

## Country Weekly Report of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

### PHILIPPINES

#### Terrorism

On 16 September 2014, a bomb exploded in front of the City Hall building in General Santos City. Maj. Gen. Eduardo Año, commander of the Army's 10th Infantry Division said that the explosive device bore the signature of known terrorist and experienced bomb maker Abdul Basit Usman. Usman is believed to be hiding with the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). The Philippines military has a suspect in the blast, alias 'Malik', 22, a protégé of Malaysian terrorist Xulkifli Abdul Hir who also is believed to be hiding in the Philippines and who has links to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and BIFF.

Government sources believe that the bomb blast, which injured seven people and killed one, was apparently not meant to kill as the bomb was detonated in the evening when crowds were low. The intention of the blast is believed to be for the group or groups behind it to make their presence felt in General Santos City.<sup>1</sup> The deceased victim was Jay-R Magnanao, 17, who succumbed to shrapnel wounds on 19 September 2014.<sup>2</sup>

Another explosive was detonated on 20 September 2014 in Lamitan City, Basilan. Lamitan City police chief Senior Inspector Gean Gallardo said the explosion took place at around 2125hrs at Sitio Lagasan in the village of Kulay Bato. The bomb was placed beneath an electric post and an acacia tree. The explosion toppled an electricity pole and caused a major blackout in the city. However, no casualties have been reported in the blast.<sup>3</sup> According to a local Mindanao news report, Lamitan Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay blamed the explosion on the Abu Sayyaf.<sup>4</sup>

#### Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM)

Spokesman for the BIFM, Abu Misry Mama, has reportedly said in a *Rappler* article that the BIFM is "in constant connection" with Abu Bakr a-Baghdadi's Islamic State

<sup>1</sup> "IS-linked group in Gensan blast", *Manila Standard Today*, 18 September 2014, <http://manilastandardtoday.com/2014/09/18/is-linked-group-in-gensan-blast/>

<sup>2</sup> "Mindanao Newsbits for September 20, 2014", *Manila Bulletin*, 20 September 2014, <http://www.mb.com.ph/mindanao-newsbits-for-september-20-2014/>

<sup>3</sup> "Bomb explosion rocks Basilan", *SunStar*, 21 September 2014, <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/zamboanga/local-news/2014/09/21/bomb-explosion-rocks-basilan-366704>

<sup>4</sup> "Blast rocks Lamitan City", *MindaNews*, 20 September 2014, <http://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2014/09/20/blast-rocks-lamitan-city/>

movement, also known as ISIS. He denied, however, rumours that the BIFM had sent soldiers to the Middle East, and also said that the BIFM did not harbour any foreigners in its own territory. These were in response to reports that the BIFM had sent 200 fighters to Syria, and a widespread belief that wanted Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir aka Marwan is hiding in BIFM territory.<sup>5</sup>

### **Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in Philippines Senate**

Senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos and Cagayan de Oro second district Representative Rufus Rodriguez, chairman of the House ad hoc committee on the BBL proposed in the past week that Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chair Nur Misuari and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) leader Ameril Umbra Kato be invited to take part in deliberations over the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law, a move which drew widespread opposition, and a refusal from Nur Misuari himself. The proposal was intended to make the passing of the BBL more inclusive, but opposition to the move said that it would legitimize the leader of a terrorist group (Kato), as well as an individual with an arrest warrant for inciting rebellion (Misuari) hanging over his head.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “The BIFF-ISIS connection and social media”, *Rappler.com*, 19 September 2014, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/69590-biff-isis-connection-social-media>

<sup>6</sup> “Nur snobs ‘Bangsamoro’ hearing”, *SunStarCagayan de Oro*, 19 September 2014, <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/cagayan-de-oro/local-news/2014/09/19/nur-snobs-bangsamoro-hearing-366365>