



REVIEW OF ISLAMIC STATE EAST ASIA

11-11-2017

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INTRODUCTION

The following report investigates the Islamic State of East Asia (ISEA), a violent extremist network (VEN) comprised of numerous violent extremist cells operating primarily throughout the Philippines. The most notorious cell, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is part of a larger loosely-affiliated ISEA network which has enacted over 500 terrorist attacks (Alindogan, 2016). Other less active, but aligned extremist cells that comprise the network include the Maute Group (MG), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Ansharul Khilafah Philippines. Each of these cells have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) and are known to co-operate (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017). The objective of this report is to provide insight into this network's disposition, evolution and capabilities using empirical evidence in relation to terrorist activity. The objectives of the report will be met by analysing data obtained from the Global Terrorism Database (GTB), a comprehensive open source (OS) repository of information on terrorist events' worldwide (Global Terrorism Database, 2017). Each of the cells outlined which comprise the broader network were used in this report due to data availability and as the GTD had no specific listings for ISEA but did for the individual cells that comprise it. As this report's focus is on terrorist activity, ISEAs (and its cells) significant transnational organised criminal activities is beyond the scope of this report although they may be regarded as such when considering funding aspects.

BACKGROUND

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (2014) states that, "Australia's primary contribution to an evolving allied Special Operations Forces (SOF) network to combat Violent Extremist Networks (VENs) should focus on increasing ties in southeast and south Asia" identifying the Philippines as 'particularly important' (p.15). The Criminal Code (Terrorist Organisation—Abu Sayyaf Group), under Section 5 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*, first listed the ASG as a terrorist organisation in 2002 along with other affiliated groups (Australian Attorney General's Department, 2017). On September 14, 2017, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (2017) began reviewing the listing for ISEA. This further listing for ISEA as a terrorist organisation, creates conjecture as to whether these groups are distinctly different. Fealy (2017) however identifies Isnilon Hapilon as the person "*whom the IS central leadership anointed emir of Southeast Asia in mid-2016*". Likewise, the Criminal Code also identifies him as emir of ASG Basilan. On May 23, 2017, Isnilon Hapilon was central to jihadist operations in Marawi City, where hundreds of pro-Islamic State (IS) fighters engaged the Philippine military. In relation to this attack, Sarmiento (2017) stated, that over 1100 lives were lost (920 jihadists, 165 government troops, and 47 civilians) with many more wounded, and hundreds of thousand civilians evacuated (Sarmiento, 2017; Fealy, 2017). During this attack, Hapilon commanded 'a diverse array of fighters' including those from MG and other foreign fighters from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Middle East (Fealy, 2017). The recent deaths of Hapilon and Omar Maute who were killed on October 16, 2017 is expected to be substantially disruptive to ISEA tactical activities in the Philippines (Sarmiento, 2017). In saying this, it is likely that the relief is only short-lived, as the religious and ideological influences that motivate these cells remain and like many terrorist organizations, the network is expected to evolve and regroup with possible and revenge attacks prompted (Sarmiento, 2017). Media reports suggest this is happening with an individual by the name Amin Baco, a Malaysian, bomb-making expert with links to JI, being regarded as the new emir in the region (Sarmiento, 2017). Another possible successor to Hapilon at least for ASG, is Basilan-based, sub-commander Paruji Indama who analysts suggest may organize attacks and has more support locally being a Filipino (Chew, 2017). Followers of Paruji Indama are reported to have carried out the beheading of a former village chieftain of Sumisip on October 23, 2017 which could be regarded as a revenge attack and demonstrate that he too may be vying for leadership (Garcia, 2017).

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Any investigation into terrorism in the southern Philippines requires an understanding of Tausug culture, the largest group of Moros in Mindanao. Tausug society has endured centuries of political, economic, and religious struggle, where historical land ownership issues has seen misunderstandings and inequality motivate animosity and violence within the Philippines (Barreveld, 2001). For Australians, these struggles echo difficulties faced the indigenous in Australia society. Interestingly, the Tausug language has no word for excessive violence, the closest translating more accurately to masculinity or bravery (Barreveld, 2001). The Tausugs do regard violence as morally wrong, however equally so, is a failure to enact revenge on rivals (Barreveld, 2001). Violence is often regarded as necessary to overpower one's enemies and this very disposition makes submission through force alone, unlikely (Barreveld, 2001). Vengeance to the Tausugs also implies killing which is regarded as a sensible way to defend one's rights, interests and honour and simultaneously prevent shame or retaliation (Barreveld, 2001). The Tausug idea of justice is often prioritized over social order, if both are not complementary and weapons and firepower regarded as status symbols (Barreveld, 2001). The Tausug's views on social structure and justice and their perspectives on kinship and reciprocity facilitate the ability to mobilize large groups in a temporary and dynamic manner, not unlike feudal systems of the past (Barreveld, 2001). This outline of Moro and Tausug culture is far from comprehensive, but a basic understanding of these motivations and affiliations is necessary to provide any effective counter-narrative to combat the VEN and ensure a lasting peace in the region which historically has been so elusive.

The ASG group is rooted in Tausug culture and is an organisation of interest to Australia because like other loosely-affiliated groups throughout southeast Asia, they have historical links with terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda (AQ) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Likewise, over a hundred Australians have been killed by VENs and the Australian territory is proximate to numerous Muslim countries (Australian Attorney General's Department, 2017; Smith, McCusker & Waters, 2010). The ASG also have links with transnational organised crime with whom they have traded arms and drugs which includes the 14K and Bamboo triads of Hong Kong and Taiwan (Cigal, 2017; Miani, 2011; Berry, Curtis, Elan, Hudson & Kollars, 2003). In fact, despite the group's religious ideologies, numerous ASG fighters (including child soldiers) have been reported to use 'shabu' or methamphetamines (Antonio, 2016). In 2013 in fact, the arrest of five men in Thailand highlighted these transnational drug trafficking activities. Prior to extradition from Thailand to Manhattan these individuals made admissions claiming that they had sourced a tonne of methamphetamine from North Korea, transported it via Hong Kong and Thailand and stockpiled it within the Philippines (The Manila Times, 2015; Hamilton, 2014).

As this report focuses on the disposition of the group and attempts to quantify the magnitude of threat and capabilities, regarding them as distinctly separate entities would prove to be a significant underestimate and inaccurate reflection of the present context as will be seen in the subsequent analysis. The recency, proximity, and magnitude of risk to Australia are not confined to Australians abroad but also those residing within Australia. This is evidenced by two recent cases. Firstly, in 2011, an Australian man, named Warren Rodwell, was kidnapped by the ASG and held for ransom for 472 days before being released (East, 2015). Second, in July 2014, Robert 'Musa' Cerantonio was arrested in Lapu-Lapu City for supporting Islamic militants before extradition back to Australia (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2016). Although Cerantonio was confined to within Australia he was arrested in Cairns attempting to travel to Indonesia with four other individuals in case that became known as the 'tinny terrorists' (Oakes & Clark, 2016). A known associate of Cerantonio, Karen Aizha Hamidon was arrested in Taguig City on October 11, 2017 (Dancel, 2017). Hamidon who has links with ASG, was also married to Mohammed Jaafar Maguid, who led ISIS-linked Ansarul Khilafah Philippines before being killed by the Philippine's police. She had also convinced a Mohammed Sirajuddin (who was arrested in 2015) to join ISIS in Syria (Dancel, 2017). Both Sirajuddin and Hamidon were part the Baqiyah United Group (BUG), led by an Indonesian woman by the name of Aisyah Lina Kamelya, who was married to a man arrested for a terrorist plot in December 2015 (Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict, 2017; Dancel, 2017). Collectively, this

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provides sufficient evidence to demonstrates the present risks associated with ISEAs to Australia and Australians.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this assessment is to provide insight into ISEA's capability, disposition and evolution, through empirical evidence to support tactical and operational activities. The specific intelligence questions addressed in this report include:

1. *Is the threat posed by the ISEA increasing or abating in the Philippines?*
2. *Are ISEA a threat to Australia or Australians?*
3. *What are ISEA's methods of attack?*
4. *What is the nature of targets of ISEA?*
5. *a) What locations are most dangerous, in relation to the ISEA threat?*
b) How dangerous are these locations?
6. *What is the nature of the affiliation of the different cells within ISEA?*

METHODOLOGY

Data was obtained from the GTD, and other OS material surrounding ISEA with both quantitative and geospatial analytics were used to analyse the data. These methods and the use of OS information were chosen due to the availability of data, feasibility of analytic methods and budgetary and time constraints. After mining data from the GTD, analysis was performed using use Microsoft Excel and Google Maps to ensure familiarity and usability in operational and evaluation contexts and to facilitate the visually display of information into graphic form. Data was extracted from the GTD, inserted into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and sorted with information pertaining to attack dates, locations of attack, type of attack, type of target etc. isolated, before filtering and purging incomplete data. This data was placed in various tables and used to make forecasts in terms of attack frequency. This tabulated data was manipulated into various graphics for visual representation.

The total number of attacks by the various affiliated groups that make up ISEA was 552 and of these the highest amount was carried out by the ASG cell whose attacks make up over 91% or the total with 505 attacks with the remaining made up of MG with 23 attacks, BIFF with 19, and Ansar Khilafah with 5 attacks. The analysis used to ascertain the first aim of the research, at time, refers to the ASG and ISEA interchangeably due to the overwhelming comparative magnitude of attacks by this cell. The ASG are a dominant portion of the overall sample due to their long comparative history compared with the other cells whose history is much shorter.

The locations of historical attacks were inserted into Google Maps creating geospatial information and maps of attack locations from the various cells in the ISEA network. These were compared and assessed for similarities and distinct differences between these cells. Clusters of concentrated activity of cells around primary attack locations were quantified to rate areas of significant activity. This quantitative analysis coupled with geospatial information returned an accurate approximation of attack rate/km² which allowed for comparison. Limitations encountered in identifying and ascertaining precise locations were at times estimated or excluded. In saying this, the limited number of these encounters were determined not to affect the overall feasibility of analysis and deemed sufficiently accurate to meet reporting objectives.

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FINDINGS

Various forecasts in Figures 1 – 5 show an upward trajectory in relation to attacks to the overall number of attacks by ASG since 1994. The number of attacks gradually increased from 1994 to 1997 before receding from seven to two annually. From 1997, the attack frequency accelerated to peak at 27 attacks in 2000 before again receding to seven in 2006. From 2007 there has been a significant acceleration in frequency to 93 attacks in 2015 before receding slightly to 72 in 2016. Various modelling from Figures 1 – 5, demonstrate that even the most conservative linear forecast has an increase in number of attacks to be expected in the coming years. Even the higher confidence level displayed in Figure 4 which has more variance shows that the frequency of attacks is expected to increase.

In relation to the other cells in the ISEA network. Attacks carried out by the MG and BIFF attacks have all occurred after October 2015 making any direct comparison with ASG implausible due to the limited sample size and historical data.

Figure 1.

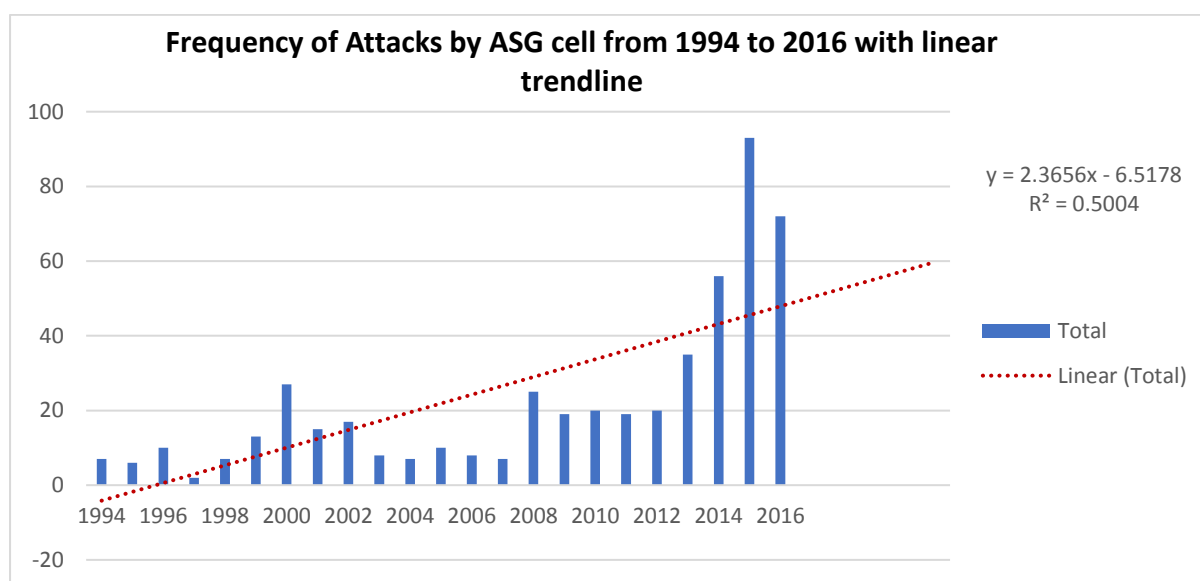
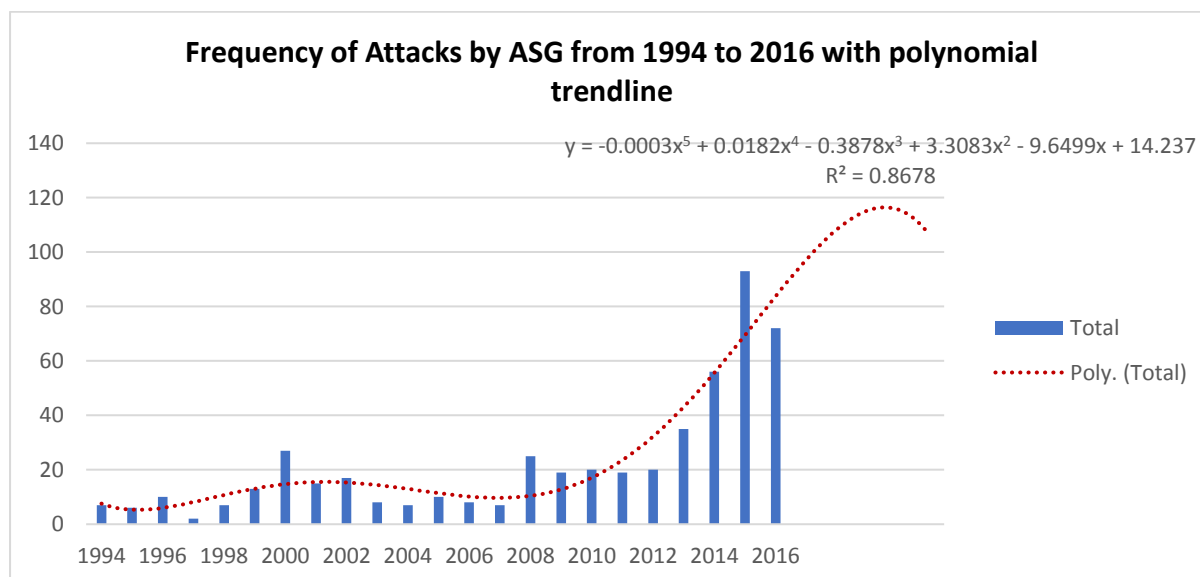


Figure 2



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Figure 3

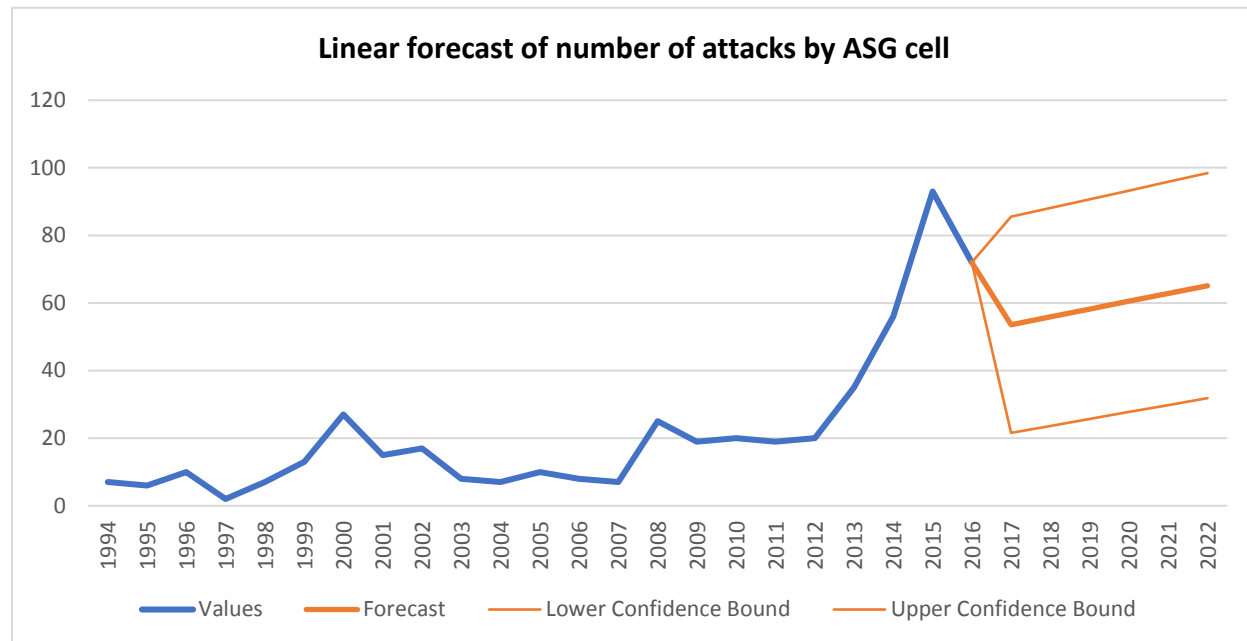


Figure 4

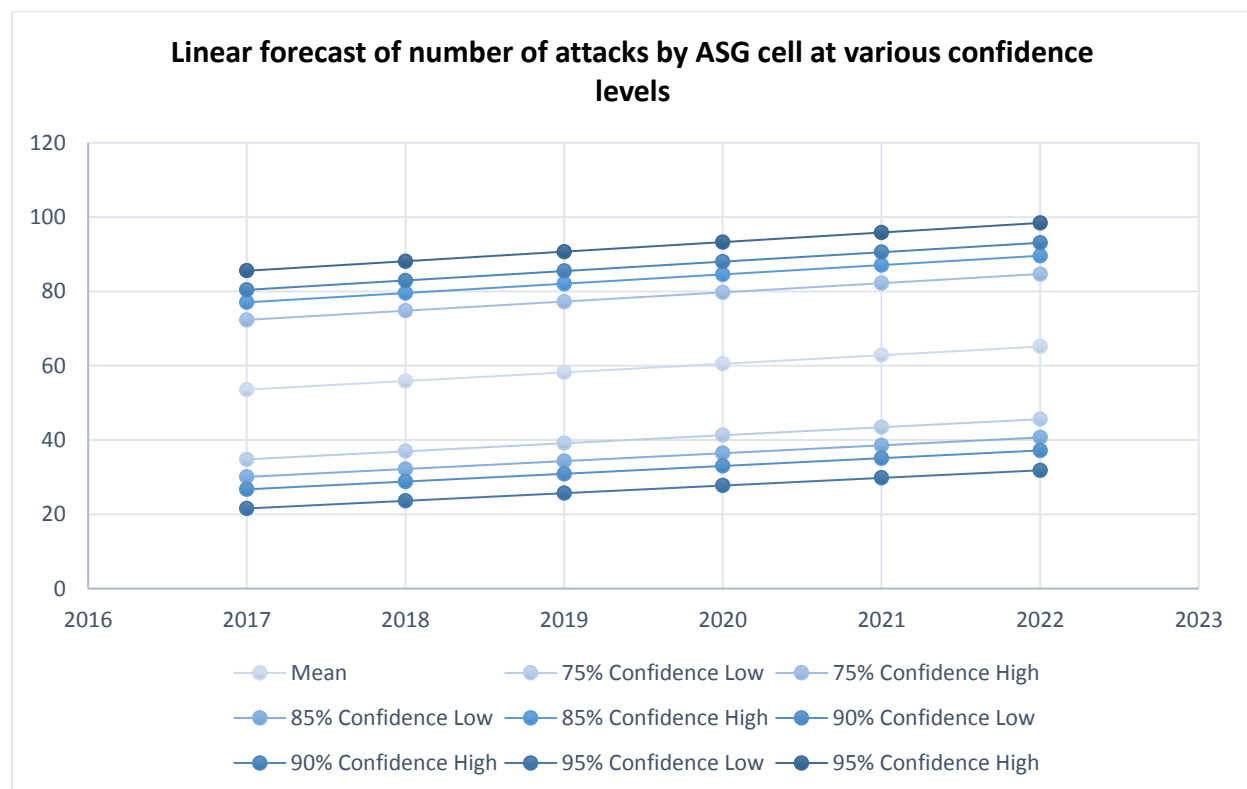
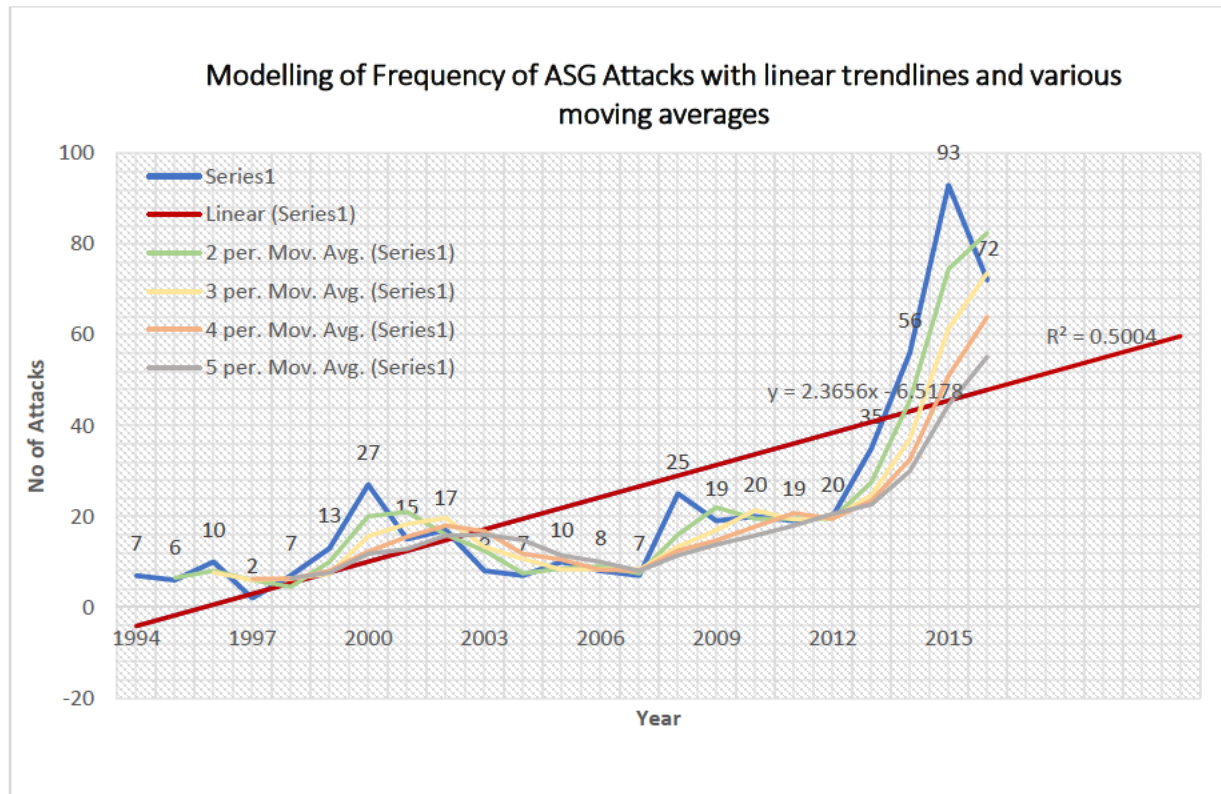
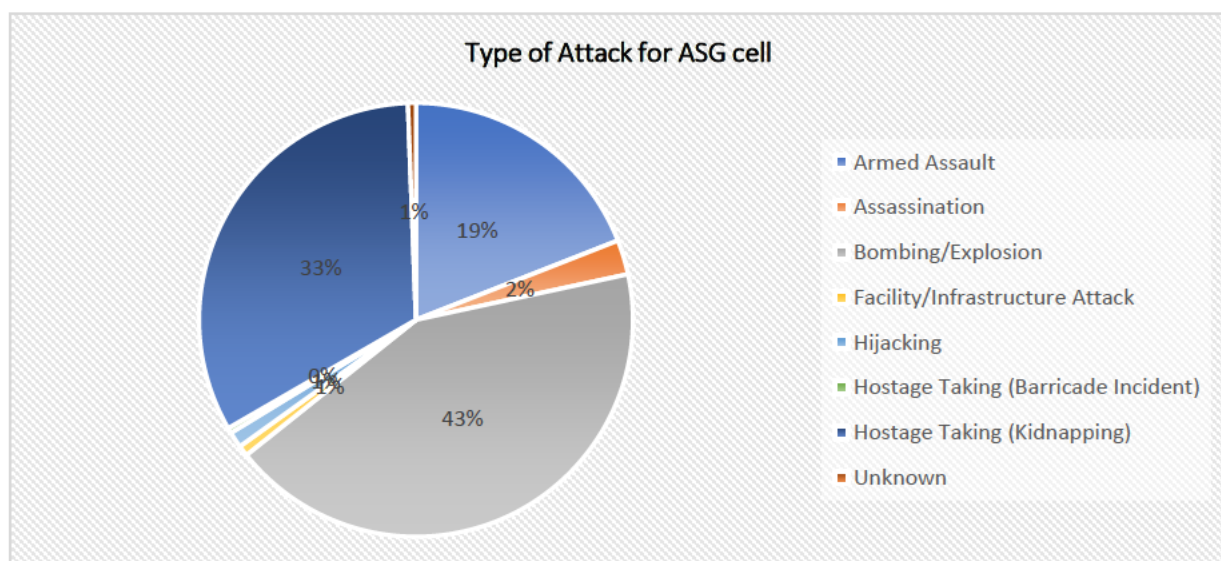


Figure 5



The primary modes of attack by the ASG cell shown in Figure 6 were bombings/explosions at 43%, hostage taking (kidnappings) at 33% and armed assaults at 19%. Combined these made up 95% of all terrorist incidents with the remainder being assassinations, facility infrastructure attacks, hijacking, hostage taking (barricade incident).

Figure 6

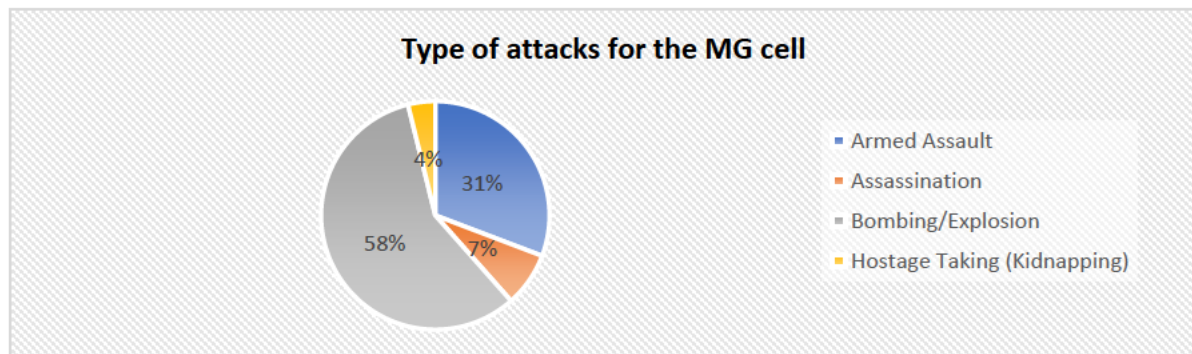


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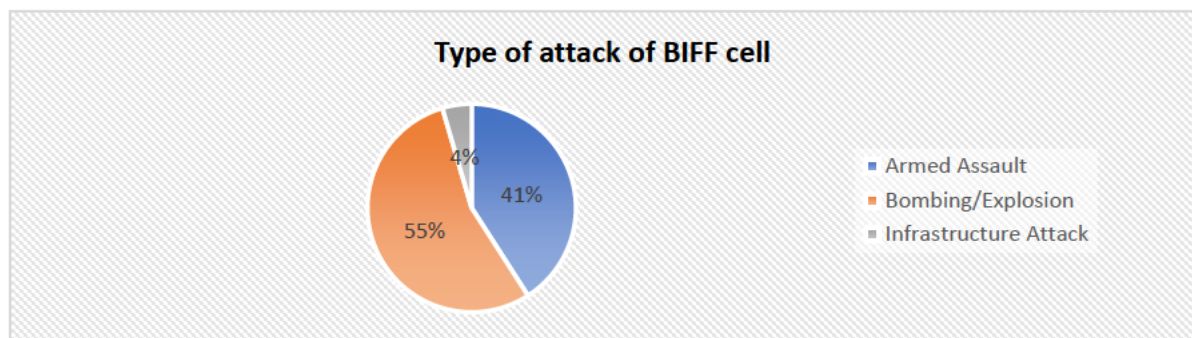
Although obtained from a far smaller sample size, Figure 7 demonstrates that the MG cells main type of attack include bombing/explosions at 58%, armed assaults at 31% and also included assassination at 7% and hostage taking (kidnapping) at 4%.

Figure 7



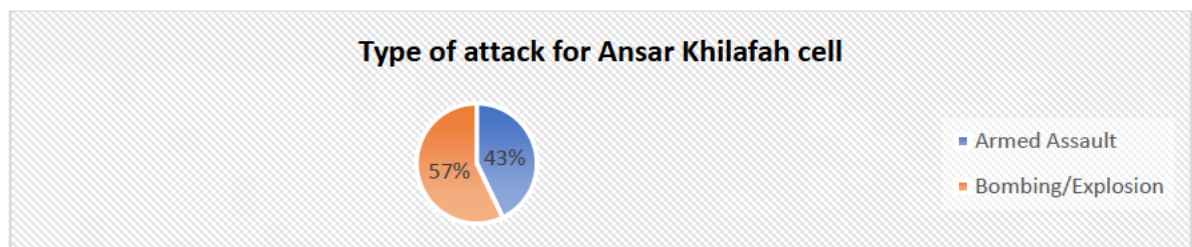
The BIFF cells main type of attacks were bombing/explosions at 55%, armed assaults at 41% and infrastructure attacks at 4% which are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8



For the Ansarul Khilafah cell their primary mode of attack also included bombing/explosions at 57% and with armed assaults at 43% which is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9

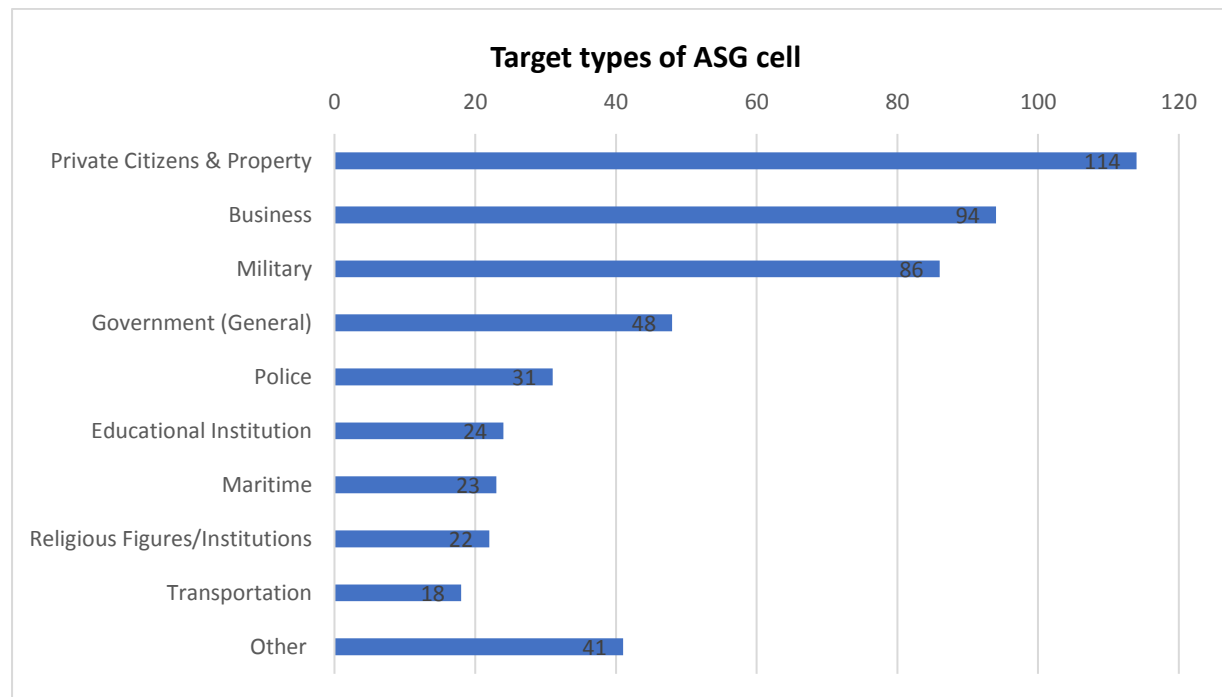


Targets of attacks by the ASG cell in descending order are shown in Figure 10 and are as follows; private citizens (114), business (94), military (86), government (general) (48), police (31), educational institutions (24), maritime, (23), religious figures and institutions (22), transportation (18) and other (41).

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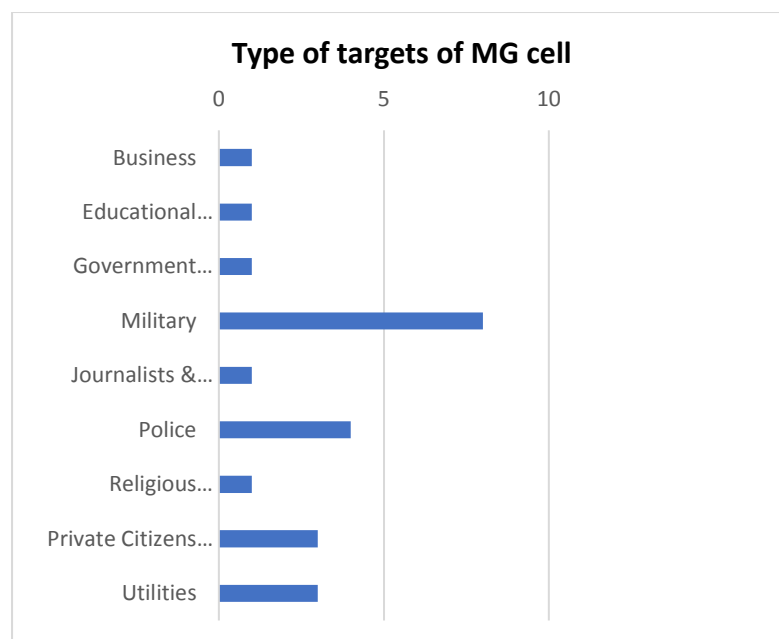
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Figure 10



Again, although with a much smaller sample size the main target types for the MG cell were attacks directed at the military and police but also include private citizens and property, government/diplomatic, businesses, religious figures/institutions, educational institutions and journalists/media and are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11

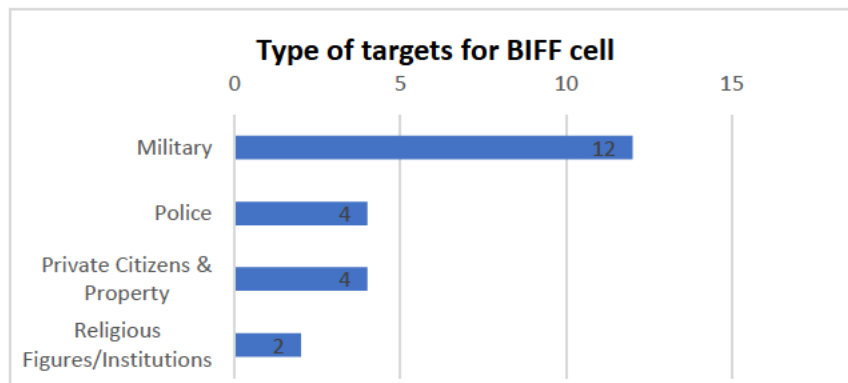


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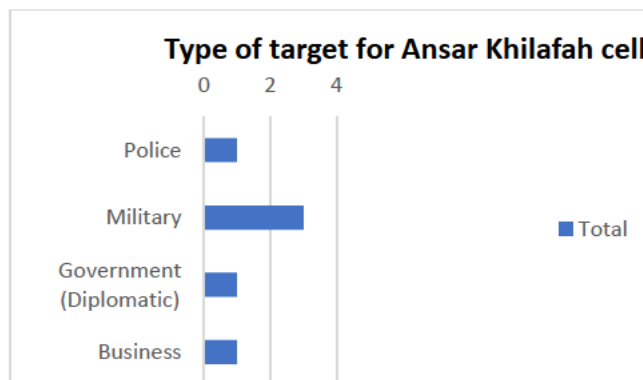
The BIFF cells main types of target, seen in Figure 12, centred around the military and police but also included private citizens/property and religious figures/institutions.

Figure 12



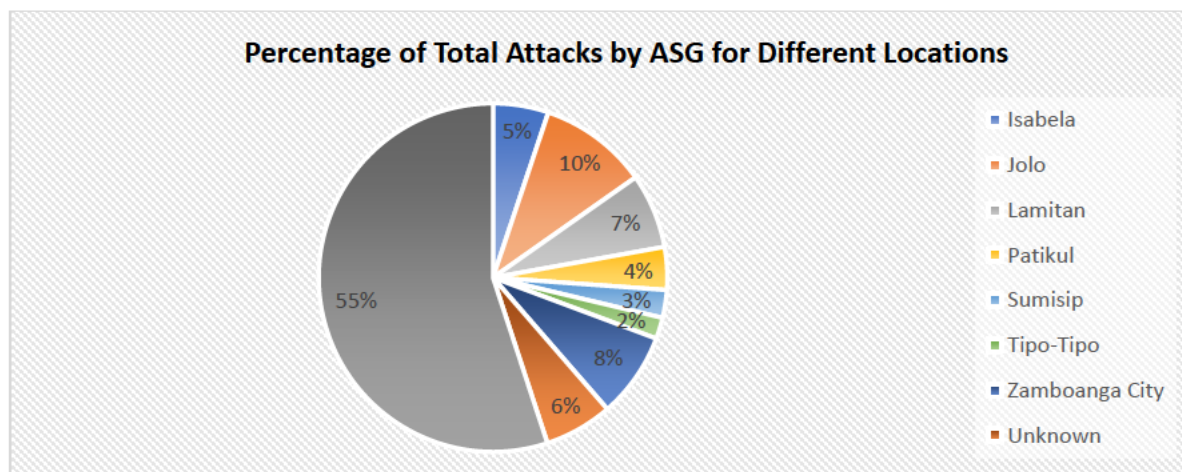
The Ansar Khilafah cell's main targets limited number of attacks were the military and police with government (diplomatic) and businesses also included.

Figure 13



Quantitative analysis of attacks revealed that the top seven attack locations for the ASG cell in descending order were Jolo, Zamboanga City, Lamitan, Isabela, Patikul, Sumisip and Tipo-Tipo. According to this figure 14 these seven locations amounted for 45% of the attacks. However, limitations are noticeable with the quantity of "other" and "unknown" attack locations.

Figure 14



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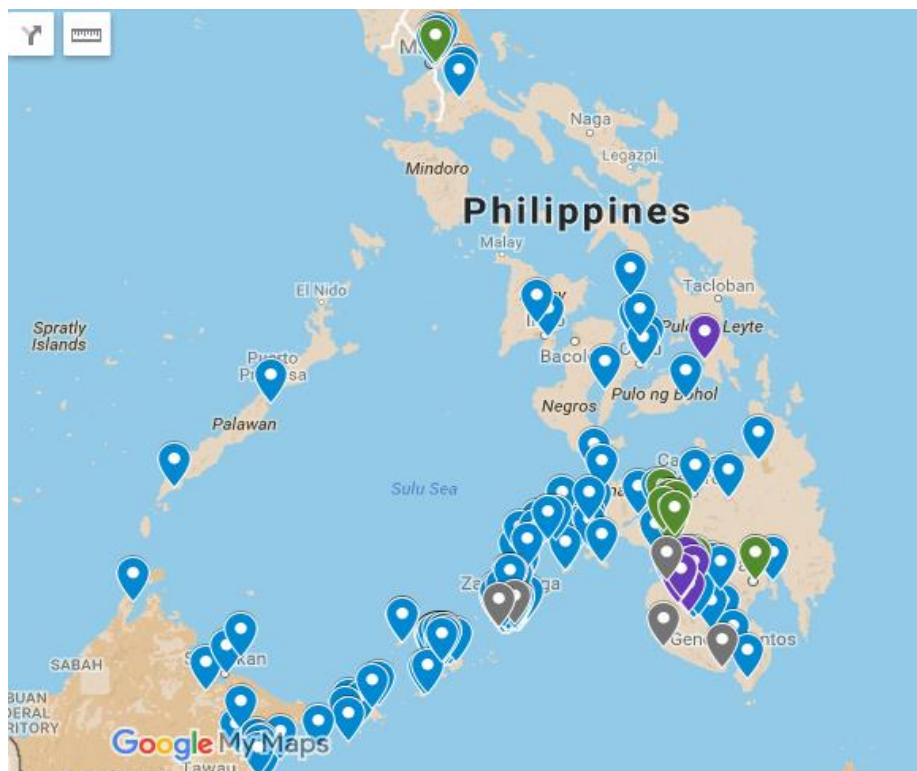
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Geospatial analysis was therefore carried on attack locations indicating that attacks are dispersed throughout the whole of the Philippines, occurring in the Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao regions and shown in Figures 15 & 16.

Figure 15



Figure 16



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The highest concentration of ASG attacks (identified by the red markers) occurred in Mindanao, and particularly on Jolo and Basilan islands, and around the Zamboanga City area. Many lesser frequent attack locations (blue markers) were proximity to these higher frequency areas. Also, moderately concentrated attack locations occurred throughout the rest of the Mindanao region, across the Sulu archipelago and into Malaysia's Sabah Region with low concentrations in Luzon and the Visayas regions which are shown in Figures 17 - 22.

Figure 17

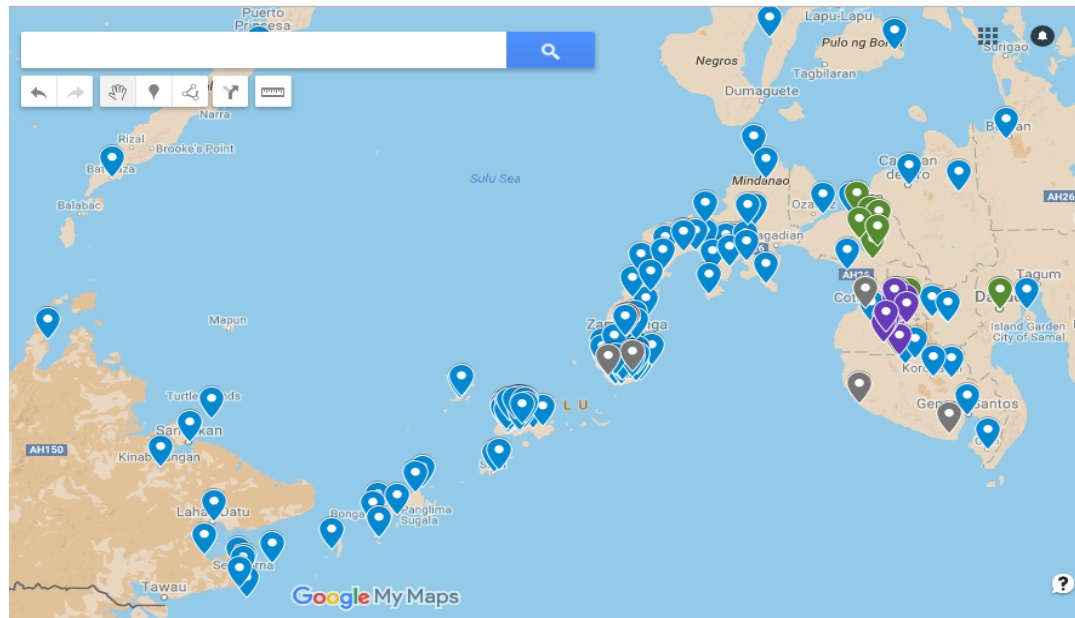
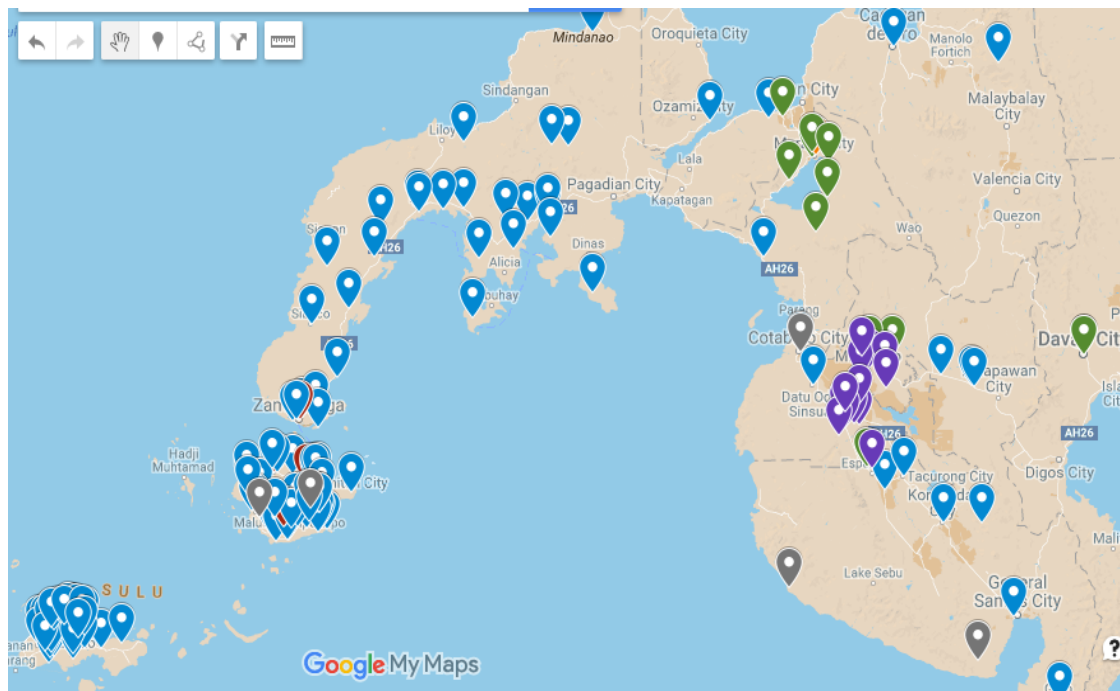


Figure 18



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Figure 19

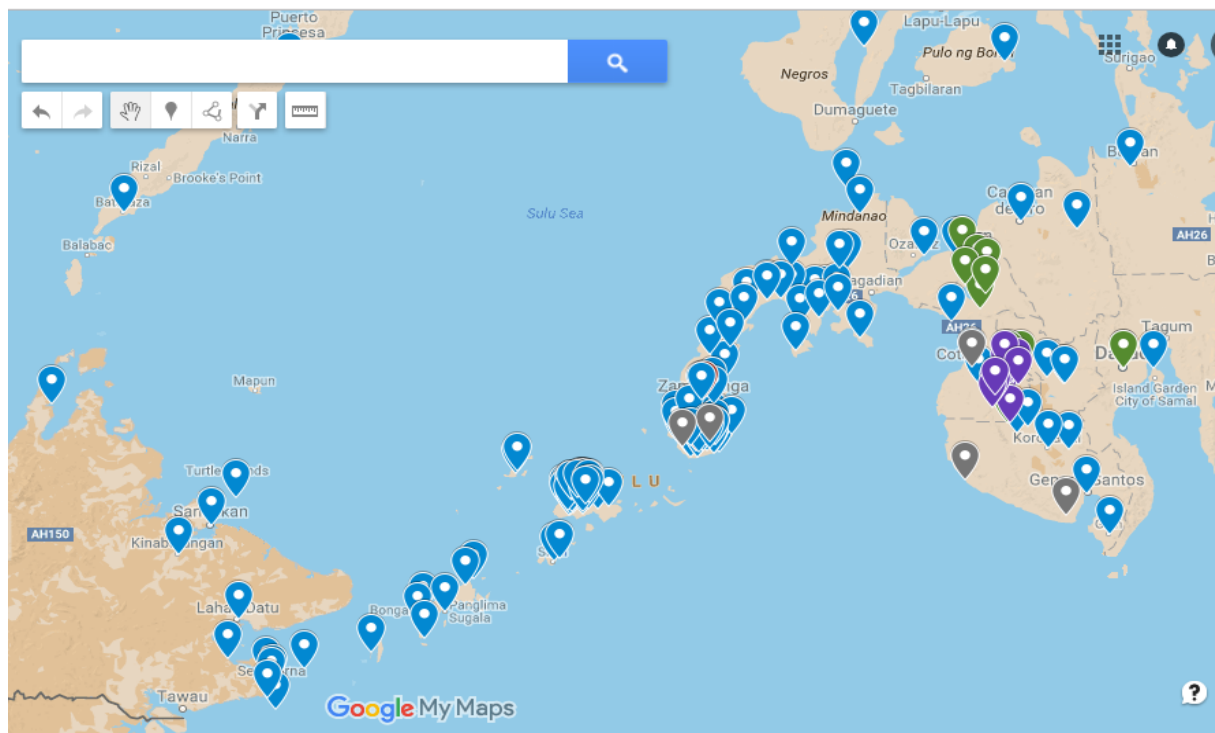
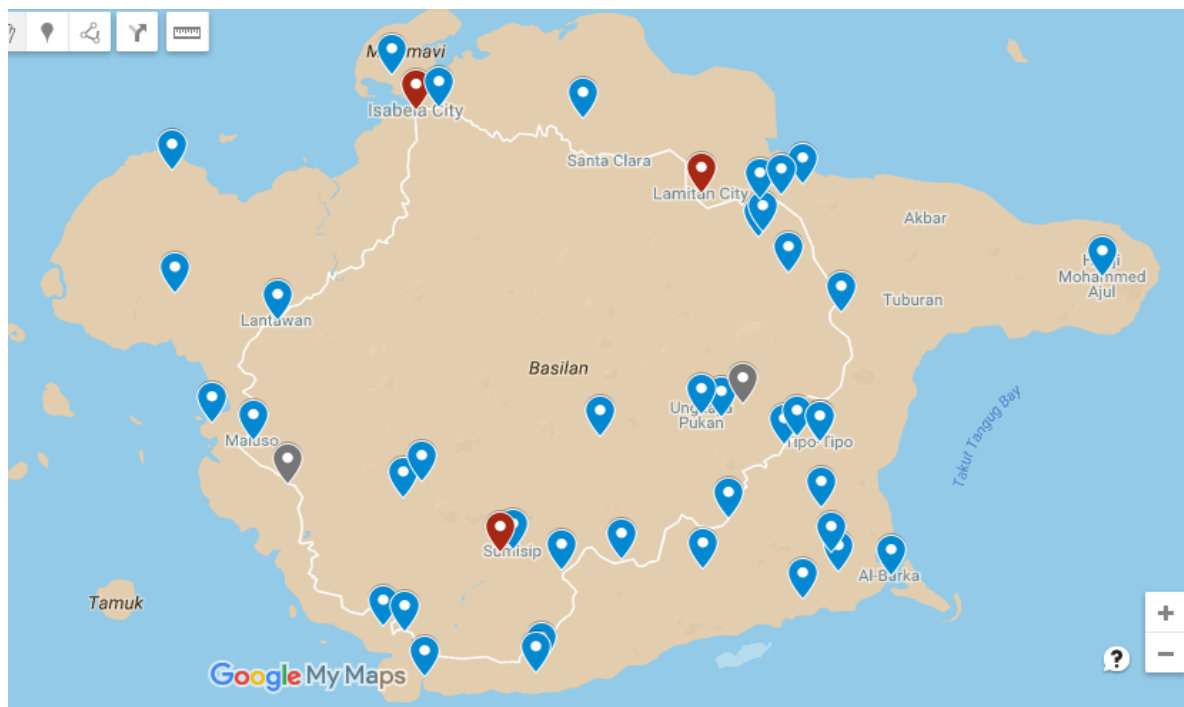


Figure 20



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Figure 21

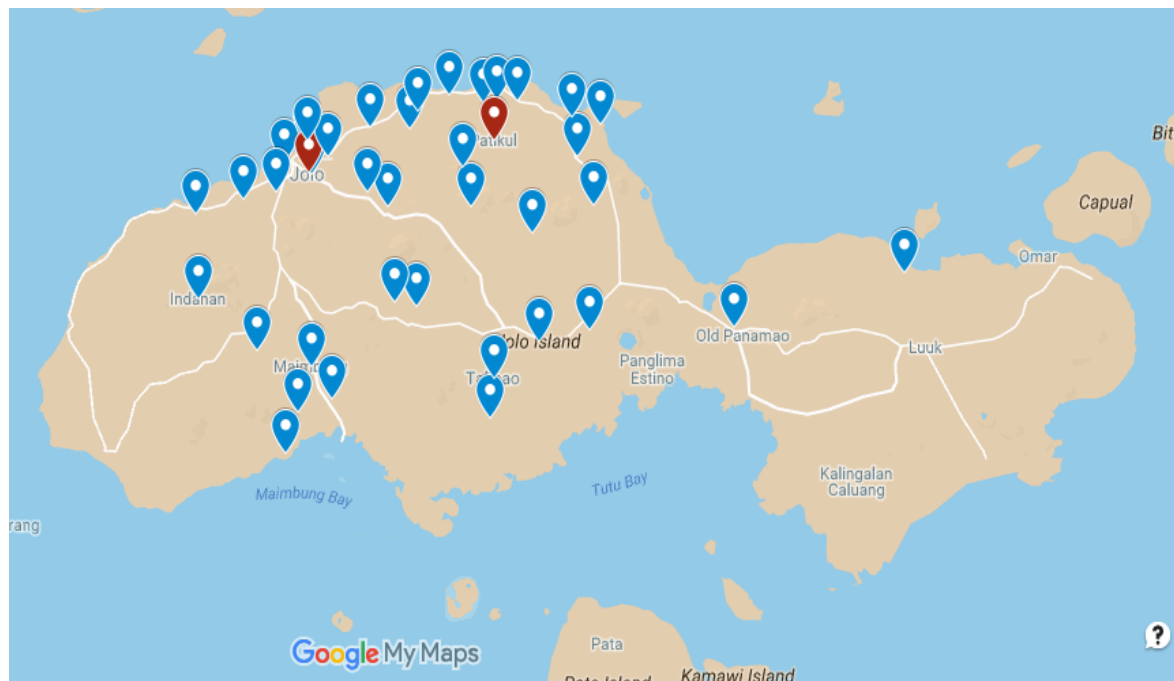
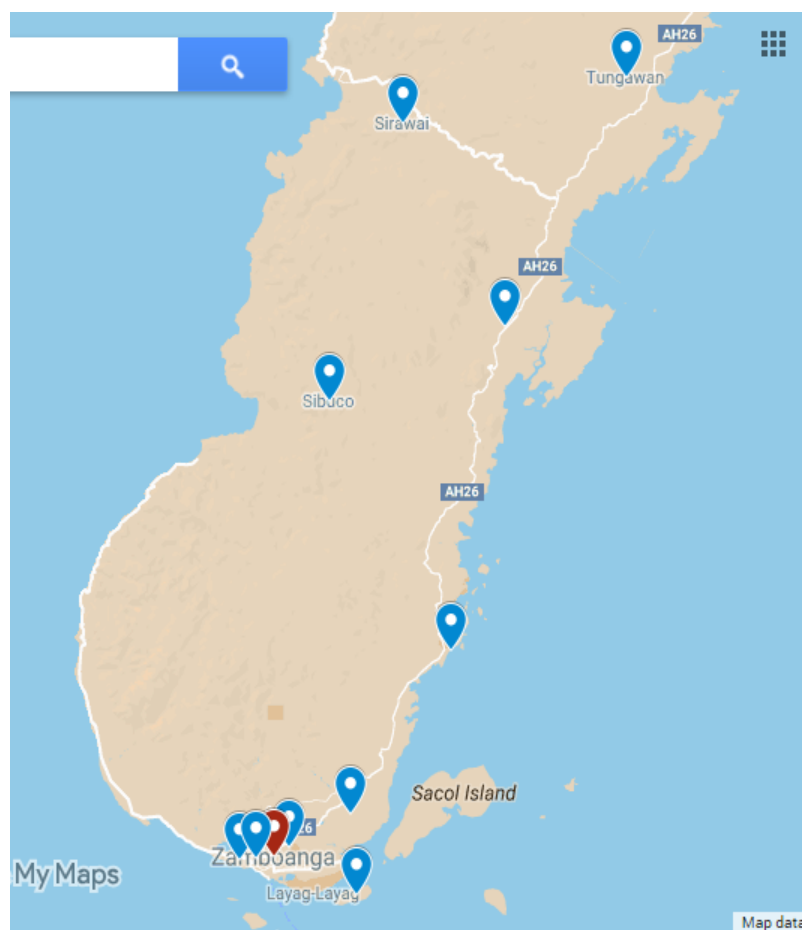


Figure 22

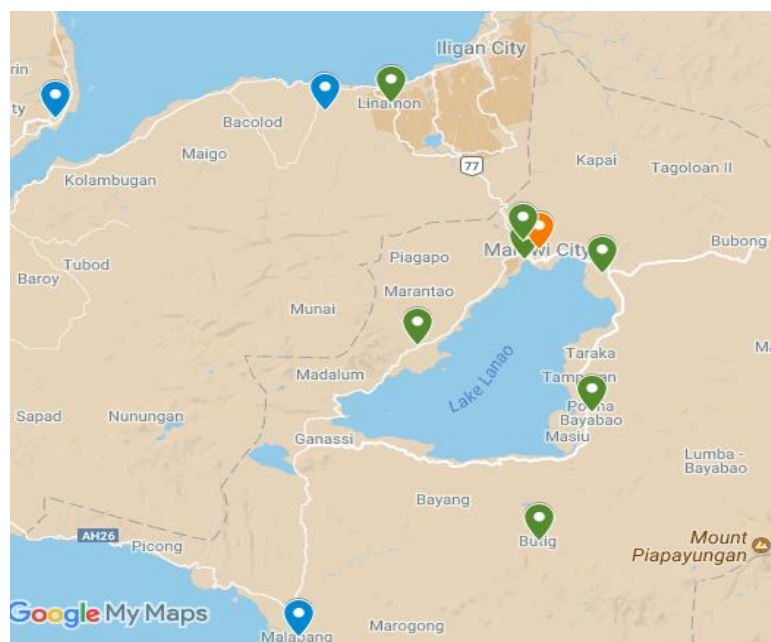


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Quantitative analysis of these locations combined with the geospatial analysis provided an accurate approximation of attack rate per square kilometre. Attack rates were calculated for Basilan island which has an area of 1265.5 km². This island encompasses four high concentrations attack locations which include; Isabela, Lamitan, Sumisip and Tipo Tipo in addition to numerous other lower frequency attack locations which are in proximity. In total, there were 155 attacks (31% of the total) calculated within this area which calculated to an attack rate of approximately one attack for every 8.16 square kilometre. The island of Jolo has an area of 890km² and encompasses two high frequency attack locations, that of Jolo and Patikul and with the addition of lower frequency attacks locations, had a total of 131 attacks (26% of total) with an attack rate of one attack for every 6.79km². Finally, the Zamboanga city region which is the southwestern half of Zamboanga Sibugay (as opposed to Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur) has an area of 1483.38km². It had 51 attacks (or 10% of total) and returned an attack rate of one attack for every 29.09 km².

Attacks from MG cell (green markers), shown in Figure 23, also fell within the region where attacks from the ASG cell were carried out, but were concentrated around Marawi City. All MG attacks occurred in the Mindanao region however none on Basilan or Sulu islands. MG carried out ten of their twenty-three total attacks within Marawi City (orange marker). Seventeen of the twenty-three MGs' attacks were concentrated in and around Marawi City and Lake Lanao in an area of approximately 1830km² and returned an attack rate of approximately one attack for every 108km². Interestingly, Figure 10 shows, that like the outlying ASG attack locations, MG had one attack in the Luzon region and Figure 23 demonstrate that three ASG group attacks occurred within the MG high frequency attack region.

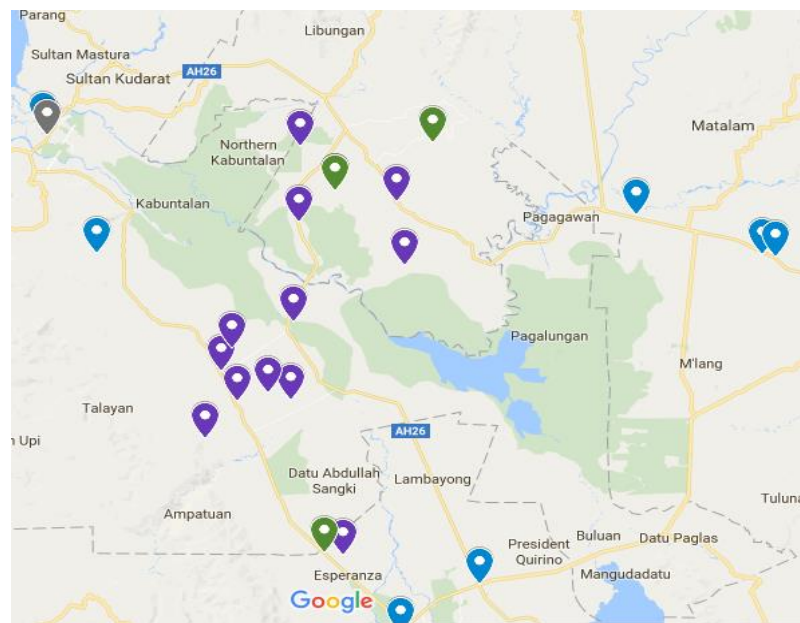
Figure 23

The BIFF cell (purple markers) attack locations which are shown in Figure 24 demonstrate that all sixteen known attack locations of the nineteen total were concentrated in the Kabuntalan region of Mindanao within an area of approximately 2220km². These 16 attacks equate to an attack rate of one attack for every 139km². Again within this area three attacks were carried out by the MG cell, one from Ansarul Khilafah, and seven attacks by the ASG cell in the surrounding vicinity.

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Figure 24



The five attacks carried out by the Ansarul Khilafah cell (grey markers), can be seen by returning to Figures 16 – 20. This shows that these attacks were dispersed throughout Mindanao, with two occurring on Basilan Island, amongst one of the highest concentration ASG attack areas. The three other attacks were dispersed along the western coastline of the Cotabato region from General Santos City to Cotabato City. Interestingly, two of these attacks were in the vicinity of both the BIFF and MG attack locations and surrounded by numerous other ASG attacks.

ANALYSIS

Is the threat posed by the ISEA increasing or abating in the Philippines?

The recent attack on Marawi City show that the magnitude of threat posed by ISEA in the Philippines is increasing. The dramatic acceleration in attack frequency, since 2000, and upward trajectory of the forecasts found in Figures 1 – 5, demonstrate that this threat posed by ISEA is increasingly problematic. All forecasts showed an upward trajectory in terms of attack frequency highlight that this threat is increasing. The most conservative linear forecasting with a correlation of around 50% (R-value of 0.5) is found in Figure 1, 3, 4 & 5 confirm this upward trajectory. The polynomial forecast which was far more accurate in terms of variance with an 87% correlation (R-value of 0.87) is found in figure 2. This forecast and modelling exacerbated the upward trajectory and highlights that scale of this threat may be more troublesome than that suggested in the conservative linear forecasts. The recent deaths of numerous ISEA members, including Isnilon Hapilon and Omar Maute, is expected to disrupt ISEA activities in the short-term. However, due to the entrenched nature of the cultural aspects and perceptions of ideological struggle has not being quelled, it is likely that ISEA's various cells will regroup and evolve.

Are ISEA a threat to Australia or Australians?

Geospatial analysis of attack locations, found in Figures 15 – 24, identify nothing to suggest that ISEA are a threat to the Australian territory. However, recent activities of numerous violent extremist cells within the Philippines suggest that they have all aligned under the ISEA banner. The influence

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of Islamic state, and the historical evolution of the ASG cell more particularly, compound the risk posed by other associations with groups such as AQ and JI. The presence of foreign fighters of numerous nationalities involved in the attack in Marawi City indicate a shift toward the Philippines from the Middle East may be unfolding. This suggests that the network within the Philippines are well-resourced and the threat is not confined to the Philippines, but global in nature. Australia's proximity to Indonesia, the known associations between ISEA and JI, and the widespread nature of recent terrorist incidents ensure ISEA remain a significant concern to Australian interests. The kidnapping of Warren Rodwell provides a concrete example that ISEA are a threat to Australian people who are living and travelling abroad. Australians are perceived as high 'value' targets in kidnap-for-ransom operations performed by ISEA, and particularly the ASG and MG cells. More concerning for Australia are threats directed at and within the Australian territory. Unfortunately, this is also evidenced by the recent extradition of Robert 'Musa' Cerantonio from the Philippines and his subsequent arrest with five other individuals attempting to travel to Indonesia. These individuals have known terrorist associations and show that the ISEA organisation has reach to individuals within the Australia territory, even if for recruitment purposes only. Cerantonio's association with Karen Aizha Hamidon and her links with known ASG and Ansar Khilafah members highlight the likelihood and proximity of this threat.

What are ISEA's methods of attack?

The three main methods of attack, found in Figures 6 - 9, were bombings/explosions and armed assaults. The bombings suggest that ISEA have the capability to produce improvised explosives devices and their propensity to carry out armed assaults demonstrate their ability to procure military grade weaponry. The addition of kidnappings suggest that this is a necessary fund-raising activity and assassinations highlight their willingness to not only use extreme forms of violence but use lethal force. Although some of the sample sizes were relatively small for other cells, many of the methods of attack showed interesting consistencies across the various cells of the ISEA network. These consistencies were not only in type but also relative percentages suggesting that the different cells possess the same modus operandi (MO) and support the assertion that these differences may be more for counterterrorism purposes and to ensure the accuracy of intelligence reporting the ISEA should be regarded as one homogenous group instead of being distinctly different Moro extremist cells.

What is the nature of targets of ISEA?

The diversity of targets outlined in Figures 10 show that ASG primary targets are private citizens/businesses and are probably due to their reliance on kidnap-for-ransom activities. The targeting of the military, police, government infrastructure and religious institutions highlight their willingness to use extreme forms violence and evidence the ideological dimension to their activity. The targets of other cells within the ISEA network, shown in Figures 11 – 13, were primarily directed at the Philippines military and was consistent across all cells of the network. Kidnap-for-ransom operations were found to be conducted by the ASG and MG cells only, however the small sample sizes of the other cells may exacerbate differences between cells more than being a significant difference in MO between them. Known religious ideologies, methamphetamine use and the recruitment of child soldiers insert an element of uncertainty when assessing combatants' rationality and increase the complexity in understanding group dynamics and their disposition. It is imperative that these elements are considered for future tactical and operational purposes.

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What locations are most dangerous, in relation to the ISEA threat?

Both the geospatial analysis in Figures 15 – 24, and quantitative analysis in Figure 14, demonstrate that the attack locations are widespread throughout the Philippines, and include the Sulu archipelago and Malaysia's Sabah region. Three main clusters of activity were identified for the ASG cell were found in the Zamboanga City region along with the Basilan and Jolo islands. Other areas of high concentrations for the other cells in the ISEA network included areas surrounding Marawi City, the Kabuntalan region and western coastline of the Cotabato region within Mindanao. The analysis tended to suggest that the at least some of the ISEA cells are mobile and transient and indicated the use of boats as a primary mode of transport. Targeting of these regions particularly, and/or these modes of transport should have the largest impact on containing the group, restricting their mobility and disrupting activities.

How dangerous are these locations?

The first two of the high concentration areas, or clusters identified were significantly more dangerous than all the other regions. The most dangerous was on Jolo Island, with attack rate of one attack for every 6.79 km² of land which was only a slightly higher concentration than those attacks on Basilan Island with an attack rate of one in 8.16km². The Zamboanga City region was a distant third in terms of concentration with an attack rate of one in every 29.09 km². MG attack concentrations centred around Marawi city returning an attack rate of approximately one attack every 108km², BIFF attacks which were primarily carried out in the Kabutalan region of Mindanao returned an attack rate of one attack for every 139km². The most dangerous locations all fall within the Mindanao region and in descending order are; Jolo Island, Basilan Island, the Zamboanga region, areas surrounding Marawi City and the Kabutalan region. Any operations carried out on Jolo or Basilan island will need to be conducted with extreme caution to prevent casualties. However, each of these areas will require the strictest force protection measures for tactical and operational activity.

What is the nature of the affiliation of the different cells within ISEA?

It is unable to be determined from the available data and subsequent analysis if the various cells are distinctively different groups. The characteristics that suggest MG may be a separate group to ASG are their lack of activity on Basilan and Sulu Islands but this again may also be explained by the sample size or preconception biases. In saying this, all the MG activity fell within regions of moderate and the diverse concentrations of ASG attack areas and occurred throughout the Mindanao region. Outlying attacks by MG in Manila, bear semblance to ASGs outlying attacks in the same location. Similarities in modes of attack between the numerous cells are not only in type but also in proportion suggesting one homogenous group because although attack concentrations may differ they also show uncanny similarities. Quantitative analysis showed that although there were differences in target type preferences between the various cells, the small sample sizes of all cells, except the ASG, may exacerbate any relative differences and are a significant limitation. The various similarities raise questions as to whether the diverse cell compositions are in fact, counterintelligence efforts to confuse government forces. The attack on Marawi city, suggest that there is sufficient evidence to treat these groups as one homogenous entity, united under the ISEA banner, that coordinate and cooperate which demonstrates an evolution in relation to VEN within the Philippines. These recent associations when considered with historical links to AQ and JI suggest that these groups have significant external support, are well-resourced and a considerable concern to Australia due to Indonesia's proximity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report examined the ISEA network in the Philippines and found it to be a significant and current threat. Recent media reports and terrorist attacks, suggest that an evolution has occurred from the ASG's initial inception to the more recent diversification of extremist groups within the Mindanao region of the Philippines which have been united under the ISEA banner. Historically, the ASG has received funding from Al Qaeda and have current affiliations with cells throughout the ISEA network in the Philippines, associations in Malaysia, JI in Indonesia and IS in the Middle East which makes them a significant global threat. The diversity of locations found in the geospatial analysis highlight ISEAs mobility and reach. Although attacks were primarily concentrated in the Mindanao region, they have also occurred throughout other regions of the Philippines, across the Sulu archipelago and within Malaysia's Sabah region. The presence of foreign fighters in the Marawi attack indicate the network is well-resourced, and a threat to Australians both abroad and at home. A better understanding of the loose-affiliations and funding arrangements would have a significant impact on continued ISEA operations. The scope of this report, however, was limited in relation to the network's transnational criminal activity, and suggest that future research directed toward these links especially with groups such as the 14K and Bamboo triad groups in Hong Kong and Taiwan could significantly reduce their ability to access weaponry, funding sources and their recruitment strategies. An investigation into the hypothesis regarding the origins of the methamphetamine supply may be of significant interest to Australia and its Allies' current security objectives that broader than the ISEA network.

Any examination that reviews the listing for ISEA must consider the numerous affiliations of cells within the network to accurately consider the collective threats, and capabilities of ISEA and its ability to mobilize large armed forces. Culturally, the Moros and Tausug people have a propensity for violence, they are willing to use lethal force and engage both the military and police, any lasting solution needs to carefully consider the underlying ideological and political factors that motivate the violence. A thorough understanding of these aspects would prove significant in neutralizing the threat and stabilizing the region. ASG have been actively waging war since 1991, and any exclusion of its historical significance when considering ISEA's current disposition would grossly underestimate the skill-level, expertise and capabilities that may prove extremely detrimental, even lethal, in tactical and operational situations. The ISEA network is well-trained with all cells possessing bomb-making capabilities and access to military grade weapons. All cells are driven by religious ideology and historical land-rights struggles and may be under the influence of amphetamines which can compromise both individual and the groups' rational behaviour. The ASGs ability to recruit and use child soldiers also requires closer investigation for strategic purposes and this along with the other factors outlined are imperative to consider throughout tactical and operational planning and situations especially those that require combat activity.

Finally, with the recent arrest of Karen Aizha Hamidon and her links with Robert 'Musa' Cerantonio and known ASG and Ansar Khilafah members requires further investigation. Cerantonio and other Australian individuals were arrested attempting to flee Australia to Indonesia and a thorough understanding of this relationship could be used to assess the magnitude and currency of threats to Australian interests. It is highly likely that the outcome of such an investigation would prove beneficial in relation understanding the recruitment process of Australian individuals not only for the Philippine conflict, but also those in Syria and Iraq. This understanding of the ISEA network and these aspects outlined would be extremely beneficial to place Australian interests in their global context, to minimise threats and ensure stability.

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