Terror Truncated

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The Decline of the Abu Sayyaf Group from the Crucial Year 2002

By

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4461-6, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4461-1


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FOREWORD

Islam came gently and gradually to the Philippines. By the ninth century, the archipelago was part of a new, more seaward passage to China for merchants voyaging from the Arabian peninsula. Along with other cultural baggage, Muslim traders carried their religion along the coasts and up the rivers of various islands, converting towns and villages, including Manila for a time. But these seaborne visitors had their greatest and most enduring impact in Mindanao, where they established powerful Muslim clans and sultanates which the Spanish were subsequently unable to dislodge during their long suzerainty. As late as 1888 the provincial governor lamented the failure of his efforts at destroying Islamic resistance, leaving itinerant preachers to travel around the island preaching Holy War and the need for Islamic unity.

The rest, as the saying goes, is history. And ignoring the historical background remains themost common first step in misconstruing developments in the southern Philippines. Above all, the legacy of prosperous Islamic communities which asserted their sovereignty against all comers developed a shared animosity towards the Philippines state and towards Christian settlers who began to move into the southern part of the archipelago in increasing numbers after the Pacific war.

The term *bangsamoro* refers to both the people and their homeland, neither of which can be said to exist safely and incontrovertibly at present. The community is a somewhat artificial construct fashioned from a dozen disparate and warring tribes scattered throughout central and western Mindanao as well as the offshore islands. Islamization promoted a new sense of ethnic identity which distinguished Muslim from non-Muslim communities. This process was intensified by foreign colonization and subsequent US-sponsored neo-colonialism by Imperial Manila.

The homeland is greater than the Autonomous Region of Muslim [or Moro] Mindanao (ARMM) and was largely lost by its most passionate defenders during disgraced ex-President Estrada's genocide-tainted All-Out War in mid-2000. It is also considerably larger than the Conflict-Affected Area of Mindanao (CAAM). As details emerge, it might even

prove larger than the new incarnation of *bangsamoro*, the construct announced in October 2012 which attempts to take account of Muslim autonomy within the framework of the Philippine state.

Events in Mindanao take place on the periphery of the periphery and Washington devised the agenda before the game had even begun. Whatever else, the Moro cause has been compelled to respond to American initiatives on local, regional and global levels. No small-scale separatist struggle could hope to meet such a challenge. US intentions are sometimes mediated through Manila, but most often Americans deal directly with provincial warlords and military commanders, circumventing Philippine sovereignty and even ignoring the central government altogether. These secretive practices by the hegemonic power have led to warlordism and other political complicities, thereby contributing to violent expressions of ethno-religious identity throughout Mindanao.

The parameters within which the *bangsamoro* people have to operate were determined from colonial times by successive American administrations. US policy appeared to be a paradoxical mixture of brutality and benevolence; a blend of shock and awe on one hand and enlightened care on the other. The Moro Wars were bloody, to be sure, but assistance afterwards was considerable. Nation-building proceeded apace. Most importantly, the peoples of Mindanao came to believe over time that they had a special relationship with the United States and felt betrayed when they were ultimately incorporated into the newly-independent republic. This outcome ignored previous agreements with the sultanates and defied statements issued by military governors of the island. Most Moros believed that the imperialists had broken faith by handing them over to Filipino colonialists, a particular process of thought which still helps to determine how the US is regarded in Mindanao today – and how the secessionist struggle is regarded, too.

Such perceptions have created much residual resentment. And Mindanao politics still reveal a debilitating pattern of patronage and warlordism, suggesting that ethno-nationalism in this instance might be a sham. Some scholars certainly regard it as irrelevant to the experience of living in Mindanao. But a high level of meddling by American interests is primarily responsible for this state of affairs and these have worked assiduously against efforts at Islamic renewal. A strong reformist impulse, especially among youth groups, provides a promising counter to the business-as-usual nature of the old methods endorsed by the US.

Resistance at this local level is one of the most significant aspects of the Moro response to Washington's neocolonial project.

US interest in the southern Philippines is longstanding, as Dr East makes clear. But its nature and purpose have changed dramatically; it is now more concerned about Islamic extremism in Mindanao than about the fate of the Moro cause itself. That concern has become implacable. The US response to the Twin Towers attack was to violate the admonition of John Quincy Adams not to go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. Anticipatory self-defence, or pre-emption, became the order of the day. Homeland security was to be achieved as far as possible from American shores.

While Washington devised a template for fighting Islamic terror, itself a strange and Hydra-headed beast, struggles by the poor and dispossessed in obscure parts of the world were re-invented as assaults upon the defenders of the Western (read: civilized) way of life. Almost immediately after the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush declared Mindanao to be a potential second front in the war on terror, adopting a unilateralist posture while both acknowledging and condemning the Philippines as a failing state. This was the first time Washington tried to extend its war on terrorism beyond Al-Qaeda. Locally, the harsh presidential rhetoric caused bemusement and fear. President Arroyo allowed US intrusion into the contested offshore islands of Basilan and Sulu as part of a calculated gamble to use the emerging war on terrorism to distract attention from her grave domestic problems and the growing opposition to her corrupt regime.

Meanwhile, the threat to open a second front in Mindanao introduced a new stage in US-Philippine relations while allowing both Washington and Manila to make significant political gains by exaggerating the significance of the Abu Sayyaf Group out of all proportion. The current situation has been created through a circuitous process of fear feeding from fear; the international mindset has been fashioned by a cabal of alarmists who have fared well by catering to Western paranoia.

In the wake of these doomsayers, American reportage and scholarship have tended to mystify and even demonize the southern Philippines. A military assessment described the place as ripe for Al-Qaeda influence, drawing attention to its ethnic, cultural, and religious fault-lines. This traducing of a people and their homeland in the guise of American expertise is not remarkable. The authorities rely upon a variety of dubious

sources, quoting dire warnings by the likes of Zachary Abuza as well as other self-styled terrorologists and parachute journalists who appear to have no special knowledge or understanding of Mindanao at all. The island is deemed to be a haven for terrorists. Some critics warn of inadequacies in Washington's approach to the region, conceding that the terrorism nexus may have been overstated and local concerns ignored.

In the glare of the Bush administration's global war, the MILF and other separatist formations were deliberately identified with extremist groups like the ASG. This obfuscation has served Washington well, but it is built upon flawed research, self-serving assumptions, and outright deception. Academia has been co-opted, too; many scholars have been embedded in the counterterrorism mission itself. For whatever reasons, there has been no subsequent change in relevant policy under the Obama administration - unless it has been an actual hardening of attitude towards Mindanao.

In this respect, *Terror Truncated* fills a critical gap which has emerged because standard interpretations have tended to follow the officially approved direction of a myriad self-referencing military studies. The author avoids the pitfalls which have cast the ASG as the ugly and brutish consequence of the internal dynamics of Moro society. Indeed, he sketches a picture of war-weary communities anxious to achieve peace through a permanent and equitable political settlement. *Terror Truncated* serves as a wake-up call exposing those commentators who promote neoliberal development via a law-&-order model which would condemn the southern Philippines to continuing misery and hopelessness.

The terrible situation appears intractable. USAID and various American agencies are attempting to gain traction in Mindanao, but their efforts seem doomed. Washington has been meddling in Mindanao ever since considering a second front and a full-scale invasion there. Above all, the Americans are annoyed at the direction of Manila's negotiations with the MILF. They also resent the role of Malaysia as mediator in the peace talks. A number of dirty tricks are being deployed. Right-wing vigilantism is again on the rise, with death squads busily at work and extrajudicial killings (EJKs) becoming more common, a sure sign that the CIA is pressing the AFP to use all means to suppress resistance in the south.

It is difficult to determine where the Abu Sayyaf Group or other terrorist formations fit into such a complicated story, but various observers have attempted to place them in the overall pattern of Islamic resistance.

ASG founder Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani certainly sought to build upon tensions generated by the idea of "becoming Muslim" in order to advance the status of his creation as an agent of radical Islamic renewal - and of armed struggle. But the situation has changed dramatically since his death.

Nor are the leaders of the *bangsamoro* going to confront the crisis directly. Faced with an angry and assertive hegemon and a very weak central government, the MILF has been seeking to refine its diplomatic skills while asserting a continued presence and a high level of control throughout central and western Mindanao to ensure that its bargaining position is protected, limited gains can be achieved, and Moro resurgence will be rendered more likely when both Washington and Manila have been propelled towards compromise. The dominant reaction of the *bangsamoro* people to their predicament has been to look for validation within Mindanao itself by promoting greater unity and consolidation while their leaders use every possible form of back-channelling to achieve a diplomatic breakthrough. They are projecting willingness to compromise in order to dispel Western accusations about terrorism and to achieve a regional peace free from the dictates and imperatives of the war on terror.

Yet still the situation deteriorates. In early 2008 the US became a signatory to the Standardization Agreement as a participant in the Joint Internal Defense Force (JIDF) in Sulu. Under the aegis of Western advisers, such initiatives have shifted emphasis away from prolonged peace negotiations to prolonged military operations. The direct involvement of the US in Mindanao has changed the agenda completely and emboldened the Philippine state in its resort to force. In the face of such provocation, a new generation of Moro leaders opposes the American presence as a negative influence on the Mindanao drama.

During the ongoing tectonic shifts of post-Cold War geopolitics, the cause – and even the actual rights – of a peripheral Muslim minority can be easily lost to sight. This harsh fact of life requires that the *bangsamoro* people fashion their struggle to accommodate certain preordained realities. Foremost among these is that any conversation with the hegemonic power must of necessity be muted and the lack of balance in the exchange will dictate the agenda and remain an insurmountable problem.

The US remains preoccupied with asymmetric warfare. In the rice padis, cornfields and pasture lands of western Mindanao and up the Pulangi River into the Liguasan Marsh to the remotest Muslim

communities, the nature of that asymmetry changes entirely as a First World conceit mutates into a Third World reality. Suspicious and largely unsympathetic outside observers perceive only a trouble-prone Muslim minority with a host of insurmountable grievances, essentially a negative and patronizing construct. The Moros themselves have developed a rich and nuanced set of shared goals and objectives.

Throughout the southern Philippines, the *bangsamoro* people are endeavouring to protect a communal life which remains surprisingly resilient against outside attack. The saving grace for them is that the worse the situation, the more tangible becomes their imagined community (*pacé* Ben Anderson). The response of peripheral Islam in Mindanao to the challenge posed by the Americans since September 11 has been to consolidate the base in the *bangsamoro* homeland and to seek purposeful engagement with both Manila and Washington. Moroland has to survive in an environment of limited initiatives for now. Nothing else seems possible for a small regional player already partly caught up in a terrifying global drama. In such an environment, studies like *Terror Truncated* have an important role to play in explaining a situation which has received too little on-the-ground, detailed analysis. Dr East's findings go a long way towards explaining the security position in Mindanao; he untangles many of the myths surrounding the Abu Sayyaf, providing a valuable counterpoint to a number of prevailing assumptions and some unscrupulous scare-mongering. For anyone interested in knowing more about the plight of the *bangsamoro* people, along with learning more about the violence and instability which has consumed their homeland, *Terror Truncated* is a provocative account which gives much food for thought.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This author wishes to acknowledge the following persons—not in order of importance—who contributed to the successful completion of this book.

Dr. Peter Sales of the Wollongong University for his continuing support in my research. Peter at times must have tired of my continuous email and impatience—but never indicated it. My sincere thanks must also go to Herbert Docena, formerly of Focus on the Global South, who gave me valuable material for my PhD, much of which was still valid for this publication. In the same vein, Victor Taylor, originally from Sulu, contributed much valuable material. His published material was a valuable source of both primary and secondary evidence.

On the technical side, sincere thanks to Megan Clift from my home town of Stanthorpe who helped with proof reading and technical advice. As well, my old school friend Greg Marsh, from Brisbane deserves special thanks for burning the midnight oil and correcting my many formatting errors. This, I am sure, saved the publisher from many headaches.

Finally, a special thanks must go in absentia to my late wife, Kathryn—Katie—who, before her untimely death at a relatively young age encouraged me to continue my research even though she was terminally ill and knew she would never see the end result. (Rest in peace my sweet one).

PREFACE

Leaving aside the Moro Wars, 1569-1762—which saw widespread Muslim resistance against the Spanish colonialists—the last four decades of the 20th century saw for the first time Muslim resistance in the southern Philippines as an organised domestic national insurgency—although the Moros, the name given to the original Muslim inhabitants of the Philippines, would prefer to see their insurgency as a liberating struggle. *Inter alia*, the salient difference between national insurgency and liberating insurgency lies in the perception of whether the insurgency is seen as fighting a national government which has claims to a degree of legitimacy, or whether the insurgency is seen by the antagonists as fighting a ruling government/group that are perceived as outside occupiers. The struggle by the two main Muslim organisations, known collectively as "Moro", namely the Moro National Liberation Front "MNLF" and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front "MILF" originally saw their struggle as a liberating insurgency. However, in the 1990s and the early 21st century the insurgency has been replaced, in the main, by negotiation. That is not to say that fierce military encounters have not occurred between these two Moro paramilitary groups and the Armed Forces of the Philippines "AFP"—which of course they have—but the emphasis is now, and has been for some time, on a peaceful resolution rather than armed confrontation. The exception to this was the violence committed by the Abu Sayyaf Group—hereafter referred to simply as the Abu Sayyaf—since the mid-1990s and the retaliatory action by the AFP following official Philippine government policy.

Prior to the terrorist attacks in the U.S. on 11 September 2001—which heralded in the so called "Global War on Terror"—the Abu Sayyaf was seen by the Philippine government as nothing more than domestic groups of criminals whose sole agenda was crime for profit. That they had some claims to acting in the name of a "Higher Cause" was dismissed as rhetorical miscreancy.

After 11 September 2001 the Philippine government—specifically the Gloria Arroyo administration—insisted the Abu Sayyaf was now a major domestic terrorist insurgency group with links to similar international terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah. The U.S.

administration of George W. Bush saw the Abu Sayyaf as an international terrorist organisation—one entity not many. Even though by 2009-2010 the numerical strength of the Abu Sayyaf was estimated by Malacanang and the AFP to be less than 400 operatives—sometimes numerically exaggerated by an overly eager press—it still ranked higher as a domestic security risk than the MNLF and the MILF or indeed the communist New People's Army "NPA".

In 2012 the Abu Sayyaf was mortally wounded. After the deaths of Khadaffy Janjalani—the recognised commander of the Abu Sayyaf--and his majordomo Abu Solaiman in 2006 and 2007 respectively, the Abu Sayyaf ceased to have effective leaders capable of directing a paramilitary organisational structure. However the gradual demise of the Abu Sayyaf as an effective and organised insurgency group can be traced back to 2002. This also coincided with the death of Abu Sabaya, arguably one of the most influential and ruthless figures the Abu Sayyaf had produced.

In the contemporary history of terrorism and insurgency it is doubtful whether any small group has had more prominence, or more military resources directed against it than the Abu Sayyaf. Importantly, it must be recognised that the Abu Sayyaf, in its early history, was indeed a lethal criminal organisation capable of committing serious crimes. However by the first half-decade of the 21st century its effectiveness in recruiting had severely diminished its ability to attract *Jihadist* enthusiasts, instead attracting criminals whose only agenda was crime for profit. And, in the poverty-stricken southern Philippines, especially the provinces with a majority Muslim population, there was no shortage of young Muslim males willing to follow this path, even if it was against Islamic teachings.

The Abu Sayyaf in 2012 may have been in a depleted state but in name it was certainly not moribund. It had fractured into a number of opportunistic criminal cells led by leaders who would like to have been seen as revivers of the original *jihadist* ideals of its founder Abdurajak Janjalani. However, the Abu Sayyaf was in a stalled state, truncated by continuous military operations whose leaders were determined to see its destruction. Indeed the destruction of any support or sympathy it may have from a local population. Consequently, as mentioned, the Abu Sayyaf was in a stalled and fractured state. It was awaiting the appearance or recruitment of plenipotentiary leaders with the authority, ruthlessness, and conviction of the late Abu Sabaya, Khadaffy Janjalani, or indeed Abu Solaiman.

INTRODUCTION

There is no international support for the Abu Sayyaf, rather there is international condemnation. The Abu Sayyaf, it can be argued, has abandoned its original goal of establishing an independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines. Furthermore the Abu Sayyaf originally saw its primary role as expanding the greater cause of Islam in the southern Philippines at the expense of secular or Christian interests. Having established who the "enemy" of Islam was in the southern Philippines, it then followed that *jihad* was justifiable. After all *jihad* could be justified as having some degree of legitimacy, insomuch that it could be seen as protecting the faith.

"*The CIA has sired a monster*"… "*The CIA, however, is a tool of American foreign policy. It will do what advances the cause of the US even at the expense of other countries like ours*". These poignant words formed part of a speech delivered to the Philippine Senate by the President of the Senate of the Philippines—Senator Aquilino Q. Pimental Jr.—on 13 July 2000. Pimental was responding to kidnappings that were now becoming more frequent and were being attributed to the Abu Sayyaf. Pimental went on further to explain how in the early 1980s the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited Muslim fighters from many countries—including the Philippines—to fight Russian troops in Afghanistan. Included in these Philippine Muslim fighters was Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, a messianic and mystic figure, who by all accounts was well liked and respected by his fellow Moros. Janjalani, one of three brothers, was born to a Muslim father and Christian mother in Basilan Province in the Philippine Sulu Archipelago region in 1959—although this date may be subject to dispute. Abdurajak Janjalani had been a member of the MNLF before going to Afghanistan. However on returning to the Philippines he broke his ties with the MNLF and formed in 1991 his own Islamic insurgency group—the Abu Sayyaf—which was more in tune with his fundamental Muslim beliefs and separatist goals. After Janjalani's death in 1998 others took up the cudgel, and these individuals will be examined later for their effectiveness or otherwise.

Of course the Abu Sayyaf was not the sole invention of one disgruntled Muslim. It had its roots in the inveterate poverty and hopelessness of the Moros in the Sulu Archipelago region of Mindanao. Unlike the MILF or indeed the MNLF it lacked international support or indeed official recognition from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)—the MNLF gained official recognition in 1975. Nevertheless it did have support for a time from some members of the Muslim population of the Sulu Archipelago Provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi and to a lesser degree Zamboanga, However as the Abu Sayyaf gradually abandoned its original goal of establishing an independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines and opted instead for profitable crime, its popularity decreased—becoming in the eye of some an anathema. And of course this gave the U.S. an excuse—post 2001—to target an Islamic criminal inspired organisation which fitted in easily to the definition of terrorists.

As previously mentioned, prior to 2001 the Abu Sayyaf was seen as nothing more than a criminal organisation. The Abu Sayyaf at that time consisted of a coterie of like-minded individuals who may have been members of the MNLF or the MILF and had defected to join a more robust and aggressive insurgency force. Many of these early Abu Sayyaf members may also have been part-time opportunistic criminals who saw the possibility of financial reward in crime. However, whatever the motive for either joining the Abu Sayyaf organisation, or indeed adopting the tag when opportunity arose, it is widely accepted that the strength of the Abu Sayyaf peaked in 2000/2001 at around 1000+. The exact number of Abu Sayyaf operatives, supporters, adoptees, or just plain suspects remained a quodlibet. In other words the numerical strength of the Abu Sayyaf was fluid. And this numerical fluidity was dependant on the source that calculated the numbers, remembering that individual sources had different reasons for either exaggerating or minimising numbers. For example the AFP stood to receive extra funding—and greater opportunity for individual promotion—if the Abu Sayyaf was growing numerically. In a similar vein the Philippine Government stood to gain extra international military aid—predominately from the U.S.—if Abu Sayyaf activity or numbers increased. When it came to the media it relied on numerical calculations from Malacanang, and a decrease in Abu Sayyaf numbers would indicate to the Philippine population, that, in the main, the government was winning the battle against domestic terrorism. Individual research reports, media publications and U.S. Congress reports normally

relied on AFP calculations—which were at best, questionable especially during the 2001-2010 Arroyo administration.

The number of Abu Sayyaf operatives as estimated by the AFP from 1993 to 2011 makes for an interesting analysis. These estimates had been released with the permission of Malacanang through the Office of the Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In 1993 it was estimated the strength of the Abu Sayyaf was around 100. By 1989 the number had increased to 1175 and peaked at 1250 in the year 2000—the year 2001 saw a slight downtown to a reported 1100. However by late 2002 this number had fallen dramatically to around 450. The highly influential Abu Sabaya had been killed in June 2002 triggering a steep decline in Abu Sayyaf operatives. This decline was due to either operatives leaving the organisation and integrating back into their communities, or being killed in skirmishes with the AFP. From 2002 to 2011 the number of Abu Sayyaf operatives remained virtually static with numbers being estimated between 300 and 400. This was in sharp contrast to the estimates from 1993 to 2000 where numbers gradually increased from 100 to 1250.

With the decrease in numerical strength of the Abu Sayyaf post 2001 a corresponding decrease in criminal activity allegedly attributed to the Abu Sayyaf may have been expected. This was certainly true in major incidents involving many victims—detailed in Chapter 1—however the number of smaller incidents rose dramatically. This of course may have been as a result of the increased presence of the AFP in the region, and to a lesser extent the stationing of U.S. forces also in the region. It was to be expected the large presence of AFP in the Sulu Archipelago region would correspond with increased skirmishes. Indeed the Arroyo administration would have expected just such an outcome. To have produced less would have thrown doubt on the legitimacy—or more correctly soundness—of the new internal security policies, and corresponding obligations of the AFP. However that soundness of judgement has to be examined. The question had to be asked whether all skirmishes were legitimate operations or a knee-jerk reaction by volatile locals who, in the main, saw the AFP—the majority of whom were non-locals and Christian—as a neo-colonial occupying force. Ponder for a moment the following statement—in part—by Herbert Docena, a former research associate and author at *Focus on the Global South*, a Bangkok-based policy and research advocacy centre. '… in Sulu [Province], the Abu Sayyaf seems to be whoever the military claims it to be and given that those who are labelled Abu Sayyaf, being

buried six feet under, could no longer contest the military's claims [of being just that] (Docena 2007)

The Abu Sayyaf was classified as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the United Nations resolution 1267 on 06 October 2001. Accordingly it took on major significance to the Arroyo administration in relation to national security. Not since the Hukbalahap (Huk) communist revolution —1946-1954—had Philippine nationals been seen as enemies of the U.S. The similarity was striking. The Hukbalahap were communists, and as such were considered potential enemies, or potential enemy sympathisers or supporters in the *Cold War*, and the Abu Sayyaf were declared enemy combatants in the *Global War on Terror*. The "declaration" of the *Global War on Terror* was the *force majeure* that dramatically changed U.S. foreign policy—especially in regard to the Asian and Middle East region—because the terrorist events in the U.S. in 2001 had emanated and been planned from sources in the broader Asian region. Strategically, U.S. interests and influence were found wanting in this region of the world. Although the U.S. had lost their military bases in the Philippines in 1992, there were U.S. military bases in Japan, South Korea, Guam, and Kyrgyzstan, but these were thousands of kilometres from the sources of the U.S. 2001 terrorist attacks. Clearly a U.S. military presence in the Philippines in the pretext of eliminating an enemy—the Abu Sayyaf—would strengthen U.S. foreign policy. However this involved complex negotiations with the Arroyo administration and in particular President Arroyo herself.

President Arroyo may have welcomed the unexpected U.S. interest in her country's counterinsurgency efforts, but it drew domestic criticism not the least from Senator Juan Ponce Enrile. Enrile had either been in parliament, or been in an influential government position or advisor during the terms of Presidents Macapagal, Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, Estrada and Arroyo. During this time he had held the posts of Philippine Secretary of Justice and Philippine National Defence. Enrile went on to become a critic of U.S. involvement in his country especially their continuing pursuit of the Abu Sayyaf who they regarded as international terrorists, whilst he regarded them as "local rebels and criminal elements". (Enrile 2002) He believed, as did many others in his country that Philippine criminal laws were sufficient to deal with the Abu Sayyaf. Moreover, he went on to say "I think this will be the first instance in history that the [sic] foreign troops will be used to enforce the criminal laws of a country". (Enrile 2002)

The *Balikatan*—shoulder to shoulder—exercises that began in 1981 had stalled after the U.S. military bases in the Philippines were closed in 1992. Because *Balikatan* '92 and *Balikatan* '93 had been in the planning phase for some time they were still held—simultaneously in October 1992. From 1993 to 1998 there were only two joint U.S./AFP exercises conducted. One, with the code name '*Palah* '95-02', was conducted in 1995 in the island province of Palawan and involved only two U.S. Navy Officers and 13 U.S. Marines—more a token of participation than any worthwhile contribution. As well, the amount of military aid given to the Philippines in the 90s—1991 excluded—averaged a little over USD 2 Million. (The exception being 1999 which saw aid jump to USD 18 million as a result of the signing of the Visiting Forces Agreement—VFA). Put simply, a VFA allows the U.S. Government to have jurisdiction over its military personnel although they may be accused of serious crimes in the Philippines. It also had provision for the U.S. to refuse to detain or arrest its military personnel accused of serious crimes in the Philippines. This may have not pleased all members of the Philippine Congress or indeed the Senate but it was U.S. friendly. Military aid to the Philippines again plummeted in 2000 to USD5 million.

Such a huge overall drop in U.S. military assistance over the 90s was unacceptable to the Philippine administration of Fidel Ramos—and a lesser extent Joseph Estrada. Financially it was disastrous. The terrorist attacks in the U.S. in 2001 proved the catalyst for a turning around of this situation. Consequently, joint U.S./Philippine military exercises were restarted or expanded. U.S. military advisors were deployed predominately in the southern Philippines where the Abu Sayyaf was active, and more importantly, in 2005, a Cooperative Security Location (CSL) was established in the Philippines. A CSL, as espoused by the U.S. Department of Defence, is defined as such: CSLs will be facilities with little or no permanent U.S. presence, instead they will be maintained with periodic service, contractor, or host-nation support. CSLs will provide contingency access and be a focal point for security cooperation activities. (An example of a CSL was in Dakar, Senegal, where the Air Force had negotiated contingency landing, logistics, and fuel contracting arrangements, and which served as a staging area for the 2003 peace support operation in Liberia)**.** (U.S. Congress Report 2004)

However, with the advent of new or revamped military exercises with the U.S. and increased military assistance came the expectation that the Philippines would introduce new and radical anti-insurgency legislation—

and that was exactly what transpired. In the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. President Arroyo introduced Memorandum Order Number 37 which provided “14 pillars of policy and action” of the Philippine Government against terrorism. Three years later President Arroyo was elected in her own right and she went about drafting some of the most restrictive security legislation—all with the elimination of the Abu Sayyaf in mind—seen since the introduction of martial law by President Marcos in 1972. In 2007 this legislation, Republic Act 9372—also known as the Human Security Act of 2007—was passed both in the Congress and the Senate to become law. This Act was simply entitled “An Act to secure the State and protect our people from terrorism”. (Both pieces of legislation will be expanded upon in some detail in later chapters).

CHAPTER ONE

THE ABU SAYYAF 1990-2002

Pre-1995

Prior to the mid-1990s the Abu Sayyaf engaged in spasmodic violent attacks against those whom they perceived to be responsible for opposition to their historic Islamic way of life in the predominately Muslim regions of Mindanao. They included proselytising practising Christians who in the main were foreigners—predominately American—and Philippine nationals who practised Christianity in its various forms including Baptists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and of course Catholics. The province of Zamboanga del Sur—which at that time included the newly created province of Zamboanga Sibugay—was the scene of most, but not all of the violence by the Abu Sayyaf against these Christians.

The first alleged attack against Christian foreigners by the Abu Sayyaf occurred in the same year that Abdurajak Janjalani formed this group—1991. Two American evangelists were killed in a grenade attack in Zamboanga City on 04 April. (These killings have never been positively attributed to the Abu Sayyaf but they bear all the hallmarks of later outrages by this organisation). This was followed on 11 August of the same year by a grenade attack on the M/V—Motor Vessel—Doulos in the international shipping port in Zamboanga. The Doulos—built and launched in the U.S. in 1914—was a 6500+ ton passenger ship previously known as SS Medina, SS Roma, and the MS Franca C. In 1977 the ship was purchased by a German charity organisation, Gute Bucher fur Alle, and operated as a Christian "floating library" that travelled the world distributing and lending Christian evangelical literature. This grenade attack killed six—two foreign volunteer workers and four locals—and wounded a further 30+ people. Abdurajak Janjalani claimed responsibility for the attack on the Doulos and according to Hutchison, writing in *The Counter-proliferation Papers Future Warfare Series 49*, in 2009 this was

the first time Janjalani had used the term Abu Sayyaf Group. (Hutchison 2009)

In 1992, an Italian priest, Fr. Salvatorre Carzedda was killed in Zamboanga City. Carzedda was involved in interreligious dialogue. He was a founder of the Silsilah Dialogue Movement that promoted cooperation between religions. Being in a region where tension may have always existed between Christians and Muslims his task was made all the more difficult by historic prejudices. As with the killing of the two American evangelists in Zamboanga City on 04 April 1991 Carzedda's death has never been positively attributed to the Abu Sayyaf. It is just possible that Carzedda was killed by Christian or Muslim zealots who objected to his conciliatory endeavours. Inter alia, this type of killing was still being carried out in the Zamboanga area 20+ years later. (On 01 April 2012 Arturo f. Eustaquio III, a former Christian and convert to Islam, and the president of the Universidad de Zamboanga, was gunned down by two assailants riding on a motorbike. Eustaquio became the 61st victim of such killings in Zamboanga in 2012. Eustaquio was an honorary member of the Inter-Religious Solidarity Movement for Peace (IRSMP).

On 26 December 1993 six Christians were killed and another 130 were wounded in the Catholic San Pedro Cathedral in the city of Davao, the capital of Mindanao when attackers threw grenades into the worshippers. Just two days prior to this attack—Christmas Eve—grenades were thrown into a market place in Misamis Occidental killing five people and wounding over 40. That these attacks were perpetrated by the same group is highly unlikely. The attack in the San Pedro Cathedral was aimed at Catholic worshippers, whereas the Misamis Occidental attack was indiscriminate insomuch that the victims could have been of any religion. Add to this the distance between the two attacks—over 300 kilometres—and the possibility of being carried out by the same group becomes even more remote.

1994 saw a proliferation of kidnappings and bombings all attributed, by the AFP and Malacanang—a metonym for Philippine government as a whole—to the Abu Sayyaf. These crimes included the kidnapping of a Spanish priest and three Spanish nuns—some reports put the number at two—and the kidnapping of a number of schoolchildren and teachers who were later released after ransoms had been negotiated. However by far the most serious of these outrages were attacks and bombings in Zamboanga

City that left an estimated 71 people dead. As was now becoming the norm the AFP apportioned blame for these outrages on the Abu Sayyaf.

Ipil: 1995

Tuesday April 4 1995 started peacefully, as was normal, in the now majority Christian town of Ipil in Zamboanga del Sur—now Zamboanga Sibugay. Then around midday heavy automatic gunfire shattered the tranquillity of this peaceful town situated a few kilometres from Sibugay Bay. Up to 200 alleged Abu Sayyaf operatives, some disguised in the uniforms of AFP personnel, others in fatigue combat jackets had arrived in land vehicles as well as water craft and began an orgy of killing and arson that left over 50 civilians and police dead. Many more than this number were wounded, some seriously. The arson attack destroyed or partially destroyed dozens of buildings including three banks. The destruction was described at the time as wanton. However, the Ipil attack was obviously well planned and executed. It had the appearance of being a retaliatory attack for some past event—possibly because at some time in the past the Ipil region had been predominately Muslim. If this was correct, and it was supposed to have been a show of strength of Islam against the Christian faithful, then the destruction of banks and office buildings would be hard to explain. Churches were burned, however they were part of the overall destruction. It is uncertain whether any Muslims were killed or wounded. However, as in the 1994 Zamboanga City bombings there may have been Muslim victims. There were reports of kidnappings in the Ipil attack but these were more than likely opportunistic.

The sack of Ipil occurred whilst Abdurajak Janjalani was the supreme commander of the Abu Sayyaf. Furthermore, it was reported Abdurajak Janjalani took credit for the raid. Ridos, or clan revenge, can be ruled out in the Ipil attack as can legitimate members of the MNLF—or indeed the MILF. An indignant Nur Misuari—the Chairman and founder of the MNLF—took exception to claims made by Defence Secretary Renato de Villa that seven alleged commanders of the MNLF were identified as being involved in the Ipil massacre. Misuari was quoted by veteran journalist, Amante E. Bigornia, as identifying the seven as “disaffected, disgruntled, former MNLF members who had formed their breakaway group”—no mention of this group joining the Abu Sayyaf was made by Misuari. (Bigornia 1995)

Ipil may not have been as poverty stricken as other towns or cities in the Mindanao region, but it was poor. Such was the damage caused it took years to rebuild the market place and repair the damaged buildings—if of course they could be repaired more so than demolished. This was not a natural disaster that qualified for government assistance, it was an act best described as a "riot" or an act of "civil commotion". The long-term emotional effect it had on survivors—or relatives of the victims—can best be described in this poignant letter to a number of friends nine years after the massacre and wanton destruction in Ipil, by former university student Divino Capitanea Golingay. Golingay recalled the events. "…at 12 noon a sudden burst of gunfire reduced us from humans into hapless beings pleading for our lives amid a spreading carnage". After an hour or so "the fighting ended"…"we who survived the infamous attack on April 4 1995 continue to live. We dream on. We continue to hope for a more peaceful world". (Golingay 2010)

If indeed the Abu Sayyaf, under the leadership of Abdurajak Janjalani, was responsible for the Ipil raid it was still only viewed by then Philippine administration of Fidel Ramos as nothing more than a criminal act perpetrated by non-Christians against Christians. That they justified their crimes by claiming an adherence to a Higher Cause was irrelevant to the Ramos administration. It was an act of barbarity perpetrated by criminals who had to be brought to justice. Similar acts of criminality had occurred in the past in the Mindanao region, and would occur again in the future.

Death of Abdurajak Janjalani

Just as Emilio Aguinaldo had done a century earlier, Abdurajak Janjalani dreamed of establishing an independent Philippine nation—geographically diverse from that which Aguinaldo envisaged. Aguinaldo wished to include the geographical regions of Luzon and the Visayas—Mindanao may not have been included. Whereas Janjalani saw his independent state as Islamic in nature and geographically in the Mindanao region—more likely the Sulu Archipelago provinces and/or the predominate Muslim provinces. Both Aguinaldo and Janjalani believed the way to rid their region of colonial imperialists was to adopt a guerrilla campaign—Aguinaldo came to this conclusion after conventional warfare had stalled or was beset with failures against Spanish and later U. S. Forces. Janjalani came to his decision after helping fellow Muslims fight Soviet invading forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s. He assisted the *Mujahideen* and would have been in Afghanistan during the formulation of

the Soviet exit strategy from 1985 to 1987—formally withdrawing in February 1989. This example of an Islamic victory over a superpower gave him the inspiration he needed to adopt the same methods in his endeavour.

Inter alia: Aguinaldo was captured by U.S. Brigadier General Frederick Funston in 1901 who politely told him he was a prisoner of war of the Army of the United States of America. He was subsequently "jailed" in a modest well-furnished house near Malacanang Palace, and reunited with his wife and children. He eventually saw his country gain independence in 1946 and died in 1964 at the age of 94. Abdurajak Janjalani was not as fortunate, dying at the relatively young age of 39 in an armed encounter with the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Basilan Province on 18 December 1998. Janjalani was not given the option of surrender as was Aguinaldo. However it is reasonable to suggest history is not as favourable to Janjalani as it has been to Aguinaldo.

In June 1997, whilst Abdurajak Janjalani was making preparations for his next foray his younger brother Khadaffy—who was 23 years old at the time and quixotic in temperament—was attempting to convince senior PNP officials at Camp Crame—Quezon City—he may be able to persuade his oldest brother to surrender, if terms could be agreed upon. As the weeks went by it became increasingly obvious that the PNP, or indeed the Ramos Government, was not interested in Khadaffy's proposition. After all the Ramos administration had signed a peace agreement with the MNLF in 1996 and was starting dialogue with the MILF. Moreover, what was to be gained by negotiating with the leader of a small criminal gang of miscreants who in all likelihood would be eliminated by the AFP? President Fidel Ramos was going out of his presidency on a high. History would judge his presidential term for his peace overtures and developmental progress and the destruction of the Abu Sayyaf was not high on his agenda. After his presidential term Ramos wrote "we consciously nurtured the atmosphere of peace and development, for it is the only way to make sustainable progress happen". (Ramos 2001)

Basilan 1999-2002

To the first-time visitor of Basilan this 1360 square kilometre island takes on the appearance of a tropical paradise with its white beaches, coconut trees, and green forests stretching up to the 971 metre high mountain of Puno Mahaji (Basilan Peak). However in 1999—and decades

before—there seethed an undercurrent of suspicion between the majority 70% Muslim population and the minority 27% Christians.

This was even more pronounced in Isabela City the capital of Basilan, where Christians outnumbered Muslims. (In 2001 when Basilan was incorporated into the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) the capital, Isabela City was excluded). This inveterate suspicion, that certain members of the Christian population—more than likely the clergy—had an agenda to outnumber the Muslims in all of Basilan as they had done in Isabela City prompted many killings .

A particularly vicious assault on a vehicle (Jeep), with six Christian catechists occurred on 14 February 1999—five Christians were killed and one—a young woman—only managed to survive by the actions of a fellow female passenger who protected her with her own body. This bullet ridden Jeep now stands in Isabella City as a stark reminder of this vicious attack under the poignant words "Memorial for Peace". The victims of this 1999 massacre were all on their way to attend an Alay Kapwa seminar promoting Christian values. They had travelled from the town of Tumahubong in the southern Basilan municipality of Sumisip and all were members of the Claretian Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer. Inter alia, one of the aims of the Claretian mission in the southern Philippines was to promote interreligious tolerance. (However, there is a certain irony here. Vincent Ferrer who was a Catholic priest born in the early years of the Spanish Inquisition was responsible for converting many non-Christian believers to Catholicism—Jews in particular. Whether he was successful in converting any Spanish Moors is problematic).

Kidnapping or indeed robbery can be ruled out as the motive for this attack in Isabela City in 1999—neither crime was committed. It was widely reported that the Abu Sayyaf were responsible for this atrocity but nobody in this organisation—at least nobody in authority—took, or admitted responsibility. The attackers—or so it would appear—were a local gang with a deep-seated hatred for those Christians who they believed flaunted their religiosity. Inter alia: It is highly unlikely that Abu Sabaya—who went onto to become one of the Abu Sayyaf's most wanted member—was involved in this atrocity even though this was more than likely the year of his return from Saudi Arabia—the exact month being somewhat of a mystery. The attack certainly had all the hallmarks of future actions by Sabaya but there was no evidence he was involved. Sabaya would not have missed the opportunity to grab headlines—indeed take full credit—as he would do in the future. However, if indeed the Abu