting its exposure during the initial week of the semester break, the second during the following week. The cadets patrolled, stood guard and conducted reconnaissance within a 250-metre radius of the camp perimeter.

Third semester training, from October 1999 to about March 2000, was directed by Mustofa, head of Mantiqi III. In addition to the full eighteen-month cadet course, short courses of two and four months were also available. The former was intended mostly for members of Mantiqi I who had difficulty getting away from jobs in Malaysia or Singapore for extended periods. Civil servants and Singaporeans were especially pressed for time; Singaporean trainees might stay at Hudaibiyah as little as three weeks. At least two such short courses were offered,

Philippines; Mustaqim (who is a different Mustaqim from the Afghan veteran and academy director) was still in the Philippines and is an explosives expert; Usman was still at large; Ibrahim, who became a weapons instructor, returned to Indonesia; and Hudaifah was arrested in Malaysia in 2004.

⁴⁵ Thoriqudin would later replace Abu Bakar Ba'asyir as "caretaker" amir after Ba'asyir relinquished his day-to-day JI duties in mid-2000 to devote more time to the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia or MMI).

⁴⁶ "Barangay" is the Philippine term for a village or urban precinct.

with guest instructors from Indonesia, around September 1999 and March 2000. Among eighteen JI suspects detained in Singapore in September 2002, three "had a deep association with the MILF", according to the Singapore government.⁴⁷

One week before the first batch of seventeen cadets graduated in March or April 2000, Mustofa selected nine to stay on as instructors for the next batch.⁴⁸ Abu Bakar Ba'asyir personally attended the academy's first graduation ceremony, or *wisuda*, staying at Camp Hudaibiyah for several nights. The second batch of fifteen cadets began training in April 2000.⁴⁹

Their training was severely disrupted as hostilities broke out between government and MILF forces in early 2000. Tensions had been building since September 1999, and in February 2000, open warfare erupted in Lanao del Norte and Maguindanao provinces. In June 2000, government forces abandoned their longstanding policy of "recognising" MILF control of Camp Abu Bakar, and by 9 July had seized the central camp complex.

Although Camp Hudaibiyah itself was not overrun until April 2001, it was immediately evacuated, and the military academy was relocated to Camp Jabal Quba on Mount Kararao, where the Makaturing Volcano straddles the Lanao del Sur border with Maguindanao. Salamat Hashim's office in the central part of the Abu Bakar complex was likewise evacuated when government forces broke through the outer camp defences, and his belongings were brought to Hudaibiyah. Kararao, which serves as the backdoor exit from Abu Bakar with horse trails

leading down to Butig, Lanao del Sur, became a sanctuary for many MILF fighters and their families, displaced by the fighting. Camp Jabal Quba, which lies outside easy artillery range, was never taken by government forces, and is today at the centre of allegations that the MILF continues to harbour JI men.

JI's training program in Mindanao was crucial in producing a new generation of operatives capable of filling the shoes of the Afghan veterans, increasingly depleted by post-Bali arrests in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. The program was approved at the highest levels of the MILF, based on Salamat Hashim's personal ties with Abdullah Sungkar and Zulkarnaen. The JI-MILF connection precedes JI's emergence as a terror organisation, but continued after the Bali bombings of October 2002. Perhaps because training activity has been in more remote, dispersed sites since the fall of Camp Abu Bakar -- and is thus more easily deniable and/or more difficult to control -- the MILF leadership has not curtailed it. It is also possible that the MILF leadership is not fully aware of the extent to which individual local commanders have made their own arrangements with JI and other groups. There is growing evidence that Hudaibiyah alumni have used their training not only to revitalise JI ranks at home in Indonesia, but also to carry out terror attacks in the Philippines itself and breathe new life into the Abu Sayyaf Group.

⁴⁷ "The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism", Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore, January 2003, p.18. According to the Singapore government, Husin Aziz, Zulkifli Jaffar and Habibullah Hameed "had taken the *bai'ah* (oath) before MILF chief Hashim Salamat", and Hussin and Habibullah received military training by the MILF, performed sentry duty at Camp Abu Bakar to guard against attacks by the Philippine army and also helped MILF to purchase materials for making explosives.

⁴⁸ These instructors were: Hamzah (utility training), Zulkifli (weapons training), Said (provisioning), Muadz (tactics), Mustaqim (explosives), Usman (physical training), Ibrahim (weapons), Hudaifah (religion), and Taufiq Rifqi (logistics). Said was killed in September 2000. Mustaqim was arrested in Central Java in July 2004.

⁴⁹ They were: Waqid, Aqil, Abu Aiman, Khalid, Ibnu Gholib, Ibnu Tahsin, Ibnu Suroqoh, Amir, Kholad, Musab, Ukasyah, Tsaqof, Shoify, Abu Salmah and Mukhriz. The second batch graduated in 2002, less Kholad, Musab and Ukasyah, who died in training accidents. Amir aka Yusuf and Shoify aka Siswanto were arrested in Semarang, Central Java, in July 2003 in connection with a massive JI weapons cache.

VI. AL-GHOZI AND THE JAKARTA AND RIZAL DAY BOMBINGS, 2000

The first indication of the deepening ties between Indonesian and Philippine jihadists was the attack on the Jakarta residence of Leonides Caday, Philippine ambassador to Indonesia, on 1 August 2000. (Contrary to earlier reports, this was not the first known JI bombing on Indonesian soil. As new evidence has shown, several Bali bombers, including Imam Samudra, were involved in an effort to bomb churches in Medan in May 2000.) Two bystanders were killed in the attack on the ambassador, who was seriously wounded.

Although al-Ghozi was not under his direct command as head of Mantiqi I, Hambali, who appears to have led the operation against Caday, "borrowed" him in July through al-Ghozi's old MILF friend from Torkham, Solahudin.⁵⁰ Also closely involved were two Afghanistan alumni, Edi Setiono, alias Usman, who did most of the planning, and Sarjiyo alias Sawad, who mixed the bomb materials. Sarjiyo had spent two years in Mindanao, 1995-1997, fighting the Philippine army.⁵¹ Future Bali bombers Dul Matin, Amrozi, Mubarak and Ali Imron took part in the operation against the ambassador as well.

Al-Ghozi's primary contact in the MILF was Mukhlis Yunos, a classmate of Hambali's at Sayyaf's Camp Saddah.⁵² Mukhlis, a Maranao from Masiu, Lanao del Sur, had travelled to the Afghan border with the help of former Masiu mayor Macaangcos Mimbantas, and in September 1989, several months after his return, was accepted in the MILF's Internal Security Force, under the command of Macaangcos' brother, Alim Abdulaziz Mimbantas -- now MILF vice chairman for military affairs. After two years service, he was promoted to company commander and assigned to the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the 3rd Field Division, under Alim Solaiman Pangalian, where from 1991 to 1999 he conducted explosives training and led demolition operations such as power pylon bombings.⁵³

Mukhlis claims to have met al-Ghozi in Marawi in 1996, presumably in December, the time of Ghozi's first visit to Mindanao. This first meeting was at the house of a certain Abdulatif; al-Ghozi was in the company of a Singaporean named Hussin. Mukhlis was aware of Camp Hudaibiyah and of al-Ghozi's frequent visits there. The presence of Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean nationals was also common knowledge among locals in the area, who often saw them at a nearby market. Al-Ghozi, on the other hand, who arrived at Camp Saddah in 1990, at least six months after Mukhlis left, claims to have met him only in March 1998, also in Marawi.⁵⁴

Whatever the true history of their acquaintance, by November 2000 the two were working closely together to implement Salamat Hashim's call to wage all-out jihad in response to the seizure of Camp Abu Bakar. Al-Ghozi had returned to the Philippines in October 2000 after leading the attack on Ambassador Caday in Jakarta. By this time, according to ICG sources, he was spending more time with the MILF than with JI and was considered to have joined the former.⁵⁵ When he visited Mukhlis at home in Marawi City in November 2000, he told him that he had recently met with Salamat Hashim and Al-Haj Murad at Camp Hudaibiyah, and that Mukhlis should gather a team to help procure explosives for a jihad operation in Manila to avenge the loss of Camp Abu Bakar. This was fully in accordance with Mukhlis's understanding of Salamat's call to jihad, as also conveyed to him by his division commander, Solaiman Pangalian. Al-Ghozi's offer of full financial support was all that was needed.

In mid-November 2000, al-Ghozi, Mukhlis, his explosives procurement middleman Cosain Ramos, alias Abu Ali, and one of his MILF trainees, "Amir Paute", travelled to Cebu City to obtain the bomb components. They were soon followed by two more of Mukhlis's trainees with the 3rd Division SOG, "Zainal Pax" and "Salman Moro". Ramos contacted his supplier, a certain Tony of Tanke, Talisay (identified by Cebu City prosecutors as Antonio Reyes) and acquired 30 kilos of TNT for 80,000 pesos (then about \$2,000).⁵⁶

The next evening, Mukhlis and Amir boarded a ferry for Manila, with their TNT hidden under

⁵⁰ ICG interview, Bali, January 2004, and Interrogation Deposition of Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, 4 March 2003.

⁵¹ Interrogation Deposition of Edi Setiono, 24 March 2003.

⁵² Al-Ghozi and Mukhlis were not, as is frequently claimed, classmates in Afghanistan. Mukhlis was senior to al-Ghozi and left months before his arrival.

⁵³ "Debriefing Report, Haji Mukhlis Umpara Yunos aka Saiffula Yunos", 27 May 2003.

⁵⁴ "Tactical Interrogation Report on Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi".

⁵⁵ ICG interview, May 2004.

⁵⁶ *Philippine Star*, 27 August 2003, and Debriefing Report, Mukhlis Yunos.

mangoes. They were joined a few days later by Al-Ghozi, Pax, Moro and two more of Mukhlis's SOG associates, "Ustadz Said" and "Osama Ara". On 1 December, Hambali and Faiz Abu Bakar Bafana arrived in Manila to survey targets; al-Ghozi, Mukhlis, and Mohammad Guindolongan, alias Abu Zainab, met them at the airport, and the following day they were booked into the Dusit Hotel in Makati, Manila's business district. Hambali was initially set on targeting the Israeli and American embassies but on discovering this to be impractical, he and Bafana gave the team a free hand and flew out again after a week.

When the Mukhlis and al-Ghozi team brought off five near-simultaneous explosions across Manila on 30 December 2000, the Rizal Day holiday, few suspected an Indonesian connection. Al-Ghozi's subsequent plan to attack Western interests in Singapore, using explosives acquired from the same Cebu City source, was only defeated by good fortune and sound intelligence coordination between Singaporean and Philippine authorities. Al-Ghozi was captured in Manila on 15 January 2002, and two days later more than a ton of explosives destined for Singapore was recovered from a safehouse in General Santos City.

VII. ZULKIFLI, THE FITMART DEPARTMENT STORE BOMBINGS, AND THE ABU SAYYAF CONNECTION

Zulkifli was one of six Indonesians captured in September 2003 off the coast of Sabah, while returning from the Philippines. He was allegedly en route home to meet with a key JI leader, Abu Dujana, to discuss taking over the leadership of Mantiqi III.⁵⁷ Multiple ICG sources have confirmed that this is the same Zulkifli identified by Taufiq Rifqi as one of the first batch of seventeen cadets at Camp Hudaibiyah in September 1998 for officer training and the man later appointed leader (*qaid*) of Wakalah Hudaibiyah in July 2000. Zulkifli, known also as Julkipli, Gul Kipli, Jul, Geol, Zol, Jol, Jabbar and (possibly) Badrudin and Bro, was also the architect of some of the most devastating bombings in Mindanao from 2000 until his arrest.⁵⁸

Fragmentary evidence from captured ASG and MILF operatives, later confirmed by ICG sources, links Zulkifli to a series of arson and bomb attacks on department stores in General Santos City and Tacurong in early 2002, as well as to the Cotabato airport and Davao bombings of early 2003.⁵⁹ He is also linked to a number of JI safehouses in the Cotabato region, including the site of al-Ghozi's explosives cache that had reportedly been destined for attacks on Western targets in Singapore.

⁵⁷ Communication to ICG, June 2004. News of Zulkifli's capture was only made public in February 2004, after the arrest of an associate in Belfast, Northern Ireland, named Jaybe Ofrasio. Zulkifli was travelling on a Philippine passport under the name of Doni Ofrasio and was detained by Malaysian police for immigration violations, probably en route to or from a Mantiqi III meeting. Jaybe Ofrasio appears to have assisted Zulkifli obtain the passport, posing as a relative. It seems that at least one of several JI safehouses in Cotabato City was also acquired through Ofrasio. A suspected JI safehouse in Bagua, Cotabato City, raided after Taufiq Rifqi's capture, was reportedly owned by a Jordan Abdullah, probably related to Jaybe Ofrasio's wife, Indira Abdullah. Jordan Abdullah was arrested on 3 April 2004, suspected of handling financial transfers for JI. See *Today*, 11 November 2003; "Filipino held in Belfast wanted for helping JI", *The Australian*, 6 February 2004, p. 7, and "JI hand starting to be visible in bank accounts", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 9 May 2004.

⁵⁸ ICG interview, June 2004. See also comments made by then Philippine National Police (PNP) Director for Intelligence Gen. Roberto Delfin, including "PNP hunts Indons linked to Davao blasts", *Today*, 8 April 2003.

⁵⁹ ICG interview, June 2004.

Zulkifli was the mastermind of the Fitmart department store bombings of 4 March 2002 in Tacurong and 21 April in General Santos City, the latter of which killed fifteen people. In Tacurong, he was assisted by an MILF operative named Abdulbasit Usman and several others. In the General Santos City attack, both Abu Sayyaf and MILF operatives are believed to have been involved, together with other JI members.

A former JI member described to ICG how Zulkifli carefully planned the placement and timing of three bombs in the General Santos City Fitmart, one inside the store, one near the exit, to catch people fleeing after the first bomb exploded, and one in the parking lot, designed to hurt those who managed to get past the exit.⁶⁰

A statement by Abu Sayyaf prisoner Noor Mohammad Umug is key in linking Zulkifli and Wakalah Hudaibiyah to the Fitmart and other bombings in Mindanao.⁶¹ Captured in May 2002 in Cotabato City, Umug told Philippine National Police (PNP) interrogators in April 2003 that "Julkipli alias Zol/Jol, Hamdan alias Hamja (Hamzah), Usman, Ibrahim and Mustakim" were among the leaders or members of Jemaah Islamiyah in Mindanao known to him. The five names coincide with those later provided by Taufiq Rifqi as members of the first batch of the Islamic Military Academy at Camp Hudaibiyah (1998-2000).⁶² What is more, four of the five, including Zulkifli, arrived together in the group of seven escorted by Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, and in Rifqi's recollection, the names of Usman, Mustaqim and Ibrahim are listed side-by-side.

In his statement, Umug claims to have met the five in an apartment rented by "Julkipli" in Campo Muslim, Cotabato City, "sometime in 2001". At the time all five Camp Hudaibiyah alumni held top positions in Wakalah Hudaibiyah or were active in Camp Jabal Quba, with the first three -- Zulkifli, Hamzah and Usman -- the most likely to have had close interaction with a senior ASG operative like Umug. As noted above, Zulkifli was head of the *wakalah* while Hamzah was finance officer, the position later assumed by Rifqi, and Usman was liaison officer. Ibrahim was in charge of the training

program at Jabal Quba, while Mustaqim was camp secretary.

According to Umug, the planning for the bombing of the Fitmart department store in General Santos City took place in this same apartment in March 2002. Umug claims Zulkifli personally demonstrated his bomb assembly skills to him, which, he said, he acquired from the MILF at Camp Abu Bakar.

Abdulbasit Usman, identified by Umug as a key associate of Zulkifli in the Fitmart bombings, independently confessed to meeting an Indonesian national, "alias Badrudin/alias Jul", in Cotabato City in December 2001. According to Usman, he twice met Zulkifli at the latter's rented house on Kimpo St., Bagua, Cotabato City, where, like Umug, he "actually witnessed the making of [an] improvised bomb" with a timing device.

In February 2002, Usman met Zulkifli in General Santos City. Together they cased the Kimball Plaza shopping mall before placing an incendiary device in the building, which burned down in the early hours of the next morning, 19 March, destroying part of the city's business district.⁶³ On 31 March, a second mall in General Santos City, the Koronadal Commercial Centre, was also burned down. Estimated property damage was in the tens of millions of dollars, with several thousand people losing work or being dislocated.

In his confession, a day after his arrest in July 2002, Abdulbasit Usman played down his own significance, saying he was a mere "guide" of the Indonesians and a platoon commander in the MILF. He denied any role in the Fitmart bombings and pointed to Zulkifli as the real perpetrator.⁶⁴

⁶³ "Partial Tactical Interrogation Report, Ahmad Akmad Usman y Batabol, alias Basit Usman", 22 July 2002.

⁶⁴ Two days later, however, he was presented by the top brass of the Philippine police and military at a press conference in the presidential palace in Manila. Press reports then described him as Afghan- and Libyan- trained (in his 22 July confession, he acknowledged only three months training at Camp Abu Bakar and as having worked in Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s). He was even brought to the attention of the UN Monitoring Group as being personally associated with al-Qaeda. See United Nations, Security Council, S/2002/1338, Annex II, p. 27. His casual escape three months later is thus all the more extraordinary. On 23 October 2002, while being allowed to loiter unsecured in the grounds of the provincial Police Mobile Group in Alabel, Sarangani, it seems he simply walked off. Local police explained that he could not be jailed as he had still not been arraigned or included in the Fitmart complaint. *SunStar* (General Santos City), 28 October 2002.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Much of the statement is paraphrased in the article cited in ICG Report, *Jemaah Islamiyah*, op. cit., fn. 67.

⁶² "Debriefing Report, Taufiq Rifqi alias Amy Erza", 13 November 2003.

A. THE GENERAL SANTOS CITY SAFEHOUSES

On his arrival in General Santos City in February 2002, Zulkifli accompanied Abdulbasit Usman to what appears to have been a *JI* safehouse in Purok 39.2, Barangay Fatima,⁶⁵ owned by a certain Hadji Sarsi Malagat. This same house is also mentioned as one of three used by suspected senior Indonesian terrorists "Abdul Sasamu" and "Baem Samuya" in September 2002, as well as by others linked to *JI*.⁶⁶ Another was the home of a fisherman from the Sangihe Talaud Islands, Uskar Makawata, in Barangay Tumbler, General Santos City; the third was that of a Fernando Sala in Barangay Fatima. Makawata was caretaker of Sala's two fishing boats docked along the village shoreline, which were used for barter trade between General Santos City and Indonesia, a frequent cover for *JI* movements.

On the evening of 14 September 2002, the Sala residence was raided, resulting in the arrest of Makawata, a certain Hassim Sumangkay, and three undocumented Indonesians.⁶⁷ Makawata's cell-phone number was found stored on Abdulbasit Usman's SIM card, as was that of "Badrudin/Bro", a resident of Kimpo, Bagua, Cotabato City, almost certainly Zulkifli. Philippine police suspect Makawata, born in General Santos City of an Indonesian father and a Maguindanaon mother, of guiding Indonesian terrorists to their MILF contacts and places of refuge.⁶⁸

According to an ICG source, Indonesian terrorists Abdul Sasamu, Baem Samuya and Nasruddin Sulayan, all identified as among the Fitmart bombers, escaped during a raid on this same date -- likely the same raid. They seem to have gone to

Indonesia for a period before being reported as returning to General Santos City on 15 October 2002, in the company of a fourth Indonesian, "Abu Narih", whom they had picked up in Indonesia. They then become part of the Davao bombs story.

It is probable that the Hadji Malagat mentioned in the interrogation reports of both Abdulbasit Usman and Uskar Makawata is related to the three Malagat brothers arrested on 17 January 2002, two days after the capture of Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi in Manila, for hiding al-Ghozi's explosives.⁶⁹ According to the brothers, they were approached in November 2001 by three Indonesians who had been boarding in town but, disturbed by the drinking there, were seeking new lodgings. The three were Abu Saad (al-Ghozi), Taupik (possibly Taufiq Rifqi) and a man named Hassan, and they presented themselves as businessmen from Marori, an Indonesian island not far from Mindanao. Among themselves, they spoke in Indonesian, but in public, Tagalog. The Malagats agreed to rent them a house.⁷⁰

Sometime between Christmas and New Year, according to Muhaladin "Datu" Malagat, the eldest of the three brothers, al-Ghozi, Taupik and Hassan unloaded boxes from a truck, which they claimed was merchandise for sale in Marori. On the morning of 17 January 2002, Taupik and Hassan returned without al-Ghozi, who had just been arrested. They asked Datu and his brother Odtud to help them bury the boxes on the grounds of the rented house. They then summoned a third brother, Amok, from high school to help with the digging. When the house was raided later in the afternoon, the Indonesians were gone, but police found the buried contraband -- more than a ton of explosives, detonating cord, blasting caps, and seventeen M-16 rifles packed in grease to prevent corrosion from seawater.⁷¹

⁶⁵ A *purok* is a small neighbourhood within a *barangay* (village or urban precinct).

⁶⁶ "Initial Tactical Interrogation Report, Uskar Malo Makawata alias Kar", 15 September 2002.

⁶⁷ The Indonesians, cousins from the Sangir Islands, claim to have been recruited as carpenters to work on Sala's house in July 2002. Three other Indonesians stayed at the house for almost a week before the raid, only leaving ten to fifteen minutes beforehand, according to two of the cousins. This corresponds with the information of a second ICG source, which identifies the three escapees as senior terrorists.

⁶⁸ Makawata remains under the custody of the Bureau of Immigration in Manila. He was reportedly released for lack of evidence but rearrested when he was named by Suryadi Masud as having hosted alias Marwan (Zulkifli bin Hir), alleged head of the *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia*, during his stays in Mindanao. ICG interview, Davao City, January 2004.

⁶⁹ In their Tactical Interrogation Reports, dated 17 January 2002, the Malagat brothers, Muhaladin "Datu", Mohammad "Odtud", and Almoktar "Amok", admitted to a family residence in 39.2 village. This was the primary residence of Mohammad and another brother, Amin, but their possible relationship to Hadji Sarsi was not touched on.

⁷⁰ Based on their Tactical Interrogation Reports, and ICG interviews with Datu and Odtud Malagat, General Santos City Jail, 15 January 2004. The brothers denied any organisational affiliations under interrogation, but in his ICG interview Datu admitted to "past" membership in the MILF.

⁷¹ *Dallas Morning News*, 17 March 2002.

B. REBUILDING THE ABU SAYYAF CONNECTION

Between early 2001 and their capture in September and October 2003 respectively, Zulkifli and Taufiq Rifqi cemented a new relationship between JI and the Abu Sayyaf Group. An earlier effort by al-Qaeda operative Omar al-Faruq in 1994 to "convince the ASG to unify and consolidate forces with the MILF" was rebuffed by founding Abu Sayyaf *amir* Abdurajak Janjalani, who considered the MILF more interested in money than jihad.⁷² Like JI, however, the Abu Sayyaf partly owes its capacity for terror to the training camps of the MILF, and in particular to a little-known, al-Qaeda funded academy called Darul Imam Shafi'ie.⁷³ Zulkifli seems to have viewed the restoration of these past training ties, this time through Camp Jabal Quba, as a significant part of JI's mission in the Philippines.

Established under the auspices of the International Islamic Relief Organisation in 1988-1989, at a time when it was headed in the Philippines by Osama Bin Laden's brother-in-law Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, Darul Imam Shafi'ie is thought to have produced three batches of trainees between 1990 and 1993.⁷⁴ Religious training took place on its Marawi City campus and military training at the MILF's Camp Busrah in Lanao del Sur. Each class numbered about 50 and was more or less evenly divided between MILF and Abu Sayyaf trainees. Perhaps the most important alumnus is Kadaffy Janjalani, who, unlike his elder brothers Abdurajak and Hector, has no overseas training. His expertise in explosives, a major source of his authority as ASG *amir* after Abdurajak's death in 1998, was gained at Camp Busrah.⁷⁵

Kadaffy Janjalani had long wanted to send men for training at Camp Hudaibiyah but the MILF rejected the idea. In early 2001, however, the ASG reportedly approached Zulkifli, as head of Wakalah Hudaibiyah, seeking JI training. Zulkifli agreed to take Abu Sayyaf trainees if his men could also gain practical experience in ASG camps. At least two JI trainees were then sent to Basilan or Jolo, while Zulkifli accepted individuals and small groups from the Abu Sayyaf for short courses of a few weeks or months.⁷⁶

Following bombings in Zamboanga City in October 2002, thought to have been supervised by Janjalani,⁷⁷ and which counted a U.S. serviceman among the eleven dead, Zulkifli visited Zamboanga from December to January to liaise with the ASG leader. A JI operative named Zaki then spent the first half of 2003 in Zamboanga and Basilan, immersing himself with the ASG in preparation for a joint training program at Camp Jabal Quba. The second batch of JI cadets graduated from JI's military academy in Camp Jabal Quba in November 2002, and the appointment two months later of an additional JI liaison officer, Mustaqim, to support Usman could reflect this growing cooperation with the ASG.

In July 2003, following his return from Basilan, Zaki met in Cotabato City with an Abu Nadjan of the ASG (possibly a 1992 Camp Busrah batchmate of Kadaffy Janjalani's), who intended to proceed to Camp Jabal Quba for a two-month training program. It is not clear whether this went ahead, but recent signs of reviving Abu Sayyaf capabilities could owe something to these ties with foreign jihadis, which have not been limited to training, ICG has learned, but have extended to joint operations with JI, ASG and MILF participation. The attacks on the Davao international airport and ferry wharf, still unsolved and a major impediment to the peace process, may well have been such joint operations.

⁷² "Summary of Information: Umar Faruq", Badan Intelijen Nasional, Indonesia. Abdurajak Janjalani was a 1989-1990 alumnus of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's Afghan military academy, and named the Abu Sayyaf Group in his honour.

⁷³ The name refers to one of the four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence, and the most widely followed in Southeast Asia.

⁷⁴ This last may be the "class 1993" referred to by ASG commander Hamsiraji Sali during a series of power pylon bombings in early 2003, but he placed the training at Camp Abu Bakar, with a larger group of 90. MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu has publicly acknowledged the existence of such a class, handled by a certain Benjie Gundang. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 March 2003, p.1.

⁷⁵ Kadaffy Janjalani is a class 1992 graduate, and may therefore have received explosives instruction from Wali Khan Amin Shah, a member of Ramzi Yousef's Manila cell thought to have taught at Darul Imam Shafi'ie that year.

⁷⁶ ICG interview, June 2004.

⁷⁷ "Debriefing Report, Abdulmukim Ong Edris", Philippine National Police.

VIII. THE DAVAO BOMBS

The bombings of the Davao International Airport on 4 March 2003 and the Davao wharf at Sasa on 2 April 2003 killed 22 and sixteen bystanders respectively, the worst confirmed terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia since Bali. Both were JI operations, reportedly with some MILF involvement.

Despite their scale, and the obstacle that the MILF connection poses to peace talks, the bombings have received little international attention. In striking contrast to Bali, there have been no successful prosecutions. The Philippine National Police (PNP), which leads the investigation, has detained two separate sets of MILF suspects, and has charged about 160 more, including most of the MILF's top leadership. The PNP has also named five Indonesian nationals whom it believes conspired with the MILF in the attacks.

Philippine military intelligence, however, presents an entirely different version of events, featuring a third set of suspects. It is this information -- incompatible with the prosecution case against the five suspects now in PNP custody -- that forms the basis for charges against the MILF leadership. A commission established by President Gloria Arroyo in September 2003 with a mandate to report back on allegations of military involvement in the bombings within 30 days -- allegations made by military mutineers in July 2003 -- only submitted its findings in March 2004. It found no proof of military involvement, but also exonerated the MILF.

Despite this confusion, both the PNP and military intelligence insist the MILF is culpable in the Davao blasts, and state prosecutors, after several reinvestigations, refuse to drop the charges against its leaders.⁷⁸ Davao City mayor Rodrigo Duterte -- previously conciliatory toward the MILF -- has accused it of collaborating with JI and al-Qaeda in the attacks. PNP intelligence director Roberto Delfin, supporting Duterte's charges, publicly named five Indonesian suspects: Nasruddin, Sulaiman, Zulkifli, Haji Akhmad and Hamja (Hamzah). Nasruddin, according to Delfin, was also involved in the Bali bombings and is identified by an ICG source as Mantiqi III chief Mustofa; Sulaiman, Delfin alleges, helped al-Ghozi conceal the General Santos City

explosives cache. The identities of the remaining three Indonesian suspects are unclear from Delfin's account, as is the role they are supposed to have played in the Davao attacks.⁷⁹

Philippine military intelligence also suspects Indonesian involvement, but provides different names: Hadji Abdul Sasamu, Ustadz Baem Samuya, Nasruddin Sulayan[g], Abu Narih and "alias Jul" -- identified, along with the first three, as a Fitmart bomber, and almost certainly Zulkifli.⁸⁰ While military intelligence describes the Indonesians' movements and MILF associations in the months before the Davao blasts in great detail, their precise role, as in the PNP version, is unclear. ICG sources say Zulkifli was the chief strategist for both.⁸¹ None of the Indonesian suspects named by Delfin or by military intelligence are included on the charge sheets submitted by the PNP to state prosecutors.

Instead, the PNP-led investigation has focused on alleged MILF foot-soldiers who carried out the attacks. The first set of suspects, Terso and Undungan Sudang, were arrested the morning after the Davao airport bomb on purely circumstantial evidence. On 11 April 2003, following the bombing of Sasa wharf, charges against the Sudangs were dropped, but not before deepening the cynicism of many local observers, who are now unwilling to accept the notion of any MILF involvement in the blasts at all.⁸²

Five new suspects were arrested in Cotabato City on 8 April 2003: Esmael Akmad, Tohami Bagundang, Esmael Mamalankas, Idar and Jimmy Balulao, who remain in custody. After two days detention, Balulao confessed to planting the airport bomb, and Bagundang admitted involvement in the airport and wharf operations. These confessions appear to be the centrepiece of the prosecution case, but many basic details in the two documents cannot be reconciled, and they do not implicate any higher MILF

⁷⁹ See "PNP hunts Indons linked to Davao blasts", *Today*, 8 April 2003, and "Suspected key planner of Davao wharf bombing nabbed", *Philippine Star*, 8 April 2003.

⁸⁰ Classified Philippine military intelligence document, March 2003, made available to ICG.

⁸¹ ICG interview, June 2004.

⁸² Terso and Undungan are the father and uncle of Montaser Sudang, an airport blast victim initially suspected as a suicide bomber on the basis of his known MILF membership. Public cynicism was fed by the premature cleaning of the airport crime scene, hampering forensics.

⁷⁸ "MILF hasn't refuted CPO bomb charges", *Mindanews*, 3 April 2004.

officials.⁸³ The charges against the MILF leadership are instead based on a completely separate account, which does not involve the five detained suspects.

This alternative account, prepared by military intelligence, pinpoints operatives of the MILF's 212th Brigade as carrying out both Davao bombings, and names them as Guindatu Mamintal Dulang, alias Commander Bimbo, brigade commander; Nasruddin Ibrahim, commanding officer of the 212th Special Operations Group, a nephew of Al-Haj Murad's; Dongdong Pitudakan, Rex Mohir, Mori Ali Usman and Tong Abbas, all involved in the 3 May 2000 multiple bomb blasts in General Santos City; and another man, the most experienced member of the team, who planted the bomb in the airport waiting shed. Three unidentified others went on to Tagum to carry out a diversionary attack (detonating an hour after the airport bomb, it killed one). Tong Abbas, Rex Mohir and the airport bomber also executed the wharf bombing. According to this account, Bimbo took his orders directly from then military affairs vice-chairman Al-Haj Murad on 12 February 2003; numerous other MILF officers are implicated in the planning.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, military intelligence picked up the movements of suspected *JI Fitmart* bombers Sasamu, Samuya and Sulayang in mid-October 2002, a month after their narrow escape from the raid on the Fernando Sala safehouse.⁸⁵ After liaising with MILF 205th Brigade field commander Manawe Ibrahim at Camp Khalid Ibn al-Walid, in Sarangani province, the Indonesians, now joined by Abu Narih, reportedly remained there for four months, only venturing out to meet MILF counterparts in Cotabato and General Santos cities.

Zulkifli apparently returned to General Santos City from Indonesia in mid-December 2002,⁸⁶ joining the

other Indonesians in Camp Khalid, until late in the month he accompanied Sulayang to Cotabato City to meet a visiting Afghan. By Taufiq Rifqi's account, Zulkifli must then have continued on to Zamboanga, where he remained until some time in January 2003, liaising with Kadaffy Janjalani of the ASG.⁸⁷

Following an MILF General Staff meeting in the Buliok area, 1-16 January 2003, operations chief Achmad Pasigan is said to have met with the remaining Indonesians in Camp Khalid. As war clouds gathered over Buliok in early February 2003, further meetings reportedly took place in Cotabato City, attended by then MILF vice chief of staff Sammy Gambar, Achmad Pasigan, Samir Hashim, Manawe Ibrahim, and five Indonesians led by Sasamu and Samuya. The need to respond to the government offensive launched on 11 February dominated the agenda, and possible bombing missions -- to be "supervised" by the Indonesians, but carried out by the SOG -- were allegedly discussed before Sasamu and Samuya returned to Camp Khalid.⁸⁸

Zulkifli is the only Indonesian mentioned by both the PNP and military intelligence in connection with the Davao bombings, but his identity is not clearly specified, he has not been charged, and no arrest warrant has been issued. Independent sources lead ICG to believe that Zulkifli -- the *Fitmart* store bomber and arsonist, Ngruki graduate and former head of *Wakalah Hudaibiyah*, held in Malaysian custody since September 2003 -- was indeed the key conspirator in the Davao bombings. It is probable that the attacks were carried out under his supervision, with help from partners in the MILF and Abu Sayyaf, possibly using MILF materials and Abu Sayyaf foot-soldiers.⁸⁹ But it is not clear who in the MILF hierarchy authorised the attacks.⁹⁰ A transparent trial of Zulkifli is needed to uncover the true extent and nature of *JI-MILF* cooperation.

⁸³ "Sworn Statement of Jimmy Balulao", 9 April 2003, and "Sworn Statement of Tohami Bagundang", 9 April 2003. The arrests of Akmad and Bagundang were based on sketches drawn from eyewitness descriptions; Bagundang then implicated Mamalangkas, Idar and Balulao. Noor Mohammad Umug, Zulkifli's Abu Sayyaf associate, identifies Akmad as an MILF commander and Idar as his nephew; Balulao is Idar's brother-in-law.

⁸⁴ Classified Philippine military intelligence document, March 2003, made available to ICG. Bimbo was arrested in October 2003 as a suspect in the June 2000 bombings in General Santos City, where he is detained, but prosecutors appear not to be pursuing the Davao charges against him.

⁸⁵ See Section VII above.

⁸⁶ It is not clear how long Zulkifli had been away, but he is also said to have been in Malaysia from late April 2002 (probably

following the *Fitmart* bombs) until 20 May 2002, when he returned through Cotabato City. ICG interview, Davao City, January 2004.

⁸⁷ "Debriefing Report, Taufiq Rifqi alias Amy Erza", 13 November 2003.

⁸⁸ Classified Philippine military intelligence document, March 2003, made available to ICG.

⁸⁹ A source told ICG that ASG made far better foot-soldiers than the MILF because they tended to speak more languages. MILF operatives were fine as long as they were operating in Maguindanao or Lanao. ICG interview, June 2004.

⁹⁰ ICG interview, June 2004.

IX. ONGOING MILF COOPERATION WITH JIHADIST GROUPS

On 20 June 2003, after intensive government pressure, Salamat Hashim issued a three-paragraph statement rejecting the use of terror. In it, he stated, "the MILF, as a liberation organisation, has repeatedly renounced terrorism publicly as a means of attaining political ends".⁹¹ The repeated denial until then of involvement in terrorism may have been less a deliberate lie than a refusal to acknowledge that the acts the MILF had engaged in deserved the label "terrorism".

But allegations of JI-MILF cooperation have continued. In April 2004, an MILF member named Sammy Abdulgani, who claimed to have joined JI, was arrested on suspicion of planning to bomb several ports in Mindanao. Press accounts said he admitted having been involved in the bombs at Cotabato airport in February 2003 and a bus terminal in Parang, Maguindanao in April 2003.⁹² Abdulgani, who was arrested with three other Filipinos who allegedly were also JI members, said they were all part of a six-person cell that took orders from an Indonesian named Usman, who had reportedly replaced Zulkifli after the latter's arrest.⁹³

Abdulgani's claims need further examination, as ICG was told by a source familiar with JI's operations in Mindanao that no Filipino (or, for that matter, Thai) nationals had actually been inducted into JI, although there were very clearly joint operations with Filipinos. Several JI members ended up working so closely with the MILF that they were considered members, however, and the reverse may have been true as well.⁹⁴

ICG has also learned from Indonesian sources that as of early 2004, Indonesians continued to be sent to MILF and Abu Sayyaf camps for training in small numbers. Some appeared to be JI members, but there were also members of Darul Islam factions, Sulawesi-based groups, and at least one small group based in Jakarta.

⁹¹ Carolyn O. Arguillas, "Salamat issues policy statement rejecting terror; Ermita welcomes move", *Mindanews*, 22 June 2003.

⁹² Edith Regalado, "JI Suspect Says Indon JI Terror Group Linked With MILF", *The Philippine Star*, 27 April 2004.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Al-Ghozi was one of these; Mustafa alias Usama, a Javanese who arrived in the Philippines in about 1996 and married a Filipina, was another. ICG interview, June 2004.

X. CONCLUSION

There is no question that the MILF as an organisation had a close working relationship with Jemaah Islamiyah leadership that predated JI's official emergence in 1993. That relationship was highly pragmatic, based more on mutual interests than on shared beliefs and goals. It was forged in mujahidin training camps in Afghanistan and cemented with the establishment of a camp on the grounds of the MILF's Camp Abubakar in 1994. It was also approved at the highest levels of the MILF, that is, by Salamat Hashim himself.

After 2000, when Camp Abu Bakar was overrun by the Philippine military, the situation became more fluid. JI's Mindanao operatives chose to work with both the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf Group, sometimes playing them off against each other. The sharp rise in the number and sophistication of bomb attacks in the Philippines since 2000 may reflect a more aggressive stance on the part of the local JI leadership in Mindanao under Zulkifli, working with an extensive network of local foot-soldiers. The picture is further complicated by the facts that both the MILF and Abu Sayyaf have developed relationships with Indonesian groups other than JI, and rather than one large training centre, there now appear to be many smaller ones. Indeed, the "training" can consist of one Filipino instructing one Indonesian or vice-versa.

Three questions are critical to assessing the MILF's relationship to terrorist organisations today and thus the prospects for the success of any peace agreement between the MILF and the government of the Philippines.

Did the MILF leadership's approval of training extend to approval of bombings or other attacks that deliberately targeted civilians? In some cases, yes. The MILF has denied any association with Mukhlis Yunus, the man who worked with al-Ghozi on the Rizal Day bombings, but the claim rings hollow. There are no statements of MILF leaders on record as condemning the attack on the Philippine ambassador in Jakarta several months earlier. The post-Buliok bombings, as noted, appear to have had at least the tacit approval of top MILF leaders.

Is there any indication that MILF cooperation with JI or other foreign jihadist groups continued after the June 2003 statement of Salamat Hashim rejecting terror?

Yes, very clearly. Abdulgani's claims suggest an ongoing relationship, and ICG's own sources confirm that training, if not active plotting of terrorist actions, has continued.

Is that ongoing relationship sanctioned by the post-Hashim leadership? This is the critical question, and the answer is not clear. The MILF's loose, decentralised structure has allowed its political leadership to disavow any knowledge of activities, including terrorist training programs, undertaken by individual local commanders -- often referred to as "lost commands". There are three possibilities for the sincerity of that disavowal, all of which bode ill for lasting peace. The first is that top MILF leaders negotiating with the Philippine government are unaware of arrangements made at the local level with jihadist groups from Indonesia and elsewhere. If they are not in control of local leaders, the organisation's capacity to abide by any agreement is doubtful. The second is that they are aware that such programs are going on but do not seek details, in a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. The third possibility is that at least some top MILF officials not only are aware that training is continuing but see it as a crucial element of a strategy to maintain military capacity and international jihadist solidarity negotiate at the same time as they negotiate.

It remains unclear whether the new MILF leader, Al-Haj Murad, has the authority or inclination to close the camps and curb the organisation's ties with JI and other like-minded organisations. If a peace agreement is to work, the Philippine government needs to be reasonably certain that the MILF leadership is at least committed to ending any training of foreign forces or individuals in military skills and to punishing any members found to be engaged in such training or in plotting or abetting acts of violence against civilians. A clear line needs to be drawn between those who are engaged in the peace process and the MILF hierarchy and those who have been outside that process and perhaps out of touch with the hierarchy. Large numbers of MILF "part-timers", the shift to "base commands" since 2000, and the death of Salamat Hashim all work against such accountability. A central pillar of the peace process must be the gradual formalisation and regularisation of the MILF's armed wing, as a prelude to its integration into the armed forces of an enhanced autonomous region.

The Arroyo government can show good faith by addressing similar MILF concerns about

accountability. The government negotiating panel needs greater continuity and diplomatic status.⁹⁵ In preparation for resumed formal talks in Kuala Lumpur, a full-time, permanent peace panel should be appointed and provided with sufficient staff resources to liaise and build consensus with key stakeholders in the Philippine Congress, the military and police, and among local politicians and civil society groups. This would build resilience into the peace process and lay the groundwork for sustainable implementation of any eventual agreement.

In the short term, the imperative is to prevent another eruption of the conflict similar to 2000 and 2003. The most likely precipitant would again be accusations of or indeed, existence of terror ties. In order to minimise this danger as negotiations go forward, the government and MILF must quickly put flesh on the bones of their 6 May 2002 joint communiqué (Appendix D). This calls for the government to provide the MILF with a list of criminal suspects taking refuge in MILF "areas". It also calls for an Ad Hoc Joint Action Group to cooperate in apprehending suspects. The communiqué should be strengthened to address foreign criminal suspects explicitly and should be implemented immediately.

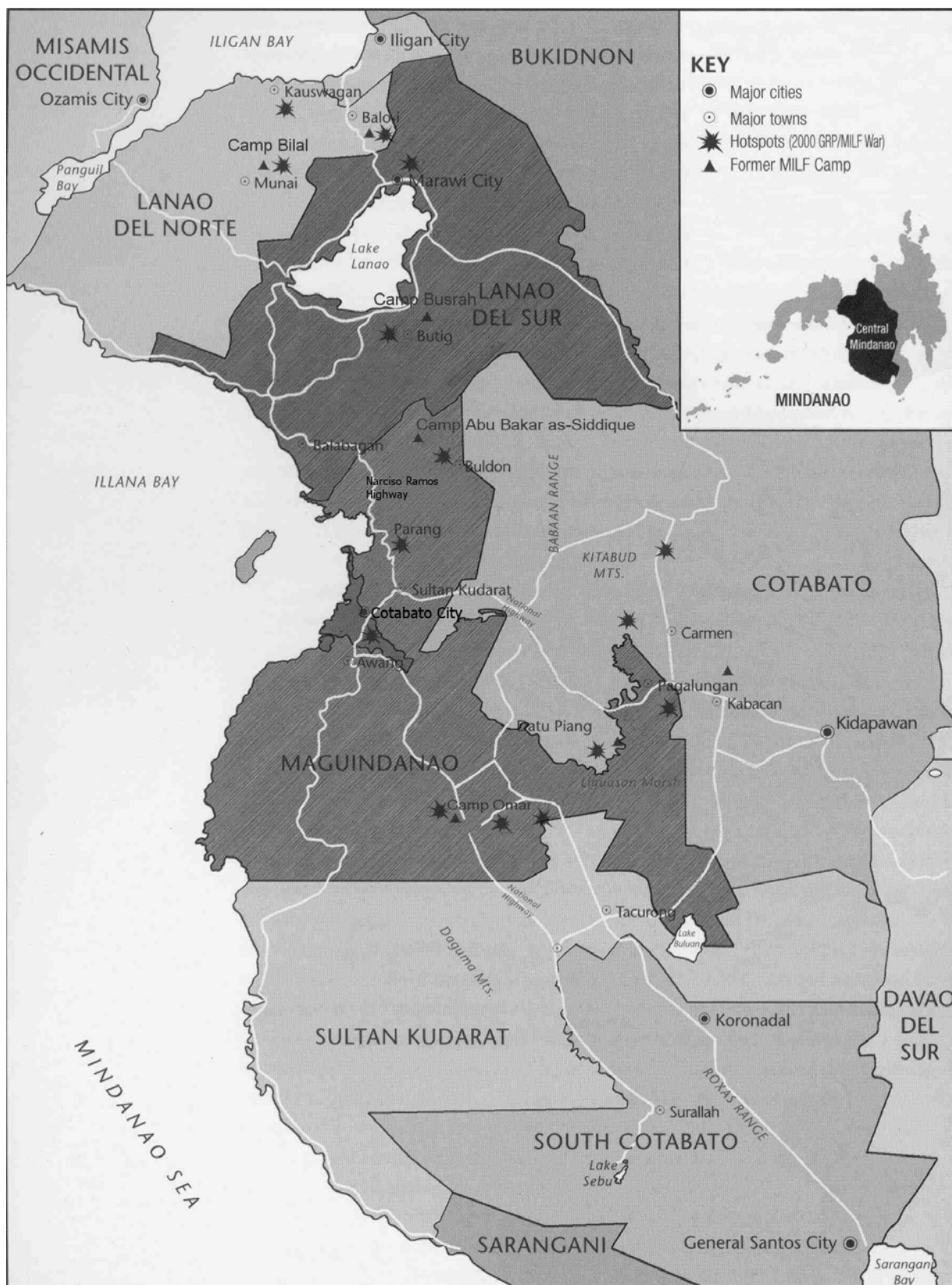
But perhaps the most important step Manila can take in terms of building a lasting peace is to ensure that a workable autonomy package is offered to the MILF. Should a peace deal be struck, Murad's ability to bring his commanders on board would depend crucially on their perception that there would be no repeat of the unsuccessful 1996 Jakarta agreement with the MNLF. Genuine and fully implemented autonomy for Philippine Muslims is a *sine qua non* for winning the long-term war on terror in Mindanao.

Singapore/Brussels, 13 July 2004

⁹⁵ A main complaint of MILF negotiators is the rapid turnover of their GRP counterparts. Since May 2003 there have been three GRP principals, Jesus Dureza, Eduardo Ermita and Silvestre Afable. The supporting team is in constant flux as panel members resign to attend to other priorities.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF PHILIPPINES



Map based on original version in 'Mindanao on the Mend', co-published by Anvil Publishing and Southern Philippines Center for Arts and Ecology (SPACE).

APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGY OF BOMBINGS AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

2000

1. M/V Our Lady of Mediatrix, Ozamis City, 25 February. 39 killed.

27 April: "All-out war" launched against MILF.

2. General Santos City, 3 May. Four bombs, three killed.

3. SM Megamall, Manila, 21 May. One killed.

4. General Santos City, 24 June. Six bombs, two killed.

9 July: Fall of Camp Abu Bakar.

5. Philippine Ambassador's Residence, Jakarta, 1 August. Two killed.

6. Rizal Day Attacks, Manila, 30 December. Five bombs, 22 killed.

2001

7. Pagadian bus terminal, 4 September. Three killed.

8. Zamboanga City, 28 October. Five killed.

2002

15 January: Capture of al-Ghozi in Manila.

17 January: Raid on Malagat compound, General Santos City, yields a ton of explosives, blasting caps, detonating cord, seventeen armalites.

9. Fitmart Store, Tacurong , 4 March. Two wounded.

19 March: Kimball Plaza arson attack, General Santos City.

31 March: Koranadal Commercial Centre arson attack, General Santos City.

10. Fitmart Store, General Santos City, 21 April. Fifteen killed.

11. Malagutay, Zamboanga City, 2 October. Three killed including one U.S. serviceman.

12. Kidapawan bus terminal, 10 October. Nine killed.

13. Shop-O-Rama and Shoppers' Plaza, Zamboanga City, 2 bombs, 17 October. Seven killed.

14. Balintawak, Quezon City, bus bomb, 18 October. Two killed.

15. Fort Pilar Shrine, Zamboanga City, 20 October. One killed.

16. Datu Piang, 24 December. Eighteen killed including town mayor Saudi Ampatuan.

17. Tacurong, 31 December. Nine killed.

2003

18. Kidapawan, 28 January. One killed.

11 February 2003: Philippine army offensive against Buliok begins.

19. Kabacan public market, 20 February. One killed.

20. Cotabato City airport, 20 February. One killed.

21. Davao City airport, 4 March. 22 killed.

22. Tagum, 4 March. One killed.

23. Tacurong, 7 March. Bomber killed.

24. Sasa wharf, Davao City, 2 April. Sixteen killed.

25. Parang bus terminal, 5 April. Nine wounded.

26. Koronadal, 10 May. Nine killed.

17 May: Philippine President Gloria Arroyo visits Washington, D.C.

25 May: Capture of Mukhlis Yunos, Cagayan de Oro City.

27. Koronadal, 10 July. Three killed.

13 July: Death of Salamat Hashim.

14 July: Escape of Al-Ghozi.

September: Capture of Zulkifli alias Jul, Sabah, Malaysia.

2 October: Capture of Taufiq Rifqi, Cotabato City.

12 October: Death of Al-Ghozi, Pigkawayan, Cotabato.

19 October: U.S. President George W. Bush visits Manila.

2004

28. Parang, 3 January. Five to 22 killed (reports vary).

29. (Unconfirmed whether attack or accidental fire) Superferry Fourteen, Manila Bay, 27 February. Approximately 100 killed.

APPENDIX C

GRP-MILF PEACE PROCESS

MARCOS ADMINISTRATION (December 1965-February 1986)

23 December 1976 Tripoli Agreement with MNLF

Provides for an autonomous region encompassing thirteen provinces of the southern Philippines. Breaks down over the issue of a plebiscite to determine territorial scope.

February 1979: Meeting in Malacanang Palace with MILF representatives Abukhalil Yahya, Omar Pasigan, Zacaria Candao. No further progress.

AQUINO ADMINISTRATION (February 1986-June 1992)

3 January 1987 Jeddah Accord with MNLF

Resurrects the 1976 agreement, leads to an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) covering four provinces approved by November 1989 plebiscite.

13 January 1987: MILF offensive in reaction to Jeddah Accord.

16 January 1987: Al-Haj Murad meets with GRP representative Aquilino Pimentel.

17 January 1987: Truce agreement ends MILF offensive.

18 January 1987: President Corazon Aquino meets Murad in Cotabato City.

No further progress.

RAMOS ADMINISTRATION (June 1992-June 1998)

24 November 1992: GRP envoy Haydee Yorac meets Murad near Camp Abu Bakar.

December 1992: MILF forms peace panel, sets talking points.

July 1993: Salamat Hashim announces he will await outcome of MNLF talks.

No further progress until 1996.

LOCAL LEVEL AGREEMENTS

3 September 1994: Murad-Rosario Diaz Memorandum of Agreement, relating to a dispute over the Malitubog-Maridagao ("MalMar") irrigation project in Carmen, Cotabato. MILF forces demand a security role in the area.

29 January 1995: MalMar Agreement.

18 April 1996 MILF-AFP Memorandum of Understanding (Narciso Ramos Highway).

2 September 1996 Jakarta Agreement with MNLF

Aims for "final" implementation of Tripoli Agreement in fourteen provinces via a two-stage process. Nur Misuari assumes ARMM governorship amidst pledges of development aid, but deposed in 2001, and resumes fighting; under detention since November 2001. ARMM expanded by plebiscite to cover five provinces in 2001, and barely sustained with aid of United Nations Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

3 August 1996: First meeting between GRP executive secretary Ruben Torres and MILF vice-chairman Ghazali Jafaar, Davao City.

10 September 1996: Creation of GRP and MILF Technical Committees (eleven members each) and peace panels, in Cagayan de Oro. Technical committees subsequently expanded to twelve and divided into Subcommittees on Cessation of Hostilities, and Agenda Setting.

25 October 1996: General Fortunato Abat, head of GRP panel, names committee members.

7 January 1997: Jafaar names MILF members; Technical Committees meet at Simuay, MILF panel headquarters near Cotabato City: formal start of low-level negotiations.

16-22 January 1997: Hostilities in Buldon, Maguindanao (Camp Abu Bakar).

27 January 1997: "Interim Cessation of Hostilities in Buldon". Signed at Simuay.

26 February 1997: "Administrative Procedures in the Conduct of GRP-MILF Technical Committee Meetings". Formalises subcommittees, secretariat (six members from each side), liaison officers (one each), spokespersons (three each), meeting format, safety, confidentiality. Signed at Simuay.

25 March 1997: "Composition of the Interim Ceasefire Monitoring Committee and Assigned Tasks and Functions". Establishes eight-member civil society Interim Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (ICMC). Signed at Simuay.

16 June 1997: PHILIPPINE ARMY offensive in Rajahmuda

18 July 1997: "Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities". Signed in Cagayan de Oro.

4 September 1997: "Agreement by the GRP and MILF". Signed in Cotabato. GRP to withdraw from Rajahmuda within fifteen days; refugees encouraged to return; law enforcement in area in coordination with "designated liaison" of MILF.

12 September 1997: "Implementing Administrative Guidelines of the GRP-MILF Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities". Signed in Cotabato. Establishes Coordinating Committees on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), six members each side; a joint CCCH Secretariat, three members each side, based in Cotabato; CCCH to meet monthly; an Independent Fact Finding Committee (IFFC) replaces the ICMC; CCCH to verify location of MILF camps and positions; full dissemination of agreement to all units.

14 November 1997: "Implementing Operational Guidelines of the GRP-MILF Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities". Signed in Marawi. Provides ground rules; MILF not to move "outside their identified areas" without clearance; armed security guards to accompany CCCH; "providing sanctuary to criminal or lawless elements" established as a "prohibited provocative act".

6 February 1998: "Agreement to Sustain the Quest for Peace". Signed in Marawi. GRP to withdraw five kilometers from Baganan river, Buldon; resolve watershed issue in area and halt logging operations of Cotabato Timber Company; operationalise CCCH Monitoring Office in Cotabato, and sub-offices in Marawi and elsewhere; expand IFFC; and form Quick Response Team (QRT).

11 March 1998: "Agreement Creating a Quick Response Team". Signed in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. QRT composed of three civil society principals, and three permanent and three alternate members each from GRP and MILF.

ESTRADA ADMINISTRATION (June 1998-January 2001)

27 August 1998 "General Framework of Agreement of Intent between the GRP and the MILF". Signed in Simuay.

17-18 September 1998: Eighth en banc meeting of Technical Committees; MILF submits list of thirteen major and 33 minor camps in accordance with 12 September 1997 agreement.

16 October 1998: "A Resolution Creating a Joint Monitoring Contingent to Oversee the Peace Situation in Upper Minabay, Buldon, Maguindanao". Signed in Simuay.

24 October 1998: "A Resolution for the Immediate Cessation of Hostilities at Datu Piang, Shariff Aguak and Talayan, Maguindanao". Signed in Cotabato City.

10 February 1999: "First Joint Acknowledgement". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Acknowledges Camps Abu Bakar and Busrah as covered by cessation of hostilities for duration of peace talks, tasks CCCH to schedule determination of camp limits at its next meeting.

10 February 1999: "Agreement to Reaffirm the Pursuit of Peace". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Activates CCCH, determination of camp limits to begin within seven days.

17 February 1999: "Joint CCCH Statement". Signed in Cotabato City. Prioritises Camps Omar, Badr, Bilal, Rajahmuda, and Darapanan for verification pursuant to Rule V of 12 September 1997 agreement; CCCH inspection to begin immediately after adoption of guidelines and procedures on identification and verification.

18 May 1999: "Rules and Procedures in the Determination and Verification of the Coverage of Cessation of Hostilities". Signed in Cotabato City. "Phase One" CCCH verification of Camp Abu Bakar follows on 10 June; Camp Bilal on 12 June; Camp Busrah on 13 June; Camps Darapanan and Rajahmuda on 21 June; Camps Omar and Badr on 23 June. "Phase Two" verifications of Camps Abu Ubaidah and Khalid on 22 July; Jabalsur on 24 July; Othman on 25 July; and Salahudin on 27 July.

2 September 1999: "Agreement on Joint Effort to Pursue a Just, Equitable and Lasting Peace". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Schedules opening of formal talks, and inspection, verification and acknowledgement of camps to be completed by 31 December.

6 October 1999: "Second Joint Acknowledgement". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Acknowledges Camps Bilal, Rajahmuda, Darapanan, Omar and Badr.

6 October 1999: "Agreement Authorizing the GRP-MILF CCCH to relay orders to the military field commanders of both parties". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Requires that military field commanders immediately and strictly observe orders of the CCCH.

25 October 1999: Opening of Formal Peace Talks at Dawah Centre, Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

17 December 1999: "Agreement on the Rules and Procedures on the Conduct of the Formal Peace Talks between the GRP and MILF Peace Panels". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Establishes six-member formal peace panels for each side; guiding principles and mandate; procedures for conduct of panel negotiations, media coverage and general provisions.

12 January 2000: "Agreement to cease the fighting along the National Highway from Cotabato City to Isulan, Sultan Kudarat [province]". Signed in Sultan Kudarat. Ceasefire effective 6 p.m., restores status quo ante bellum,

CCCH to verify compliance and reported tension along National Highway in Lanao del Sur; capabilities of CCCH and IFFC to be strengthened.

20 January 2000: "Joint Communiqué of First Formal Meeting". Signed in Sultan Kudarat.

9 March 2000: "GRP-MILF Agreement on Safety and Security Guarantees". Provides MILF negotiators with immunity from arrest during course of peace talks.

27 April - 9 July 2000: "All-Out War"

MACAPAGAL-ARROYO ADMINISTRATION (20 January 2001-present)

24 March 2001: "Agreement on the General Framework for the Resumption of Peace Talks between the GRP and MILF", signed in Kuala Lumpur. (Framework Agreement).

22 June 2001: "Agreement on Peace between the GRP and MILF", signed in Tripoli. (Tripoli Agreement). Establishes three point agenda: security aspect; humanitarian and rehabilitation and development aspect; ancestral domain aspect.

7 August 2001: "Implementing Guidelines on the Security Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001", signed in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

6 May 2002: Joint Communiqué on Criminal Interdiction, signed in Cyberjaya, Malaysia. Calls for Ad Hoc Joint Action Group under CCCH (attached as Appendix D).

7 May 2002: "Implementing Guidelines on Humanitarian, Rehabilitation and Development Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace", signed in Putrajaya. Mandates Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) to manage development in MILF areas.

30 June 2002: Fifth Joint CCCH meeting, Davao City. Discusses operationalisation of AHJAG.

11 February 2003: PHILIPPINE ARMY Buliok Offensive.

28 March 2003: First Round of Exploratory Talks, Kuala Lumpur. Discusses withdrawal from Buliok and dropping of Davao Airport Bomb charges.

23 June 2003: Second Round of Exploratory Talks, Kuala Lumpur.

19 July 2003: Mutual Cessation of Hostilities (the current ceasefire agreement).

6 September 2003: Third Round of Exploratory Talks, Kuala Lumpur.

2 December 2003: Joint CCCH meeting, Davao City. Discusses continuing delay in operationalising AHJAG.

7-8 February 2004: Fifteenth Joint CCCH meeting, Davao City. Formalises Interim Action Teams (I-ACT) pending operationalisation of AHJAG.

19-20 February 2004: Fourth Round of Exploratory Talks, Kuala Lumpur. Agreement on Malaysian Advance Party mission preparatory to deployment of OIC International Monitoring Team.

22 March 2004: Malaysian Advance Party arrives, tours MILF camps in Mindanao.

3-4 May 2004: Seventeenth Joint CCCH meeting, Davao City.

15-16 June 2004: Eighteenth Joint CCCH meeting, Davao City. Discusses possible CCCH inspection of Mount Karara.

APPENDIX D

JOINT COMMUNIQUE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES AND THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have agreed to the isolation and interdiction of all criminal syndicates and kidnap-for-ransom groups, including so-called "lost commands" operating in Mindanao.
2. Both sides agreed that the activities of these criminal groups impede the peace process, the effective pursuit of development programs, and the efficient delivery of basic services to the poor: for this purpose, immediate and joint action is needed for the security and upliftment of the affected communities.
3. The AFP/PNP shall convey to the MILF an order of battle containing the names and identities of criminal elements as defined in the Implementing Guidelines on the Security Aspect of the GRP-MILF Agreement on Peace of 2001 suspected of hiding in MILF areas/communities.
4. The MILF and the GRP shall form an Ad Hoc Joint Action Group against criminal elements in order to pursue and apprehend such criminal elements. This group will operate in tandem with their respective Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH).
5. A quick coordination system will be established by the GRP-MILF Ad Hoc Joint Action Group to enhance their communications and working relations for the successful apprehension or capture of criminal elements in accordance with this agreement provided, that criminals operating outside MILF areas/communities are considered beyond the purview of the peace process.
6. The MILF shall block the entry of criminals into MILF areas/communities. The MILF may request the assistance of the AFP or PNP in the conduct of operations against such criminals inside MILF areas/communities.
7. The agreement shall be enforced by the MILF and the GRP through their respective Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities.

The MILF and GRP express sincere adherence to the implementation of this agreement, including other existing peace agreements, so that the peace negotiation of substantive issues can proceed smoothly towards a just and lasting peace in Mindanao.

Signed on this 6th day of May 2002 at Cyberjaya.

APPENDIX E

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 100 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.icg.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board -- which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media -- is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates seventeen field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogotá, Cairo, Dakar, Dushanbe, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul, Nairobi, Osh, Pretoria, Pristina, Quito, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 40 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, those countries include Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda,

Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia and the Andean region.

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