

MONTHLY COUNTRY REPORT

PHILIPPINES

APRIL 2008

Terrorist attacks in April 2008 showed a steep surge registering almost a 50 percent increase from 14 incidents in March to 24 attack incidents this month. On the other hand, government efforts are slightly higher than the previous month from 20 to 25 Counter terrorism incidents this month.

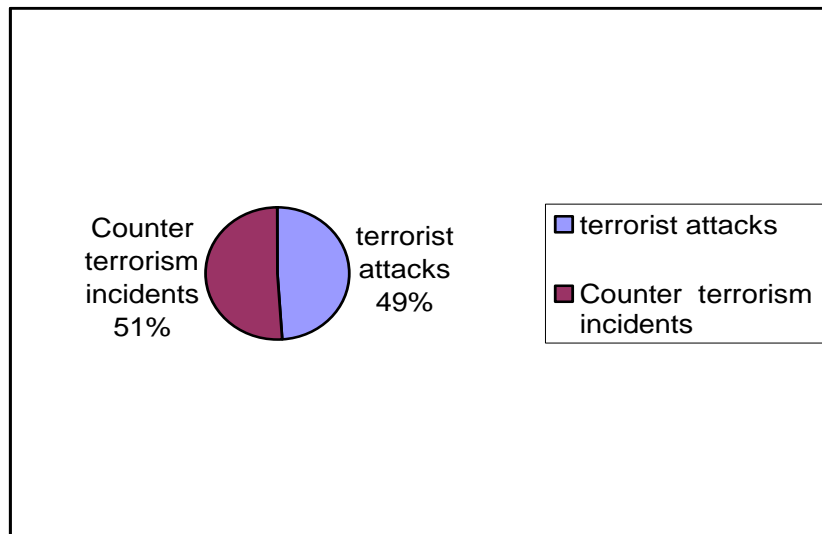
Among the significant developments; the temporary liberty of jailed MNLF leader Nur Misuari, just after he was ousted in a highly questionable election of MNLF by his erstwhile Secretary General Cotabato Mayor Muslimen Sema. On the other hand, there is general apprehension on the fate of Philippine government and MILF ceasefire and peace talks with Malaysia's impending withdrawal of its International Monitoring Team (IMT). This apprehension is reinforced by the re-alignment of Philippine military troops from Sulu to areas identified influence by the MILF which added speculation of a possibility of breakout of hostilities. The twin explosions that rock Zamboanga City, blamed on the ASG by Philippine authorities, added fuel to the speculation. Most analysts saw this as diversionary tactic from pressure brought by a relentless military operations directed towards the ASG.

In the counter-terrorism front, the Philippine military scored significant victories against the New People's Army with the seizure of 6 big NPA camps in Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental this month. This was despite a significant offensive made by the insurgents against government troops and critical infrastructures.

Terrorist Attacks	Counter Terrorism Incidents	Deaths					Injuries					Arrests
		Mil	LEA	Civ	PM	T	Mil	LEA	Civ	PM	T	
24	25	7	0	5	1	6	8	0	5	0	7	11

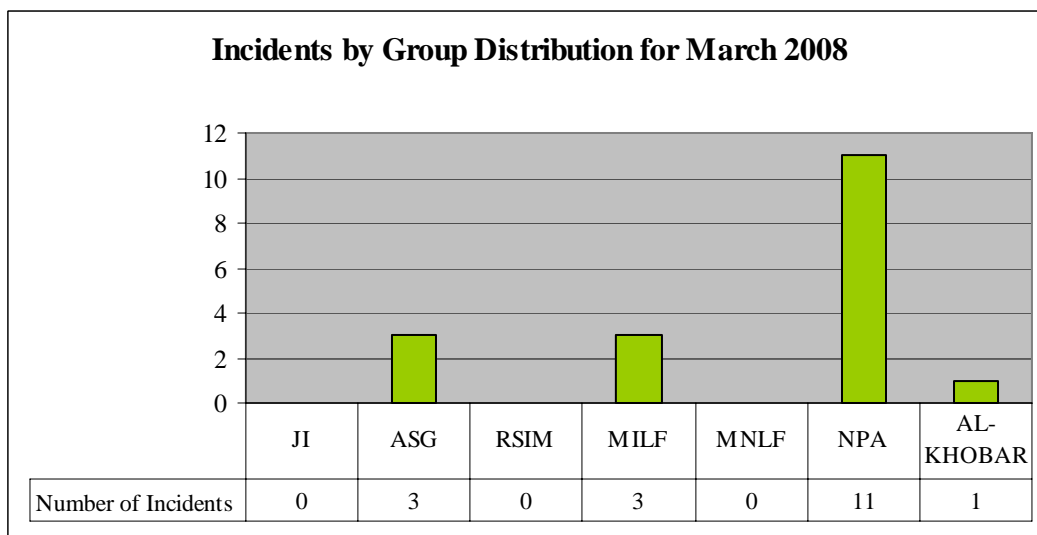
**TA – Terrorist Attacks CT – Counter Terrorism; Mil – Military; LEA – Law Enforcement Agency; Civ – Civilian; PM – Paramilitary; T- Terrorist*

Number of Incidents



The highlights of this month's development are the twin bombing attacks blamed on the ASG. This showed the resiliency of the ASG to survive from the onslaught of military operations directed towards its ranks. The lethality and the operational methodology that the bombs were detonated resembled that of the Jemaah Islamiyah—which could mean that the technology of cell phone detonated bombing techniques have been transferred to the ASG.

Number of incidents perpetrated by terrorist groups



Ji – Jemaah Islamiyah

ASG – Abu Sayyaf Group

RSIM – Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement

MILF – Moro Islamic Liberation Front

MNLF – Moro National Liberation Front

NPA – New People's Army

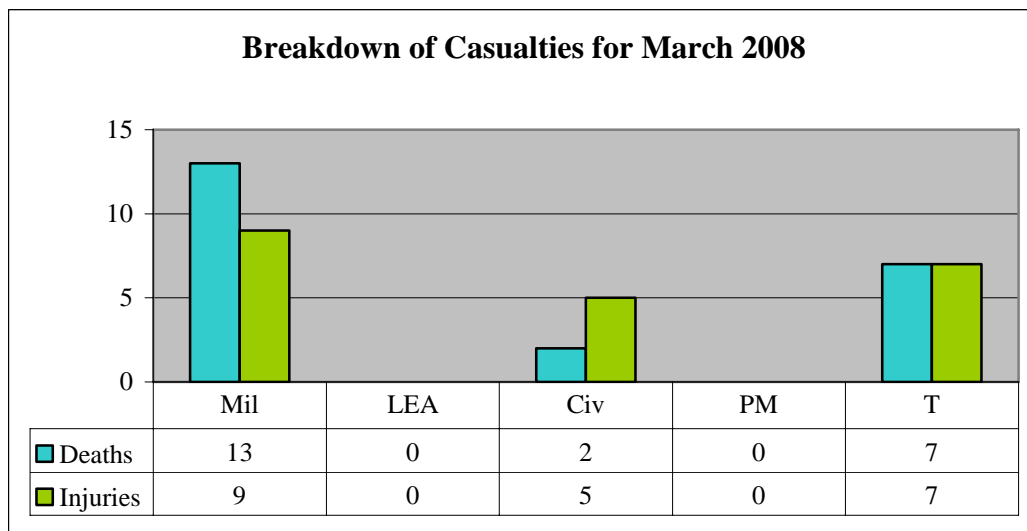
Consistent with last month's report, the NPA has perpetrated most of the attacks. This month, NPA attacks reinforced the earlier belief that the communist insurgents had been extorting revolutionary taxes from private companies and corporations to build up its logistical capability, and at the same time punishes recalcitrant business establishment by attacking its critical infrastructures. The ASG was blamed for twin

terrorist bombings in Zamboanga City and the reported abductions of individuals, including Muslims, indicates that the ASG, while pressed elsewhere, can still operate over a wide area.

The MILF areas of responsibility continue to be relatively peaceful except for three incidents that were believed not organizationally sanctioned but feuds between local MILF commanders with some individuals and armed civilian volunteer organizations. However, the re-alignment of forces of the Philippine Armed Forces being deployed to MILF controlled areas created a volatile situation that may break out into open hostilities, especially with both parties redeploying forces with the impending withdrawal of the Malaysia’s International Monitoring Team (IMT) that is keeping the ceasefire.

On the other hand, the release of the MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari from jail provides a respite from Philippine government criticisms in handling the peace process. This was also believe to appease his loyal followers (demanding Misuari’s release) currently perceived to have established tactical alliance with the ASG.

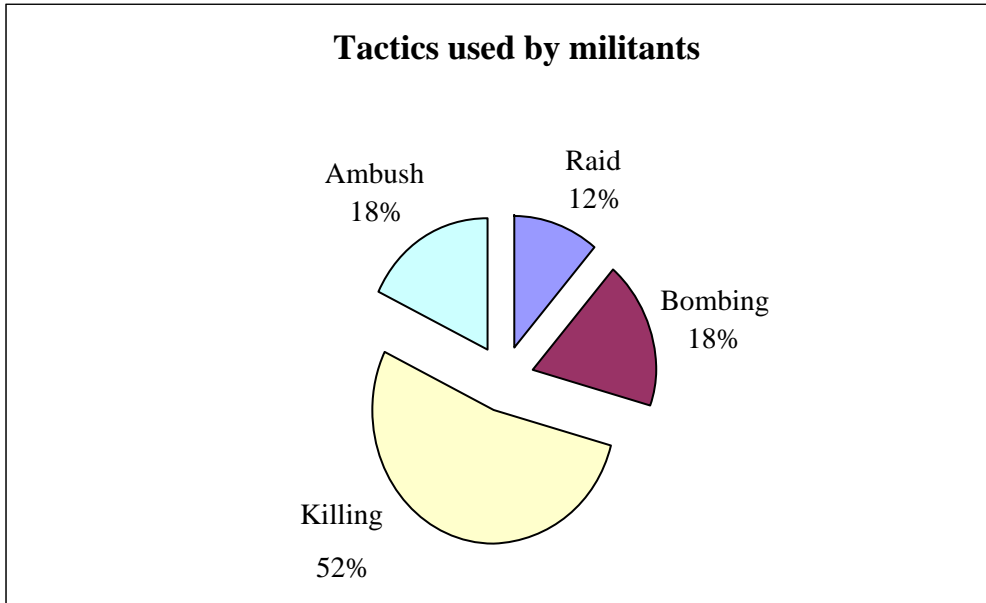
Terrorist Incidents and Counter Terrorism Operations



Methodology

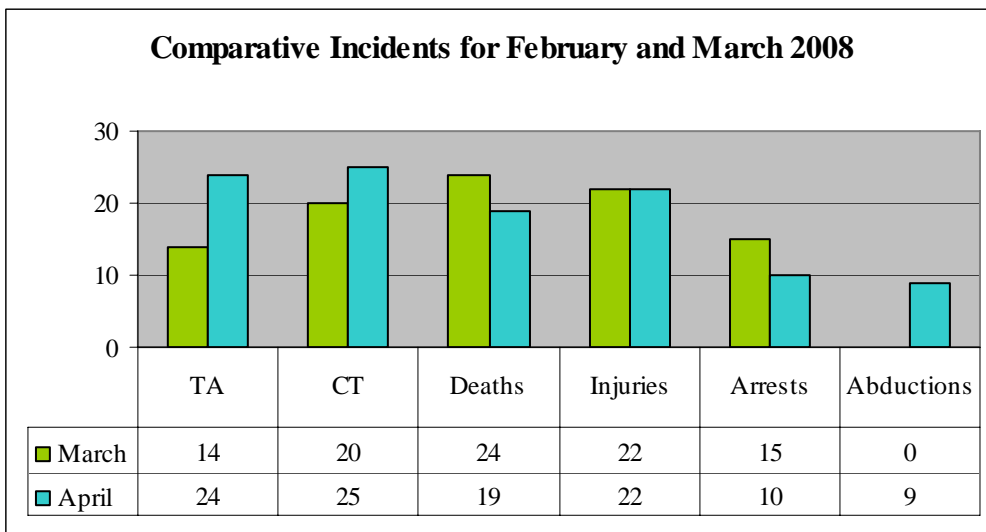
Tactics used by militants

Raid	2
Bombing	3
Shooting/Killing	9
Ambush	3



Attacks this month by the NPA were against security personnel and private infrastructures, while ASG signature has been into bombings.

Comparative Analysis



The month of April showed positive counterterrorism efforts for the Philippine Armed Forces, but the recent successful ASG bombing attack in Zamboanga and the increasing attacks of the communist insurgents, coupled by the troubling political situation in the Philippines should keep the Philippine security forces cautious and vigilant.

Generally, the Philippine national security situation will not likely improve. Some flashpoints would be the implication of IMT withdrawal, the result of the assessment of the GRP-MNLF peace agreement and the implication of easing-up of military operations in Sulu against the ASG with the Philippine military redeployment of

forces because of the threat of the resumption of hostilities, should the GRP-MILF peace talks bogged down.