INCIDENT REPORT: PHILIPPINES

Philippine Armed Forces Air Strike Operation in Sulu
2 February 2012

Location: Lanao Dakula\(^1\), Parang Town, Sulu Island

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Event Summary:

News reports broke out that three alleged terrorist and rebel leaders belonging to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were killed in a Philippine military operation in Sulu on 2 February 2012. ASG leader Umbra Jumdail (alias Dr.Abu) was killed in the attack. There were initial reports that JI’s Zulkifli bin Hir (alias Marwan), and Abdullah Ali (alias Mauwiyah) were also among those killed but new information disclosed that the two were not in the area at the time of the assault.

Precursor: Intelligence Gathering and Operations Planning

It was confirmed that United States intelligence agencies supplied the information on the three terrorist leaders in the time leading up to the air strike. In December 2011, several JI personalities were monitored to have entered the Philippines. More specifically, the activities of Marwan have been closely monitored since the arrest of another JI operative, Umar Patek, in Abottabad, Pakistan in January 2011. Marwan was supposedly left in-charge of Southern Philippines after Patek’s departure for Pakistan. Days before the air strike, intelligence informants confirmed the presence of the ASG and JI in the area. This was further corroborated by information coming from local villagers who worked with the military to track down the rebels.

Operation:

Two OV-10 Counterinsurgency aircraft (pictured left) took off at approximately 0200 from Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City. Both aircrafts were carrying a

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4 Own deduction. EAAB is located in closest proximity to Sulu Island, and the 25th Composite Attack Squadron, which comprises of OV-10 “Bronco” aircraft is stationed there. The 25th is specifically tasked to deal with “lawless elements in Mindanao”. See http://www.15thstrikewing.mil.ph/25cas.htm
payload of 2x 500 pound bombs (pictured right). The aircrafts arrived over at the target site at approximately 0230 – 0300 and dropped the bombs at the terrorist encampment in Lanao Dakula. The area was described to be heavily forested. After the air strike, military troops stormed encampment, whereupon field reports of the three leaders’ deaths started to come in.\(^5\) The assault was described as “brief but precise” and “taking only seconds.”\(^6\)

*Map of Area of Operations:*

\(^5\) “3 terrorist leaders, 12 followers killed in Sulu air raid,” Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2 February 2012, [http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/138569/3-terror-leaders-killed-in-sulu](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/138569/3-terror-leaders-killed-in-sulu)

\(^6\) “Sulu airstrike kills 3 terror leaders, 12 followers,” Philippine Star, 3 February 2012, [http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=773875&publicationSubCategoryId=63](http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=773875&publicationSubCategoryId=63)
Aftermath:

The force of the 500lb bombs are thought to have thoroughly destroyed both the encampment and the bodies, delaying any positive identification of the bodies.

There are new intelligence reports that claimed that only Dr. Abu was killed and that the two JI operatives were not in the area at the time of the raid. As of 10 February 2012, intelligence sources have denied that Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, and Abdullah Ali, alias Mauwiyah, were among those killed. The verified casualties of the air strike are as follows:

1. Umbra Jumdail alias Jumdail, Doc Abu, Abu Pula
2. Iting Jumdail- the son of Doc Abu
3. Hadji Tateh Hayudini
4. Naser Lipae
5. Muin Khalid
6. Abdullah alias Abdul Aziz
7. Abu Daud
8. Muamar

The military’s efforts are now directed towards tracking down the location of the gravesites of those killed in the raid. Muslim religious leaders in the province have refused to cooperate with the military and give information on the location of the graves. The Imams strongly objected to the idea of digging up the cadavers as it goes against their religious beliefs. There is reportedly only one grave which contained five bodies.

Brief Profile of ASG leader Abu Pula:

Gumbahali Jumdail

Named Doc Abu due to his ability to provide medical aid to injured militants, Jumdail is a Sulu based Abu Sayyaf leader. He is charged with 21 counts of kidnapping and detention of persons against their will. He was notably involved in the Dos Palmas incident, where around 20 people, some of them foreign nationals, were kidnapped by the ASG from a high-end resort in Palawan.

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8 “Imams refuse to reveal where terror suspects were buried,” Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5 February 2012, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/139767/imams-refuse-to-reveal-where-terror-suspects-were-buried. See also “Police fail to find bodies of terrorists killed in Sulu,” Philippine Daily Inquirer, 4 February 2012, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/139567/police-fail-to-find-bodies-of-terrorists-killed-in-sulu
9 Ibid
10 Ibid
Assessment:

The death of Dr. Abu is considered as the latest major blow to the ASG and also to the JI as there are reports that Dr. Abu is one of those harboring JI members. Dr. Abu was allegedly in the midst of planning terrorist attacks at the time of his death.\(^\text{11}\) The air strikes have raised concerns about possible retaliatory attacks by the rebels and the military is on alert status as a precaution.\(^\text{12}\) There are also concerns that the raid has put the lives of foreign nationals held in custody by the ASG at risk.\(^\text{13}\)

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