

# Abu Sayyaf Group's Notorious Chieftain: A Profile of Khadaffy Janjalani

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In the first week of August, intense fighting broke out against a faction of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants on the southern Philippine Island of Jolo (Sun Star, August 15). While the Armed Forces of the Philippines claimed to have killed five militants, their real target, ASG chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani, has continued to elude them. With a US\$5 million bounty on his head, Janjalani is one of the most wanted men in Southeast Asia (Manila Times, August 15).

Khadaffy Janjalani is the younger brother of ASG founder Abdurajak Janjalani, a fiery cleric, Afghan veteran and friend of Osama bin Laden, who was gunned down on December 18, 1998. His other elder brother, Hector, was captured by the Philippine government and arrested for masterminding a string of bombings in Manila in December 2000.

Abubakar Khadaffy Janjalani (known as Abu Muktar) was born on March 3, 1975 in Isabella City, Basilan, and later briefly studied computers at Mindanao State University before joining his brothers in the early-1990s. He was allegedly trained at an al-Qaeda camp near Mazar e-Sharif in the early-1990s, where he led a group of 20 Moros. He was arrested in 1995, but escaped from police headquarters in Manila under suspicious circumstances.

Khadaffy was involved in some of the ASG's most notorious kidnappings, including the Palawan Island incident of May 27, 2000 that led to the capture of 20 people, and the subsequent beheading of an American hostage (Sun Star, May 15). For this, he was indicted in U.S. federal courts. Yet Philippine National Police debriefs of six ASG members who were captured in October 2002 present a very clear picture that Khadaffy Janjalani was focused primarily on waging jihad through an urban bombing campaign. He became the ASG's top bomb-instructor by 2001-2002. He directed his underlings to reconnoiter targets and acquire bomb-making skills and ingredients, organized training by Middle Eastern operatives and ordered bombings in Zamboanga, General Santos and elsewhere. He organized the December 2002 bombing in Zamboanga that killed a member of the U.S. Special Forces.

With the killing of ASG leaders Abu Sabaya in 2002 and the capture of Ghalib Andang in 2003, Khadaffy Janjalani became the titular head of the ASG, although he has no formal religious training (Terrorism Focus, May 17). The ASG, moreover, is a loose affiliation of groups, with each commander having significant autonomy. Yet under his leadership, as it is, the ASG has moved away from high-profile kidnappings and back into the realm of terrorism. Janjalani is "working very hard to get the ASG back to its roots," one Philippine intelligence official told this analyst. Yet this was more for personal reasons: he was "trying to assert his legitimacy based on the religious authority of his brother."

In 2001, Khadaffy approached Zulkifli, a top JI operative and the liaison to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the southern Philippines. Khadaffy wanted to send his men to train in MILF camps, something that the MILF had always resisted. In 2002, however, JI's acting amir, Abu Rusdan, ordered JI operatives to forge an alliance with the ASG. At the same time, the MILF realized that a relationship with the ASG could be useful in terms of building their own network in the Sulu archipelago. (The Sulu archipelago is dominated by ethnic Tausigs, who comprise a very small number of the MILF cadre but represent the vast majority of their rival, the Moro National Liberation Front.) Zulkifli also arranged for the training of JI operatives in ASG camps in Tawi Tawi and Basilan in return. Rohmat (also known as Zaki), an Indonesian JI member, was the primary liaison to the ASG.

Afterwards, the ASG's area of operations expanded to central Mindanao. According to captured JI leader Nassir bin Abbas, Janjalani provided RP100,000 (roughly US\$2,000) to Zulkifli to fund the February 2003 bombing of the Cotabato airport and later played a role in the Sasa Wharf and Davao airport bombings. Janjalani recruited and trained the 2005 Valentine's Day bombers, Abu Khalil Trinidad and Gamal Baharan, and has encouraged the recruitment of other Christian converts to extend the ASG's reach beyond Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago (Sun Star, October 29, 2005).

Khadaffy has been the focus of an intense manhunt, and following the 2002 U.S.-Philippine operations in Basilan, he is believed to have fled to Tawi Tawi. He was then reported in Palimbang, Mindanao, a MILF stronghold. He moved into the Liguasan Marsh area in Maguindanao, where he was given sanctuary by two MILF hardliners, Wahid Tondok and Salamat Samir, who were also protecting two senior JI operatives, Dulmatin and Umar Patek (Terrorism Focus, July 5). The three were reportedly the target of an air attack in 2004, although they all escaped unharmed. One Philippine intelligence official explained to this analyst, "Khadaffy Janjalani is consolidating the [MILF] radicals. He has the money to support the religious hardliners who will challenge [MILF Chairman Ebrahim el Hajj] Murad." Murad, however, was able to isolate some of the hardliners and in late 2005 Khadaffy was purportedly back in Jolo. He travels with a small contingent of around 12-20 men.

There are contentions that the real power in the ASG is not Janjalani, but Radullan Sahiron (known as Commander Putol) and his son, Ismin Sahiron (known as IS). Nonetheless, Janjalani remains one of the most hunted men in Southeast Asia.

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