

The Philippines: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On January 27, 2019, two bombs detonated during Sunday mass at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral on Jolo island in the southern Philippines province of Sulu. The first explosion occurred inside the cathedral, which was followed by a second blast just outside as soldiers rushed to the scene. At least 23 people were killed and more than 100 others were wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. In July, Indonesian police revealed the attack was carried out by a married Indonesian couple who attempted to travel to ISIS territory in 2016. The couple was stopped in Turkey and deported back to Indonesia in January 2017. It is the first known suicide bombing carried out by Indonesian deportees. (Sources: [CBS News](#) [1], [CNN Philippines](#) [2], [BBC News](#) [3], [Guardian](#) [4], [New York Times](#) [5])

On June 28, 2019, two suicide attackers bombed a temporary camp of the Philippine army's counterterrorism unit in Sulu. The attack killed five soldiers and wounded several others. ISIS promptly claimed responsibility attack, though a police official maintained that the attack was locally-planned and carried out by Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants. In July 2019, DNA tests confirmed the identity of one of the attackers as Sulu-born 23-year-old Norman Lasuca, making him the first known Filipino to carry out a suicide bombing. (Sources: [Straits Times](#) [6], [Associated Press](#) [7])

Overview

Both Communist nationalist rebels and Islamic separatist insurgencies have wreaked havoc on the Philippines, especially on the southern island of Mindanao. As a result, several thousands of Filipinos have been murdered in bombings, assassinations, kidnapping attempts, and executions.

Some of the more high-profile attacks in the Philippines involved the kidnapping and execution of foreigners, including Western missionaries and tourists. For example, in May 2001 the Islamic separatist [Abu Sayyaf Group \(ASG\)](https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/abu-sayyaf-group-asg) beheaded an American hostage after the demanded ransom payment was not delivered. In April and June 2016, ASG militants beheaded Canadian hostages John Ridsdel and Robert Hall, respectively. In September 2014, ASG kidnapped a German doctor and his companion who were traveling on a yacht between Malaysia and the Philippines. ASG threatened to execute the hostages unless Germany paid a ransom and ceased supporting U.S.-led airstrikes against ISIS. The two hostages were eventually [released](#) [8]. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [9], [BBC News](#) [10], [New York Times](#) [11], [Asian Journal](#) [12])

The Philippine government considers the Communist People's Party (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), to be one of the most significant internal security threats. Unlike the Islamic extremists who are concentrated primarily in Mindanao, the NPA has members throughout the country including in the capital city of Manila. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's [Global Terrorism Index 2014](#) [13], the NPA was the "largest individual group" suspected to be behind terrorist attacks in the Philippines. Both the CPP and NPA were designated foreign terrorist organizations by the United States on August 9, 2002. (Sources: [Stratfor](#) [14], [Combatting Terrorism Center](#) [15], [U.S. Department of State](#) [16])

Philippine military and police forces have struggled in dealing with extremist groups. The struggles stem from a lack of capacity, poor coordination, and geographical obstacles. However, the government has made efforts to restructure and strengthen its counterterrorism measures in cooperation with the United States and its Southeast Asian neighbors. Through military and economic initiatives, the Philippines has increased its capability to constrain violent activity and reduce financing for extremist groups like the NPA, ASG, and Jemaah Islamiyah. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [17], [Financial Action Task Force](#) [18])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Communist People's Party

The Philippines' longest-running extremist conflict is with the Communist People's Party (CPP) and its military wing the New People's Army (NPA). Jose Maria Sison, a student activist in Manila, established the CPP in 1968 after being expelled from the existing Communist party, the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP). The CPP's ideology is based heavily on Maoist thought and singled out U.S. imperialism, capitalism, and feudalism as issues to be confronted via revolution or a

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“protracted people’s war,” rooted in the peasantry. Unlike Islamist groups that are located primarily in the southern Philippines, the CPP has a presence in Manila and is active throughout the country. On August 9, 2002, the U.S. Department of State designated the “Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army (CPP/NPA)” as a Foreign Terrorist Organization at the request of then-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. (Sources: [CTC Sentinel](#) [15], [International Crisis Group](#) [19], [U.S. Department of State](#) [20])

During President Rodrigo Duterte’s first month in office in July 2016, he took action to establish peaceful relations with the Communists. President Duterte made promises to release political prisoners and issued offers for positions in his administration for those who are willing to join peace talks. On August 25, 2016, Duterte declared a ceasefire with the CPP and NPA, and ordered the Philippine military and police forces to abide by the declaration. The first round of formal peace talks between the Communists and the Duterte administration were held in Oslo, Norway from August 22-28, 2016. However, in July 2017, following attacks by the NPA on government forces in Mindanao, Duterte declared that he will no longer be negotiating a peace deal with the Communists. In August 2017, CPP announced that it would no longer cooperate with Duterte and declared that “the people have no other recourse but to tread the path of militant struggle,” responding to the extension of martial law in Mindanao. (Sources: [GMA News](#) [21], [ABS-CBN News](#) [22], [Inquirer](#) [23], [Rappler](#) [24], [PhilStar](#) [25])

Due to its organized structure and presence beyond the restive southern region of the Philippines, the CPP and NPA has been considered more of a threat to the country’s stability as a whole than Islamic rebels. In 2017, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana estimated that the NPA had upwards of 5,000 members. According to terrorism researcher Luke Lischin, there has been a surge in the communists’ violent activities, with the NPA launching 260 attacks in 2017, up from 60 attacks in 2016. In December 2017, Duterte designated the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations. The country’s Department of Justice also moved to file a petition to label more than 600 people, considered CPP/NPA members and sympathizers, as terrorists. The latter move was criticized by human rights groups for its sweeping nature. (Sources: [Asia Times](#) [26], [Channel NewsAsia](#) [27])

Moro National Liberation Front and Moro Islamic Liberation Front

Established in 1971 to fight for an independent Moro (Islamic) state in Mindanao, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was the first Islamic extremist group in the Philippines. Filipino Muslims refer to themselves as Moro, which is a derivation of the word ‘Moor,’ a derogatory term used by Spanish colonialists to refer to Islamic North Africans. The term was then adopted by the Christian majority of the Philippines to describe their Muslim neighbors in the southern islands of the country. After over a decade of fighting and negotiations between the Philippine government and MNLF leaders, then-President Corazon Aquino signed a law in 1989 that established the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), allowing for self-rule of predominately Muslim areas. Nonetheless, violent conflict continued until 1996, when the MNLF and the Philippine government ultimately reached a final peace agreement, effectively ending the group’s armed struggle. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [28], [CNN Philippines](#) [29])

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) split from the MNLF in 1978 over leadership and strategic conflicts. Salamat Hashim, a member of the MNLF, was unhappy with the group’s [agreement](#) [30] with the Philippine government, which allowed for an autonomous but not independent region in Mindanao. Hashim rallied more radical elements to breakaway and form the MILF. The MILF has been in negotiations with the Philippine government for over 18 years and has since denounced violence and terrorist acts. In March 2014, the MILF and the government of then-President Benigno Aquino III signed a peace agreement, known as the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). The CAB laid a foundation for a legislative framework that would replace the ARMM and grant greater autonomy. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [28], [The Economist](#) [31], [Reuters](#) [30], [The Diplomat](#) [32])

On July 26, 2018, Duterte signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which would create a new autonomous region, to be called the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The BOL adds more territories to the pre-existing autonomous region, subject to a plebiscite wherein locals voted on inclusion. The law allows for the BARMM to have a parliament and more autonomy over issues such as budgeting, the judicial system, indigenous rights, and natural resources. Both MNLF and MILF support the law, which has received praise from the United Nations and countries with ties to the peace efforts in Mindanao. Both separatist groups pledged to fight violent extremism and promised to work with the government for peace. On January 21, 2019, a majority of voters in the ARMM approved the BOL and it was officially deemed ratified on January 25. (Sources: [The Diplomat](#) [33], [Rappler](#) [34])

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Abu Sayyaf Group

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is the smallest, though most radical of the separatist groups in Mindanao. ASG split from the MNLF in 1991, like the MILF, amidst criticism that the parent organization was weakening due to its willingness to enter into peace talks with the Philippine government. ASG is the most violent of the groups and is of most concern to Australia and United States, due to its historical ties to al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah. The group is divided into two main factions: the Sulu-based faction led by Radulan Sahiron, one of the United States' most-wanted terrorists; and the Basilan-based faction, which was led by Isnilon Totoni Hiplon until his death in October 2017. In a video posted on January 2016, a band of ASG members, using the group's alternative name Harakatul Islamiyah (Islamic Movement), pledged allegiance to ISIS and named Hapilon their new leader. Hapilon was on the FBI's list of [Most Wanted Terrorists](#) [35] for his involvement with ASG. (Sources: [Stanford University](#) [36], [BBC News](#) [28], [Manila Time](#) [37]),

According to a report by the United Nations' Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, the Basilan-based ASG are now being led by several sub-leaders and many have dissociated themselves from ISIS to focus on criminal activities. One sub-leader, Furuji Indama, has been implicated in several terrorist attacks since Hapilon's death and is considered to have been the closest to Hapilon. Following an attack at a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu on January 27, 2019, the Philippine military revealed that there was an active ASG sub-group called Ajang-Ajang. The group, previously focused on kidnap-for-ransom activity, is comprised of a younger generation of members who are brothers and sons of deceased ASG members. (Sources: [United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) [38], [Rappler](#) [39], [CNN Philippines](#) [40])

President Duterte has promised to crackdown on extremist groups operating in the country, but has stated that he will uphold existing peace processes with the MNLF and MILF. Duterte has explicitly refused to negotiate with the more violent ASG, and on August 1, 2016, effectively shut the door on peace talks with the terror group. Duterte stated, "I will not deal with persons with extreme brutality. There is no... reason for me to sit down and talk with criminals." ASG is believed to be comprised of 300 to 400 armed fighters as of February 2019. (Sources: [GMA News](#) [41], [Associated Press](#) [42])

ISIS

ASG and the closely aligned Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) pledged allegiance to ISIS, according to videos uploaded to YouTube on July 23, 2014. In another [video](#) [37] posted in January 2016, a group of ASG members issued another formal pledge of allegiance to the terror group and named Hapilon as ASG's leader and emir of ISIS in the Philippines. According to the Philippine's defense secretary, ISIS contacted Hapilon in December 2016 and encouraged him to find an area to establish a base for ISIS operations in the Philippines. A January 2016 video released by ISIS suggested that the group's leadership in Syria had confirmed Hapilon as the leader of ISIS in Southeast Asia. Several other Filipino extremist groups throughout Mindanao have also pledged allegiance to ISIS, including the Maute Group and Ansar Khalifah Philippines (AKP). (Sources: [GMA News](#) [43], [National Defense College of the Philippines](#) [44], [Manila Times](#) [37], [Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict](#) [45], [Rappler](#) [46])

In a November 28, 2016, statement, Duterte said that Philippine intelligence services confirmed that ISIS had connected with the Maute Group. The group, also known as the Islamic State in Lanao, was responsible for several terrorist incidents in Mindanao in 2016. On November 28, Philippine police discovered a bomb near the U.S. Embassy in a trash bin, believed to be planted by Maute militants. Four members were arrested the same day and were found to be carrying video clips of themselves pledging allegiance to ISIS. According to media reports, the Maute group is also responsible for the December 28, 2016, explosions on a town celebration in Leyte, an island in the middle of the country. Two bombs were reportedly detonated using a mobile phone, injuring 23 revelers. (Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [47], [ABS-CBN News](#) [48], [Associated Press](#) [49], [NBC News](#) [50], [ABS-CBN News](#) [51], [GMA News](#) [52])

On May 23, 2017, Maute rebels took siege of Marawi, following gunfight with the Philippine army and national police. According to authorities, the Maute Group was believed to be harboring Hapilon, who is allegedly ISIS's leader in Southeast Asia and has been working to unite ISIS-supporters in the Philippines, including the Maute Group. Hapilon has since fled the city, abandoning the militants. Philippine intelligence reported that some of the ISIS-linked fighters in Marawi traveled from abroad, including from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East. The presence of foreign fighters raises concerns that the Philippines is becoming an ISIS hub. Official government figures report that 290 militants, 70 soldiers, and 27 civilians were killed with an additional 246,000 displaced between May 23 and June 27, 2017. (Sources:

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[Standard](#) [53], [ABS-CBN News](#) [54], [Reuters](#) [55], [Reuters](#) [56], [ABS-CBN](#) [57])

ISIS affiliates in the Philippines reportedly have received funding from ISIS core. In January 2017, ISIS's central command in Syria funneled tens of thousands of dollars to the Maute Group. ISIS affiliates have also secured millions of dollars through robbing banks, looting homes, and other criminal activities. Remnants of the Maute Group, now led by Abu Dar in the southern province of Lanao del Sur, are reportedly engaged in the illegal drug trade. ISIS-linked groups have used the funds to lure would-be fighters to join their ranks, in some instances paying new recruits \$300 to \$400 and providing firearms. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [58], [Channel NewsAsia](#) [59], [United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) [38])

On February 27, 2018, the U.S. Department of State designated ISIS-Philippines and the Maute Group as a Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) and Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). In November 2018, the *Guardian* reported that upwards of 100 ISIS foreign fighters were in Mindanao, some of whom chose to remain there after traveling to the Philippines to join the siege of Marawi. Approximately 80 foreign fighters were believed to have participated in the siege. The ISIS foreign fighters are primarily from Indonesia and Malaysia, but others came from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Middle East. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [60], [Guardian](#) [61])

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan is the "acting emir" of ISIS in the Philippines as of February 2019. A Philippine official confirmed this, stating that Sawadjaan, a Jolo-based commander of ASG, was promoted to the position in 2018. Sawadjaan began his militant career with the MNLF. He left the group alongside Radulan Sahiron to join ASG in 1992, but later departed Sahiron's command due to a dispute over accommodating foreign militants. Sawadjaan has been connected to several hostage executions and, according to Philippine police, planned and financed the January 2019 cathedral attack that killed at least 23 people. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [62], [Associated Press](#) [42])

On June 22, 2019, ISIS released a video from its so-called East Asia province, showing fighters in the Philippines. The video was part of ISIS's "And the Best Outcome is for the Righteous" series, in which jihadists around the world re-committed their allegiance to ISIS emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The group in the video is led by a man known as Abu Abdallah. (Source: [Long War Journal](#) [63])

Foreign Fighters

In March 2014, former Philippine President Aquino received [reports](#) [64] that two Filipino Muslims died in Syria in late 2013. They were reportedly fighting against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his regime. The specific opposition group remains unclear. In December 2013, an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) working in Syria saw two dead anti-Assad fighters in the streets. A Syrian government soldier informed the OFW that the dead fighters were members of the Abu Sayyaf Group. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [65], [Rappler](#) [64], [FARS News Agency](#) [66], [Asian Pacific Post](#) [67])

In September 2014, a Philippine intelligence official [revealed](#) [65] that the government began investigating the involvement of Filipinos Islamists in Syria, possibly fighting for ISIS. Young Filipino Muslims may also have returned from Syria and Iraq to radicalize others in the Philippines. The leaked [government report](#) [67] said that 100 Filipinos went to Iran to undergo military training and were later deployed to Syria. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [65], [Rappler](#) [64], [FARS News Agency](#) [66], [Asian Pacific Post](#) [67])

A Filipino ISIS member is believed to have taken part in ISIS' beheading of 18 Syrian Air Force pilots and American citizen Peter Kassig. The executions were captured on a November 2014 video. [Reports](#) [68] cited an unnamed [Kurdish source](#) [69] confirming the participation of a Filipino ISIS member. In a May 2015 video produced by al-Hayat Media Center and published by ISIS supporters on Twitter, the same ISIS fighter is [shown](#) [70] sitting in a military vehicle sporting an ISIS flag. In the 30-second video, he encourages his fellow Filipino jihadists to immigrate and join ISIS in Iraq and Syria. (Sources: [PhilStar](#) [69], [Daily Mail](#) [68], [IraqiNews](#) [70])

In August 2016, a Filipina woman was arrested in Kuwait who was suspected of having ties to ISIS's affiliate in Libya. Kuwaiti security forces purportedly found email messages where she pledged allegiance to the terror group. The suspect also allegedly communicated with her husband in Libya via the Telegram encrypted messaging app. The unidentified woman, who moved to Kuwait in June to work as a house maid, reportedly admitted she planned to launch an attack. (Sources: [Al-Arabiya](#) [71], [Associated Press](#) [72], [ABS-CBN News](#) [73])

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In November 2018, Malaysian police said they arrested eight extremists in Putarajayah near Malaysia’s capital and in Sabah, the northern most region of the country closest to the southern Philippines. Seven of the suspects were Philippine nationals, one was a Filipino ASG member who had been charged with recruiting children for use as “human shields” in battles with authorities. (Source: [Straits Times](#) [74])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Since the 1970s, Islamists and Communist separatists have planned and executed numerous attacks throughout the Philippines, although the most deadly incidents have been concentrated on the southern island of Mindanao.

According to the [Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents](#) [75], the Philippines has suffered more than 593 attacks of varying degrees based on data collected between 1969 and 2010. From 2000 to 2007 alone, Islamic extremists carried out bomb attacks that killed over 400 Filipino civilians and injured over a thousand more. (Source: [Human Rights Watch](#) [76])

Leftist extremists, primarily associated with the Communist People’s Party (CPP) and the New People’s Army (NPA), have claimed an estimated 120,000 lives in more than 40 years of conflict with the government. The NPA reportedly had 3,800 guerillas active in the first half of 2016, according to a November 2016 estimate by the Associated Press. (Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [77], [U.S. Department of State](#) [78], [Associated Press](#) [79])

The “Bojinka” Plot

During the summer of 1994, 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) and Ramzi Yousef began planning the Manila Air or “Bojinka” plot, a nonsense name [KSM adopted](#) [80] after hearing it while in battle in Afghanistan. Part of the Bojinka plot was to bomb 12 U.S. commercial passenger planes over the Pacific Ocean in the span of two days. The two terrorists also planned to assassinate then-U.S. President Bill Clinton during his November 1994 trip to Manila and to bomb U.S.-bound cargo carriers by smuggling jackets with explosives on board.

In their shared Manila apartment, KSM and Yousef experimented with liquid explosives and invented remote trigger devices. The plot was ultimately foiled when Philippine authorities discovered the bomb-making endeavor on January 6, 1995. Yousef accidentally caused a fire to the makeshift laboratory in the apartment, which brought police to the scene. Authorities uncovered a laptop with detailed plans of the Bojinka plot. According to Michael Garcia, the former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and prosecutor in Yousef’s case, KSM and Yousef were mere weeks from executing the plan.

Yousef was able to escape to Islamabad, Pakistan. He was later captured by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in February 1995 and extradited to the United States. He was indicted for the Bojinka plot, along with accomplices Abdul Hakim Murad and Wali Khan Amin Shah. They were charged in a New York federal court with seven counts of attempting to bomb 12 passenger planes. (Sources: [9/11 Commission Report](#) [81], [New York Times](#) [82], [CNN](#) [83])

Abu Sayyaf Group Terror Activities

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is known for its brutality and targeting of civilians. ASG has also received global attention for its [kidnap-for-ransom](#) [84] schemes targeting Westerners. On September 21, 2015, ASG militants abducted four hostages—Canadians Robert Hall and John Ridsdel, Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad, and Filipina Marites “Tess” Flor—from a resort on Samal Island in the south of the Philippines. ASG militants reportedly beheaded Ridsdel in April 2016 and Hall in June 2016 when their ransom demands were not met. The terror group freed Flor on June 24, 2016, as well as Sekkingstad on September 17, 2016, after a \$630,000 ransom from an unidentified source was paid. (Sources: [CNN](#) [85], [New York Times](#) [11], [CNN Philippines](#) [86], [BBC News](#) [10], [CNN Philippines](#) [87], [CNN Philippines](#) [88], [New York Times](#) [89])

In 2002, ASG’s relationship with al-Qaeda brought additional attention to the Philippines as a battleground for the [Global War on Terror](#) [90]. The United States provided training and military assistance to the Philippine military and national police, taking out top ASG leaders such as [Khadaffy Janjalani](#) [91]. In the summer of 2014, ASG leaders pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and ISIS, drawing focus back to the group’s presence in the southern Philippines and potential

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threat to the region. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [90], [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) [91], [PhilStar](#) [92])

Siege of Marawi

On May 23, 2017, Maute rebels took siege of Marawi, following gunfight with the Philippine army and national police. According to authorities, the Maute Group was believed to be harboring Hapilon, who was then-ISIS's leader in Southeast Asia and allegedly working to unite ISIS-supporters in the Philippines, including the Maute Group. Philippine intelligence reported that some of the ISIS-linked fighters in Marawi traveled from abroad, including from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East. The presence of foreign fighters raised concerns that the Philippines could become an ISIS hub. (Sources: [Standard](#) [53], [ABS-CBN News](#) [54], [Reuters](#) [55], [Reuters](#) [56], [ABS-CBN](#) [57])

The Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict reported that ISIS funneled tens of thousands of dollars from Syria to militants in the Philippines in January 2017 in advance of the siege of Marawi. According to an October 2017 interview with the Philippine military chief, ISIS sent at least \$1.5 million to finance the siege, and fighters used the 2014 ISIS capture of Mosul, Iraq as a blueprint. (Sources: [Rappler](#) [93], [New York Times](#) [58], [Benar News](#) [94], [New York Times](#) [95], [Associated Press](#) [96])

On October 16, 2017, Philippine government forces launched an offensive to recapture the last areas of Marawi held by militants, killing leaders Hapilon and Omarkhayam Maute. The following day, Duterte declared the city liberated. On October 23, after 154 days of the siege, Defense Secretary Lorenzana declared that the military had ceased combat operations in the city. The five-month siege reportedly left more than 1,100 fighters and civilians dead, including more than 900 militants, and has displaced at least 400,000 residents. The Philippine Congress voted on December 13, 2017 to grant President Duterte's request to extend martial law on the southern island of Mindanao through the end of December 2018. On December 12, 2018, the government again extended martial law through the end of 2019. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [97], [Rappler](#) [98], [Voice of America News](#) [99])

- **January 27, 2019:**Two bombs explode during Sunday mass at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu in the southern Philippines.
The first explosion occurred inside the cathedral, which was followed by a second blast just outside as soldiers rushed to the scene. At least 18 people are killed and 82 are wounded. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [CBS News](#) [1], [CNN Philippines](#) [2], [BBC News](#) [3], [Guardian](#) [4]
- **December 31, 2018:**An IED explodes outside of the South Seas Mall in Cotobato City, on the island of Mindanao, killing at least two people and wounding 34 others.
Authorities defuse a second smaller IED they find in the mall. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but the military believes the explosives are from an ISIS-linked group. Sources: [CNN](#) [100], [Voice of America](#) [101], [ABS-CBN News](#) [102]
- **August 28, 2018:**An IED explodes in the midst of a harvest festival in the southern town of Isulan, killing three people and wounding at least 36 others.
ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Local police and army officials believe the ISIS-linked BIFF is responsible. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#) [103], [PhilStar](#) [104]
- **July 31, 2018:**A bomb explodes in a van at a security checkpoint on the southern island of Basilan, killing 10 and wounding eight.
The driver of the van was reportedly on his way to carry out a suicide bombing at a large public gathering when his van broke down at the checkpoint. The suspected bomber asked local villagers to help push his van and his explosives went off shortly after. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency but provides no specific evidence. ISIS claims the bomber was a Moroccan national but it also cites an inflated casualty figure for the attack. Authorities suspect the ISIS-linked Abu Sayyaf Group of responsibility. Witness accounts and forensic data confirm the bomber was a foreign national, according to police. The Philippine government condemns the attack as a "war crime." Sources: [Reuters](#) [105], [Associated Press](#) [106], [ABC News](#) [107], [Wall Street Journal](#) [108]
- **January 31, 2018:**More than 50 members of the ISIS-linked group responsible for the siege in the city of Marawi are charged with, among other crimes, kidnapping and murder.
The charges are related to crimes allegedly committed a year before when the Maute Group gained prominence and attracted financial support from ISIS. One accused is a Filipino doctor sought by U.S. law enforcement for funding a failed terror plot to bomb New York City in 2016. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [109]
- **October 17, 2017:**After confirming the deaths of ISIS-linked leaders Hapilon and Omarkhayam Maute, Duterte announces that Marawi has been liberated from terrorists and that martial law will stay in place in order to combat remaining extremists.
Source: [New York Times](#) [97]
- **August 21, 2017:**ASG militants attack a village in Basilan as locals gather for a festival, killing at least nine civilians

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and wounding dozens more.

The attackers are believed to be part of an ASG faction led by Furuji Indama. [Rappler](#) [110]

- **May 23, 2017:** Philippine soldiers launch an operation in Marawi in search of Isnilon Hapilon. Government troops reportedly act following reports that Hapilon was in the Marawi to potentially join forces with ISIS-linked Philippine rebels, the Maute Group. Soldiers clash with Maute militants as they take control over large parts of the city. According to local media reports, Maute militants burn the Marawai jail and Dansalan College and attack the Amai Pakpak Hospital. Duterte declares martial law on the entire island of Mindanao. Sources: [PhilStar](#) [111], [ABS-CBN News](#) [112], [ABS-CBN News](#) [54], [Rappler](#) [113]
- **March 25, 2017:** Philippine authorities, with the help of U.S. and Kuwaiti officials, arrest a Kuwaiti couple with suspected links to ISIS. Philippine authorities believe the couple had been plotting an attack within Kuwait and possibly the Philippines. Source: [Associated Press](#) [114]
- **February 27, 2017:** German authorities confirm ASG militants beheaded German hostage Jürgen Kantner after the deadline for ransom payment passed. Kantner was kidnapped from his yacht in November 2016. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [115], [Reuters](#) [116]
- **January 4, 2017:** More than 150 inmates escape from the North Cotabato District Jail on Mindanao, after approximately 100 gunmen storm the jail and engage in a shoot-out with guards. According to authorities, the attackers are linked to the BIFF and MILF. Sources: [BBC News](#) [117], [ABS-CBN News](#) [118]
- **November 28, 2016:** Philippine police discover and safely detonate a homemade bomb near the U.S. Embassy in Manila. According to the national police chief, the bomb has components similar to the improvised explosive device used in the September 2, 2016 attack in Davao City. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [49], [NBC News](#) [50]
- **November 7, 2016:** Philippine soldiers find the body of a German woman on a yacht, in an attack believed to have been carried out by ASG rebels. Source: [Reuters](#) [119]
- **September 17, 2016:** ASG releases Norwegian hostage Kjartan Sekkingstad after receiving a \$630,000 ransom payment, according to the national police. MNLF members reportedly facilitated his release. Source: [New York Times](#) [89]
- **September 2, 2016:** An improvised explosive device (IED) explodes in a crowded market in Davao City, killing 14 people and injuring at least 71 others. President Duterte calls the blast an act of terrorism. ASG claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [CNN](#) [120], [New York Times](#) [121], [ABS-CBN News](#) [122]
- **August 30, 2016:** ASG militants kill 15 Philippine soldiers in a series of clashes on the southern island of Jolo. The Philippine government announces that it plans to send thousands more soldiers to the island, an ASG stronghold. Source: [New York Times](#) [123]
- **August 25, 2016:** ASG reportedly beheads 18-year-old Filipino hostage Patrick Almodovar. Sources: [International Business Times](#) [124], [Inquirer](#) [125]
- **June 24, 2016:** ASG releases Marites Flor, a Filipina hostage who was kidnapped along with three westerners at a holiday resort in September 2015. Source: [CNN Philippines](#) [87]
- **June 13, 2016:** Philippine police report that a severed head was found in a plastic bag near a Roman Catholic Church in the southern Philippines. DNA tests later confirm the head is that of Robert Hall, the second Canadian held hostage by ASG. Sources: [New York Times](#) [11], [CNN Philippines](#) [86]
- **May 1, 2016:** ASG releases ten Indonesian captives following 35 days of captivity. The victims are from an Indonesian tugboat crew who were captured in March. Reports suggest that the hostages were released because of intensifying military operations against ASG. The lead Indonesian negotiator claims that the Indonesian government did not pay ransom for the hostages' release. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [126], [Jakarta Post](#) [127]
- **April 25, 2016:** The Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf Group beheads Canadian citizen John Ridsdel, reportedly hours after the deadline for his ransom expires. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calls the incident an "act of cold blooded murder." Ridsdel had been held by the Abu Sayyaf Group since September 2015, when ASG kidnapped three westerners and one Filipino woman. The terror group demanded a \$6.5 million ransom for each of the hostages. Sources: [Toronto Star](#) [128], [CBC News](#) [129], [BBC News](#) [10]
- **April 9, 2016:** ASG members ambush a unit of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The attack kills 18 soldiers, at least four of whom are beheaded, and injures more than 50 others. Four of the soldiers killed in action are former MNLF fighters who were integrated into the AFP. The Philippine military, however, succeeds in killing Ubaida Hapilon, son of ASG leader Isnilon Hapilon, and reported bomb-making expert, Moroccan national Mohammad Khattab. Sources: [BBC News](#) [130], [Philippine Government](#) [131], [CNN Philippines](#) [132]
- **January 2016:** A band of ASG members, using the group's alternative name Harakatul Islamiyah (Islamic Movement),

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pledges allegiance to ISIS in a video posted online.

They also name the leader of their unit, Isnilon Totoni Hapilon, as the leader of ASG. Sources: [BBC News](#) [28], [Manila Times](#) [37]

- **December 24, 2015 - December 26, 2015:**Members of BIFF carry out a series of attacks over three days, killing eight.
The attacks are reportedly in response to the military's hunt for ISIS-linked terrorists in the region. Source: [PhilStar](#) [133]
- **November 18, 2015:**ASG beheads Malaysian hostage Bernard Then Ted Fen, who was kidnapped in May 2015. He is the first Malaysian to be killed by the group. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak condemns the killing, calling on Philippine authorities to take action against the perpetrators of the barbaric act. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [134], [PhilStar](#) [135]
- **September 21, 2015:**Eleven ASG gunmen storm the Holiday Ocean View Samal Resort in southeast of Mindanao, abducting a Norwegian resort manager, two Canadians, and one Filipina woman.
Source: [CNN Philippines](#) [136]
- **September 18, 2015:**A bomb explodes under a bus in Zamboanga City in southern Philippines, killing an 11-year-old girl and injuring at least 32 others.
Local police blame ASG based on video evidence and extortion letters that were sent to the bus terminal management. Sources: [International Business Times](#) [137], [ABS-CBN News](#) [138]
- **August 11, 2015:**Members of the Philippine military find the beheaded body of a man identified as the barangay captain, Rodolfo Buligao. Buligao was kidnapped by ASG in May 2015.
Source: [Rappler](#) [139]
- **February 5, 2015:**DNA tests indicate that Philippine police killed Jemaah Islamiyah's notorious bomb-maker, Marwan, in a January 25, 2015 raid.
However, the Philippine government is still on the hunt for 63 of Marwan's associates, all believed to be trained by another Jemaah Islamiyah bomb expert and senior figure, Dulmatin. Sources: [CNN](#) [140], [Inquirer](#) [141]
- **January 25, 2015:**Approximately 400 officers in the Philippines' counterterrorism police force conduct a raid in the village of Mamasapano in southern Philippines.
The police force's elite Special Action Force (SAF) receive intelligence that Zufiki bin Hir a.k.a. Marwan, a Malaysian Jemaah Islamiyah member and wanted fugitive, is hiding in the village. At least 44 officers of the elite the SAF die in gun battle with the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, a MILF splinter group, making it the deadliest operation for the police force in over ten years. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [142], [Christian Science Monitor](#) [143]
- **May 21, 2014:**NPA Communist extremists attempt to take over a town hall in Cotabato, Mindanao.
Philippine police kill three of the 100 rebels and the remaining NPA assailants are forced to retreat. Source: [U.S. State Department](#) [78]
- **September 3, 2013 - September 28, 2013:**A group of 200 MNLF extremists launch a deadly attack on Zamboanga city on the southern island of the Philippines.
The MNLF rebels storm the southern Philippines coast of Zamboanga, attempting to capture City Hall. The Philippine Armed Forces, many of them U.S.-trained commandos, encircle the extremist-held town. MNLF takes 200 hostages in the first four-days and uses human shields in fire-fight with the military. The standoff lasts for nearly three weeks, coming to an end on September 28. More than 150 people die in the fighting, with two-thirds of them being MNLF members. More than 10,000 homes are burned in the battle between the group and government military. Source: [The Atlantic](#) [144], [VOA News](#) [145]
- **May 27, 2013:**NPA fighters detonate an explosive device on a roadside in the northern Philippine province of Cagayan. Seven policemen, part of the elite SAF, are killed and seven others are wounded. The attack comes days after a clash between Filipino Marines and ASG militants in the southern Philippine province of Sulu. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [77], [International Business Times](#) [146]
- **October 3, 2011:**NPA conducts attacks against three large-scale mining corporations in Surigao del Norte, a province on the Mindanao island.
The three companies—Taganito Mining Corp, 4K Mining, and Thpal Mining—are targeted because they refused to give into the group's extortion demands. No security personnel are injured. However, the group destroys machinery, a guest house and causes major damage to mining operations. Source: [GMA News](#) [147]
- **February 27, 2004:**ASG militants set off a blast on the *Superferry 14*, a passenger ferry bound from the Philippines capital of Manila to the city of Bacolod in central Philippines.
The explosion and resulting fire spread through the ferry, killing 116 people, including 15 children. Tragically, 12 families lose multiple members and in one case, three generations perish. The Philippine government believe that senior ASG leaders Khadaffy Janjalani and Abu Solaiman are the masterminds behind the attack. Sources: [BBC News](#) [148], [Human Rights Watch](#) [149]
- **April 2, 2003:**A food stand along the Sasa Wharf on the island of Mindanao is bombed, killing 17 and injuring 56. Several purported MILF and ASG members are arrested in connection with the attacks. Philippine officials allege the attacks were carried out with the help of Jemaah Islamiyah, given the Indonesian nationality of a few suspects. Sources: [Human Rights Watch](#) [150], [PhilStar](#) [151]
- **March 4, 2003:**Amidst a surge in sectarian violence, a bomb detonates at Davao International Airport in the south.

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Twenty-two people die in the attack, including an American missionary, and 170 others are wounded. An ASG member claims responsibility days after the attack, though government authorities initially blamed MILF. Sources: [Human Rights Watch](#) [150], [New York Times](#) [152]

- **January 15, 2002:** Philippine authorities arrest Jemaah Islamiyah's expert bomb-maker, Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi. Al-Ghozi is responsible for training Jemaah Islamiyah members from Singapore and Malaysia and has ties to extremist groups in the Philippines, such as MILF. Al-Ghozi is also responsible for the Rizal Day bombings in December 2000. Source: [BBC News](#) [153]
- **August 2, 2001:** ASG members attack a predominately Christian village in Basilan Province, Southern Philippines. The Islamic insurgents kidnap 32 villagers and later decapitate 11 of them. Source: [Human Rights Watch](#) [150]
- **December 30, 2000:** Jemaah Islamiyah sets off five simultaneous blasts in the Metro Manila area in Philippines' capital city, killing 22. It occurs during Rizal Day, a national holiday commemorating the martyrdom of the nation's hero, José Rizal. According to Philippines police investigation, Jemaah Islamiyah member Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi was responsible for the bombing. He later confesses that the bombing assignment in the Philippines was funded by Jemaah Islamiyah. Sources: [GMA Network](#) [154], [Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs](#) [155]
- **April 22, 1989:** Members of the NPA shower gunfire on a vehicle carrying U.S. Colonel James N. Rowe, on its way to Quezon City, a Manila suburb. Colonel Rowe, the chief of ground forces of the Joint United States Military Assistance Group, is struck in the head and dies instantly, his Filipino driver is injured. The Communist rebels claim that they targeted the U.S. Army officer for his direct involvement in the Philippine government's counterinsurgency program. Source: [New York Times](#) [156]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

On February 19, 2007, the Congress of the Philippines passed the [Republic Act No. 9372](#) [157], also known as the "Act to Secure the State and Protect Our People from Terrorism," or the "Human Security Act of 2007" for short. This is the main piece of counter-extremism legislation in the Philippines. The Act criminalizes and defines terrorism and other terms applicable under the law, such as accomplice or accessory. The Act also includes guidelines for surveillance and banking regulations to prevent terror funding. The Act also created the Anti-Terrorism Council the lead agency in implementing the Act. As of July 2018, both houses of the Philippine Congress are deliberating amendments to current legislation, including changing the title of "Human Security Act of 2007" to "Preventing Terrorism Act of 2018" and expanding the definition of terrorism and punishable acts. The current proposal in the House of Representatives also seeks to change the fixed penalty of "forty years of imprisonment" for such punishable acts to "life imprisonment to death." Some human rights groups warn that proposed changes would remove important safeguards against abuse by law enforcement. (Sources: [Philippine Congress](#) [158], [Inquirer](#) [159], [U.N. Counter-Terrorism Committee](#) [160], [Republic of the Philippines](#) [161], [The Diplomat](#) [162])

Then-Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also created the National Counter-Terrorism Action Group (NACTAG), under the supervision of the Anti-Terrorism Council, to assist in enforcing the Council's regulations. Whereas the Anti-Terrorist Council oversees general implementation of the law, NACTAG is responsible for the actual investigation and evidence-finding for prosecutors in the event of a terrorist attack. (Sources: [Philippine Congress](#) [158], [Inquirer](#) [159], [U.N. Counter-Terrorism Committee](#) [160])

In 2013, the Philippines passes the [Republic Act No. 10365](#) [163] to amend the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Act of 2001. It expanded the list of crimes under the Philippines AML regime to include financing terrorism. Financing terrorism is also a stand-alone crime under [Republic Act No. 10168](#) [164], known as "The Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012." (Source: [U.S. State Department](#) [18], [Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines](#) [164])

Security Agencies

According to the U.S. Department of State, Duterte has an Anti-Terrorism Council to provide guidance to counterterrorism agencies, but coordination between government agencies remains ineffective. Historically, the major counterterrorism security apparatus is the military, known as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). However, on January 1, 2011, the Philippines government created the 2011-2016 [Internal Peace and Security Plan](#) [165]. The AFP has begun to transition internal security functions, i.e. domestic terrorism, to the Philippine National Police (PNP) in order to increase the role and capability of the police in maintaining internal security enabling the AFP to shift its focus to maritime security and

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territorial defense. According to the U.S. State Department, Duterte's focus of resources on anti-narcotics and counterterrorism operations stymied progress. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [166], [U.S. Department of State](#) [167])

Within the PNP, there is an elite force called the Special Action Force (SAF). The SAF is the tactical support unit of the PNP that deals with more high-level issues such as hostage crises, commando-type unconventional warfare. The group is known primarily for its counterterrorism operations and most recently for the botched January 2015 raid during which 43 elite officers were killed. (Source: [Philippine National Police](#) [168], [Wall Street Journal](#) [142])

The AFP, however, has been able to degrade ASG's forces with the assistance of the U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P). Recent [estimates](#) [169] show that that ASG has approximately 300 fighters, down from its peak of 1,250 in 2000. The JSOTF-P mission provided counterterrorism training to the AFP until 2014. The United States officially ended JSOTF-P activities in June 2015, but has retained some personnel in the Philippines to [provide](#) [170] "operational advice and assistance to higher levels of command" within the AFP. (Sources: [Soufan Group](#) [169], [U.S. State Department](#) [17], [United States Naval Institute](#) [170], [Soufan Group](#) [171])

Counter Extremism Programs

The Philippines also has a counter-radicalization program called Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA), or Resilient Communities in Conflict Affected Communities. PAMANA is the government's program on conflict resolution and development in conflict-affected areas throughout the Philippines. According to the organization's most recent [status report](#) [172], PAMANA has launched programs that provide social protection for former combatants and their next-of-kin as well as support to indigenous people and other marginalized groups. For example, PAMANA sponsored a Health Insurance Program to cover former combatants from rebel groups that are included in peace agreements with the Philippine government. The Health Insurance Program was able to enroll 3,740 former militants in early 2015. For indigenous peoples, PAMANA has launched initiatives like the issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) to support indigenous land claims, and quick response programs during emergencies. These programs are intended to foster sustainable peace and encourage capacity-building. (Sources: [U.S. State Department](#) [18], [PAMANA](#) [173])

The New Bilibid Prison, a maximum security prison under review with the Philippine Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), hosts a number of inmates from ASG and BIFF. The prison is at 165 percent capacity, a record high, and authorities are concerned that extremist inmates may radicalize others. The country's Bureau of Jail Management and Penology tries to combat this threat by providing counter-radicalization programs in facilities where ASG members and other terror suspects are housed pending trial. (Sources: [Inquirer](#) [174], [U.S. State Department](#) [78])

International Counter-Extremism

The Philippines condemned the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States, offering its ports and airports for use by U.S. naval vessels and military aircraft. Then-Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and then-U.S. President George W. Bush agreed to dispatch of U.S. military personnel to train the Philippine military in counterterrorism efforts against ASG. Under the bilateral Visiting Force Agreement of 1999, the two countries had agreed that the United States would provide training and other assistance to the Philippine Armed Forces. Since then, the Philippines has consistently allied with the United States to combat extremism domestically and pledge support for U.S. actions abroad. (Sources: [Congressional Research Service](#) [175], [NBC News](#) [176])

In September 2016, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte requested the complete removal of American troops from Mindanao and stated that the Philippines will review its policy of allowing American troops to combat terrorism in the country. Then-U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg stated that the United States would like to remain involved in the Philippines' campaign to combat Islamic militancy, expressing concern about any "new intrusion of ISIS or any other group that wants to take advantage of open space in the south of the Philippines." Following the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency, Duterte said he would no longer "quarrel" with the United States. (Sources: [GMA News](#) [177], [Bloomberg](#) [178], [ABS-CBN News](#) [179], [Reuters](#) [180])

On July 16, 2019, the Philippines and the United States concluded bilateral talks on counterterrorism, which resulted in an agreement to increase efforts to counter violent extremism. As of April 2019, approximately 250 U.S. troops are stationed

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in the Philippines as part of a counterterrorism campaign that has existed at some level since 2002, but was officially restarted by the Pentagon in 2017 as Operation Pacific Eagle. Additionally, an American Special Operations civil affairs team is working with three nonprofits and a Philippine Army platoon on stabilization and infrastructure projects in areas ravaged by Islamist militants. The U.S. State Department also provides assistance to help community officials address issues linked to extremism among Muslims. (Sources: [Straits Times](#) [181], [Japan Times](#) [182], [New York Times](#) [183])

Anti-ISIS Coalition

Speaking before the 26th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi, Malaysia, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario expressed the government's fear that Philippine security is under [real threat from ISIS](#) [92]. In the same speech, del Rosario pledged that the Philippines would:

contribute in the fight against extremism, terrorism and crimes against humanity by engaging or cooperating with other countries in the areas of information sharing, joint investigations, educational campaigns, humanitarian assistance to victims, restricting flow of funds intended to finance terrorism, supporting resolutions aimed at curbing terrorism and enhancing local legislation to address terrorism. (Source: [Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines](#) [184])

The [Philippines cosponsored](#) [92] United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and [supported](#) [185] the [ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement](#) [186] on the Violence and Brutality Committed by Extremist Organizations in Iraq and Syria. As of December 2016, the Philippines has implemented the U.N. Security Council ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qa'ida sanctions regime and Taliban (1988) sanctions. (Sources: [PhilStar](#) [92], [CNN](#) [185], [ASEAN](#) [186], [U.S. Department of State](#) [167])

Maritime Cooperation

On May 5, 2016, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia [agreed](#) [187] to coordinate policing of Southeast Asia's shipping lanes following an increase in kidnappings by Islamic extremists. Foreign ministers and military chiefs from each country met days after the May 1 release of [10 Indonesian](#) [126] crewmen and a separate incident in which a Canadian hostage [John Ridsdel](#) [129] was beheaded by ASG militants.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is working to enhance the country's maritime security given recent attacks at sea by Islamic militants in southern Philippines. There have been several high-profile kidnappings of Western and local nationals from tourist locales and shipping and fishing boats. The attacks were perpetrated mainly by ASG terrorists. Philippine, Indonesian, and Malaysian militaries have stated that they will apply lessons learned from patrolling other shipping lanes, like the Malacca Strait, to prevent further armed robbery and kidnapping at sea. (Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [188], [U.S. Department of State](#) [188])

In January 2018, Duterte and Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi agreed that the two countries would increase bilateral cooperation on maritime security and anti-terrorism operations. The agreement included strengthening trade between the Philippines and Indonesia and launching an education program to spread Islamic values in Southeast Asian nations and to counter extremism. (Source: [PhilStar](#) [189])

Diplomatic and Financial Endeavors

As a member of ASEAN, the Philippines adopted the [Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates](#) [190] (GMM) on April 27, 2015. The Declaration promotes moderation as an ASEAN value and enhances cooperation within ASEAN-led bodies to counter extremism, among other mandates. (Source: [ASEAN](#) [190])

In February 2015, key Filipino counterterrorism officials received advanced training on combatting terrorism financing from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC)'s Secretariat. (Source: [UNODC](#) [191])

The Philippines is also a member of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering, which is modeled after the

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Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental body promoting policies to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. The Philippines has improved its anti-money laundering and counterterrorist finance regime. In June 2013, the FATF found that the Philippines was [no longer subject](#) [18] to the FATF monitoring process, but would work with the APG to address ongoing issues. (Sources: [Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering](#) [192], [Financial Action Task Force](#) [193])

Public Opinion

In November 2018, the Merdeka Center, a Malaysia-based opinion research firm, released poll results on Muslim attitudes toward extremism in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Merdeka surveyed 5,000 Filipinos and found that they had the “highest tendency to dehumanize persons of other faiths,” compared to the other countries surveyed. More than half of the Filipinos polled also said they would justify attacks against the military, police, and civilians and agreed that waging war was the only way to conduct jihad. Fewer than two percent of Indonesians, Malaysians, and Thais said they would use violence or join a violent organization to defend their faith, whereas six percent of respondents in the Philippines said they would. (Source: [Straits Times](#) [194])

One major polling body in the Philippines, [Social Weather Stations](#) [195] (SWS), has conducted surveys that measure public satisfaction with the government and public opinions on issues of national concern. In June 2018, SWS conducted a survey that measured Filipinos’ satisfaction with the government, including its performance on fighting terrorism. Those surveyed gave the government a rating of “good.” The rating fell by one grade from “very good” in March 2018. In August 2018, SWS released a study on violent extremism, which surveyed residents of the Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur provinces, and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the southern Philippines. When asked about suicide bombings, 85 percent of Maguindanao residents and 67 percent of Lanao del Sur residents responded that they were rarely/never justified. However, only 50 percent of Marawi City respondents and 36 percent of respondents in IDP camps believed that the act was rarely/never justified. (Sources: [Social Weather Stations \(January 2018\)](#) [196], [Social Weather Stations \(August 2018\)](#) [197])

In August 2017, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey on top national security threats in the country. Approximately 70 percent of respondents in the Philippines believe that ISIS is a major threat to the country, making it the top threat concern compared to other issues such as climate change. (Source: [Pew Research Center](#) [198])