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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Abu Sayyaf Group

Aka al Harakat al Islamiyya (the Islamic Movement).

Description: The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was designated as a FTO on October 8, 1997. The ASG split from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the early 1990s and is one of the most violent terrorist groups in the Philippines. The group claims to promote an independent Islamic state in western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

Activities: The ASG has committed kidnappings-for-ransom, bombings, ambushes of security personnel, public beheadings, assassinations, and extortion.

Throughout 2015, the ASG was responsible for multiple attacks, kidnappings, and the killing of hostages. In September 2016, the ASG abducted two Canadians, a Norwegian, and a Philippine woman from a resort on Samal Island. The ASG set ransom at US \$60 million. The ASG beheaded the two Canadian citizens later that year, and in early 2017, the ASG beheaded a German citizen when ransom deadlines were not met. The group continued its kidnapping-for-ransom operations in 2017, after collecting approximately US \$7.3 million during the first six months of 2016. In August 2017, ASG members killed nine people and injured others in an attack on Basilan Island.

In July 2018, ASG detonated a car bomb at a military checkpoint on Basilan Island that killed 10, including a Philippines soldier and pro-government militiamen. In late December, the group was suspected of kidnapping three men from a fishing vessel operating in the Sulu-Celebes Sea and was also suspected of a September 11 attack on another fishing vessel operating in the same area, indicating ASG remains committed to piracy and armed robbery in the Southern Philippines maritime area.

Strength: The ASG is estimated to have 400 members.

Location/Area of Operation: The group is located mainly in the Philippine provinces of the Sulu Archipelago – namely Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, the Zamboanga Peninsula, and Mindanao – but has also conducted cross-border operations into eastern Malaysia.

Funding and External Aid: The ASG is funded primarily through kidnapping-for-ransom operations and extortion. It may receive funding from external sources, including remittances from overseas Philippine workers and Middle East-based sympathizers. In the past, the ASG has also received training and other assistance from regional terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiya.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Abu Sayyaf Group (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



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Malaysia, Philippines

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