

MONTHLY COUNTRY REPORT

PHILIPPINES

AUGUST 2008

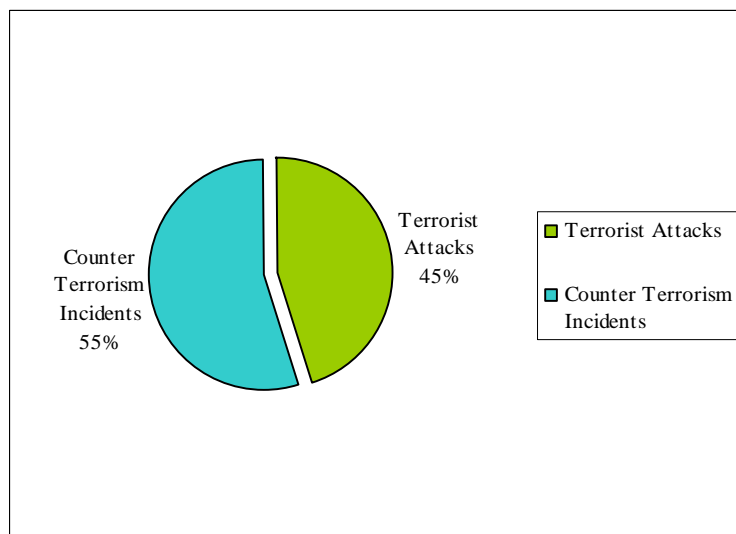
In the month of August 2008, there were 27 attacks reported, a decrease of five incidents compared to July 2008. But, the intensity of the attacks, as seen in the number of casualties, concludes that there has been a surge of violence this month. The recent developments in Mindanao have contributed to the increase of incidents. Early this month, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) were supposed to sign the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. However, local politicians from Southern Philippines protested citing the agreement was unconstitutional and lacked consultation which led the Supreme Court to release a Temporary Restraining Order (TOR) to hold back the signing. The agitated Moro rebels raided villages and clashed with government troops. More than a hundred thousand people have fled their homes fearing to be caught in the crossfire.

In a positive development, counterterrorism efforts have increased by 50% compared to July, 33 in the current month verse 22 previously. 17 arrests have been reported while 53 rebels have surrendered to the government. Significant arrests involved that of Ahmad Edris of the Abu Sayyaf and Ruben Pestano Lavilla alias Sheikh Omar of the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM). Both have been involved in terrorist attacks in the country including kidnapping and the bombing of Super Ferry 14.

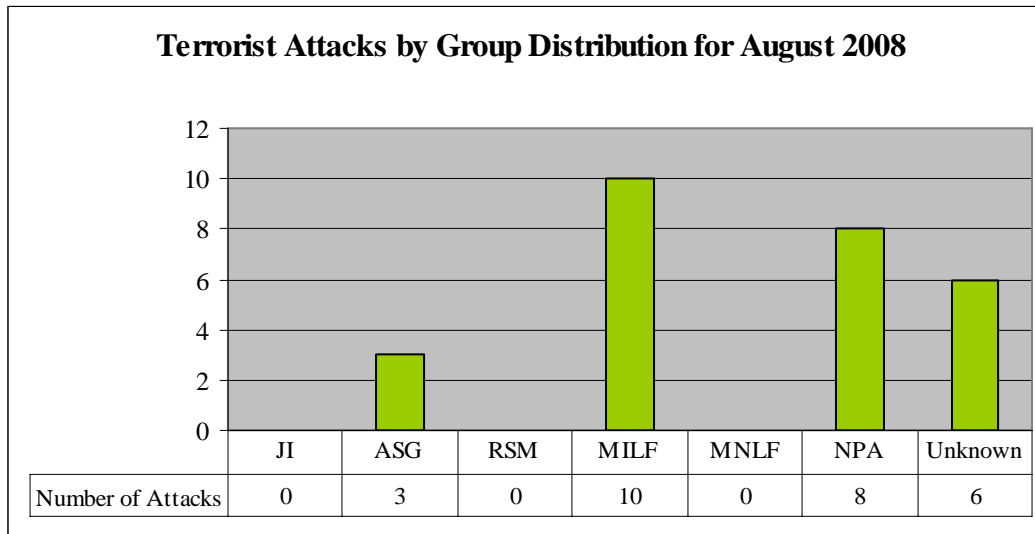
Terrorist Attacks	Counter Terrorism Incidents	Deaths					Injuries					Arrests	Surrenders	Abduction
		Mil	LEA	Civ	PM	T	Mil	LEA	Civ	PM	T			
27	33	35	1	65	5	87	46	0	42	4	10	17	53	0

*TA – Terrorist Attacks CT – Counter Terrorism; Mil – Military; LEA – Law Enforcement Agency; Civ – Civilian; PM – Paramilitary; T- Terrorist

Number of Incidents



Number of incidents perpetrated by terrorist groups



JI – Jemaah Islamiyah

ASG – Abu Sayyaf Group

RSIM – Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement

MILF – Moro Islamic Liberation Front

MNLF – Moro National Liberation Front

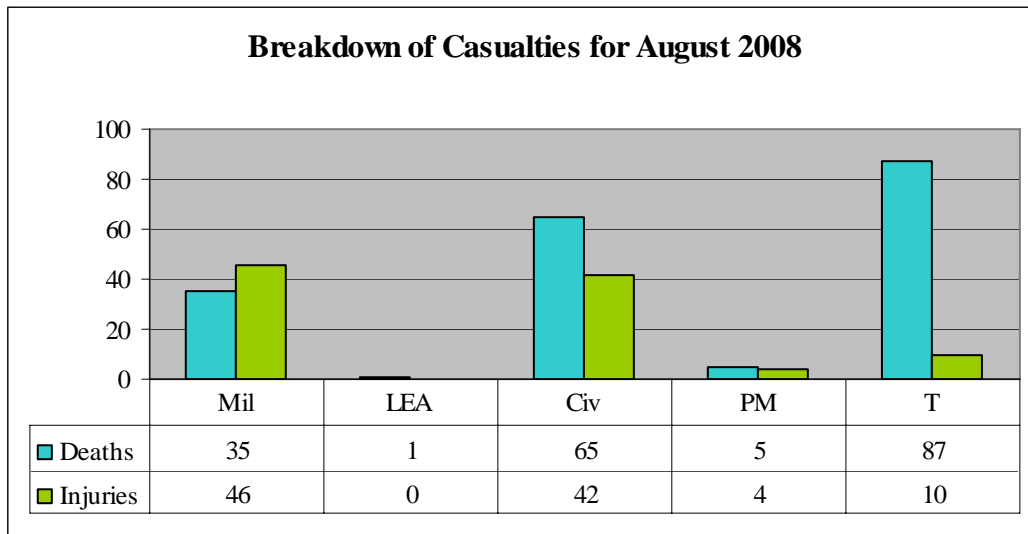
NPA – New People’s Army

There were eight raids recorded this month and worst of these were the five coordinated attacks on the towns of Kauswagan, Kolambugan, Maigo and Bacolod in Lanao del Norte, and Maasim in Sarangani province launched by the MILF. The rebels sprayed gunfire, hacked civilians with machetes and torched houses, police stations and town centers before using residents as human shields in the face of counter-attacks from the Philippine military. After several clashes, army troops were able to liberate the towns and forced the rebels to withdraw and evade an all-out military and police assault against them. As always, the downside of these encounters is the displacement of families, whose homes and farms have been used as battlefields.

Meanwhile, the six attacks perpetrated by unknown groups occurred in Zamboanga and Central Mindanao areas. These places are known to be the bailiwick of the MILF. Police are now investigating if indeed the Moro group is involved but so far no reports have been confirmed.

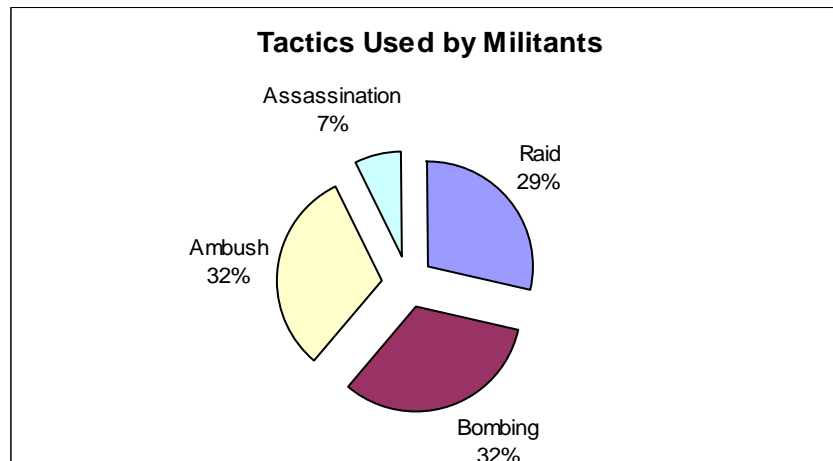
Of the eight attacks by the NPA, five were raids against police outposts and telecommunication cell sites. Globe Telecom has been a consistent victim of the communist group because of their refusal to pay revolutionary tax.

Terrorist Incidents and Counter Terrorism Operations



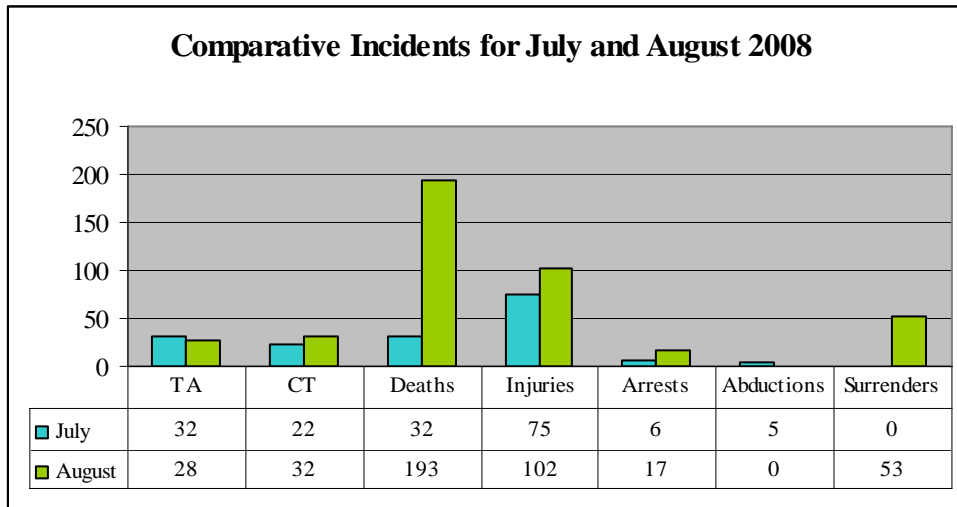
Methodology

Tactics used by militants



Raids, ambushes and the use of IEDs are still the most common tactics employed by the militants.

Comparative Analysis



The graph clearly shows an increase in the number of casualties. In the death category alone, the number has multiplied six times compared to July 2008 and most of these are civilians affected by the MILF attacks.

Individuals and groups composed of the academic, religious, and non-government organizations have called on to the government to stop the military offensive. However, amidst the calls of halting its military offensives for the primacy of the peace process, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) is said to be taking steps towards having the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) declared a terrorist organization. But it was stressed that what they are looking at are the atrocities committed by two MILF commanders and not the entire MILF institution. Backdoor negotiations are still ongoing as the government is not keen on accommodating calls to launch an all-out war against the MILF who have earlier claimed that it has not sanctioned its commanders to launch attacks in Mindanao.

The GRP has also said that it intends to refocus the peace talks with the MILF on the issues of “disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation”. This came out after it announced that it won’t sign the MOA-AD irrespective of the pending Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of MOA-AD.