Cold Arm of ‘Jihad’ Sponsored by the West is Reaching Rebellious Philippines

A month ago I wrote an essay exposing the complex network of Western-sponsored terrorism in Asia (“Washington Jihad Express: Indonesia, Afghanistan, Syria and Philippines”). I argued that in the 1980’s, Indonesian and Malaysian jihadists, indoctrinated by the Southeast Asian brand of extreme anti-Communism, went to fight in Afghanistan against the socialist governments of Karmal, and then Mohammad Najibullah, with the ultimate goal of destroying the Soviet Union. Hardened and further brainwashed, they returned home to Southeast Asia, participated in several ethnic strifes and pogroms (including those in Ambon and Poso), and then, in order to ‘bridge the generational gap’, embarked on the coaching of young generation of terrorists, who eventually ended up fighting in Syria and recently in the Philippines.

My essay was full of facts, and I put into it various testimonies of Southeast Asian academics, thinkers, and even of one active and prominent ‘jihadi cadre’ who is now living in Jakarta.

In the Indonesian city of Bandung, Mr. Iman Soleh, a professor at the Faculty of Social and Political Science (University of Padjadjaran- UNPAD) offered his take on why the West is now so obsessed with destabilizing and smearing the Philippines and its current rebellious administration:

“Since World War Two, the U.S. was afraid of so-called ‘domino effects’. Among other things that are now happening in the Philippines under president Duterte, the government is curbing activities of the multi-national mining conglomerates, and the West cannot accept that. Philippines are putting its environmental concerns above the short-term profits! For the millions of left-wing activists here in Indonesia and all over Southeast Asia, President Duterte is a role model.”

It is no secret that the West punishes such ‘bad paradigms’ brutally and decisively. Prof. Soleh continued:

“I think all that is happening is not just to ‘destabilize’ the Philippines, but also because the country has conflict areas that could be ‘nurtured’. The best example is the predominantly Muslim island of Mindanao, vs. the rest of the Philippines, which is predominantly a Catholic country...”

Jihadi cadres dreaming about establishing caliphate, ‘color revolutions’ type politicians, several ‘perpetual conflicts’, as well as ‘vibrant civil society’ and NGOs that are clearly on the pay list of the West: you name it and the Philippines (for decades an obedient colony of the West) has them all. Their sole purpose is to destabilize the country and to overthrow the current administration in Palacio de Malacañan in Manila.

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After a prolonged saga, I finally received a permit to visit Marawi City, which until now is torn by the war.

Before being given an army convoy and then expedited to the front, I was detained in Saguiaran town, at the army base, for almost 12 hours, and interrogated by the pro-US/anti-Duterte faction of the military. Using text messages I
was immediately informed by my contacts in Manila: it was obvious that someone high up in the military command didn’t want me to witness what was really happening in the besieged city.

When I finally reached Marawi, I clearly understood why some anti-Duterte people wanted to stop me: almost everything on the ground was exactly the opposite of what the Western and the servile local media wanted to show the public.

Things were actually better, much better than I expected.

The Martial Law imposed on the area was ‘mild’ and rational. There was hardly any administrative interference from the military top brass. Relief operations to help tens of thousands of IDP’s were well organized and, given the difficult circumstances, extremely effective.

The army was busy fighting the terrorists who were holed up in about one square kilometer of the center of the city. The rest of Marawi was liberated and almost intact. My estimate was that around 20-30 percent of the houses were either destroyed or damaged, while the countless mass media reports have been speaking about the “entire city” or “most of the city” having been reduced to ruins.

I can testify to all this, as I was there, even facing the very core of the fighting, and I’m in possession of the photo evidence to illustrate what I’m claiming here.

I spoke to several internally displaced people (IDP) and I spoke to the civilians who are still living in Marawi and in the surrounding area. I met the highest commanding officers, including Brigadier General Ramiro Rey (head of the Joint Task Force Group, Ranao) and Lt. Colonel Jo-Ar Herrera, and grilled them with my questions, about the situation on the battlefield. I travelled with ordinary soldiers and I visited hospitals and relief centers.

General Rey explained during our meeting in the Municipality of Marawi City (now also serving as the headquarters of the war theatre):

“The ISIS wants to establish their state on the island of Mindanao - an Islamic caliphate - right here in the Province of Lanao del Sur.”

“On the 23th May there was a report about existence of a safe house of the terrorists. Our forces attacked and when this resulted in a firefight, we were surprised, realizing that the terrorists have already occupied almost the entire area. Later, after studying evidence and seeing videos, we found out that the terrorists were actually planning to take over the entire Marawi by May 26th, which was the start of Ramadan. The fighting continued for the entire day of the 23rd. If we would have failed that day, the situation would have been much worse. But our forces liberated most of Marawi and the terrorist forces had to withdraw east of the Agus River.”

The war has been brutal. There have been killings by the terrorists. Internally displaced people told me that ISIS set up checkpoints and divided people into Muslims and infidels. Non-Muslims were immediately killed, or taken as hostages and used until now, as human shields.

“The corpses of victims were all around Marawi, decomposing under the burning sun,” recalled Ms. Ima Mimbalawag. “Some were being eaten by dogs.”

After May 23rd, things deteriorated rapidly, and tens of thousands of local people were forced to hit the road, searching for safe havens all over the island and the country.

“The terrorists began using captured women as sex slaves,” explained Major Malvin Ligutan, standing in front of a temporary military base in Saguiaran, from which the deafening Howitzer salvos have been fired over the hills and towards the terrorist positions inside Marawi City.

Despite all the horrors of the Marawi war, the army refused to use brutal tactics, even after it found out that various local citizens clearly miscalculated and before the conflict began, offered substantial support to the ISIS-related terrorists.

Captain John Mark Silva Onipig clarified:

“These people belonging to the ISIS are not only terrorists, but they are also criminals. They were
dealing in drugs... And some local people knew that... Actually, locals knew quite a lot; they knew about the presence of the terrorists in the area long before all this started, but they never reported it to the authorities.”

“How did they get hold of so many weapons?” I wanted to know.

“In the Philippines, those who have money can buy as many weapons as they want on the black market.”

Several high-ranking army officials confirmed on and off the record, that there has been the involvement of foreign fighters in the battle of Marawi.

“In one of the safe houses, we found passports issued in Indonesia, Malaysia and several Arab countries.”

Ms. Drei Toledo, an educator, renowned social media journalist and pro-Duterte activist, originally from Mindanao, pointed a finger at both Malaysia and the United States:

“For Malaysia: it is aiming at serving its own interest by expanding/restoring the Caliphate across Mindanao. Malaysia has been directly funding destabilization in order to put Mindanao in perpetual chaos, since 1968. Malaysia benefits from Mindanao being in a perpetual state of chaos and conflict because this means we can never reclaim oil-rich Sabah.”

“As for the United States: they are primarily interested is retaining control over Philippines and our seas, because China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ (OBOR) system will be finally completed soon. Philippines is the last and the most critical trans-shipment point.”

For the US: it is retaining control, by all means and at any cost. For some individuals in Malaysia: the establishment of a caliphate in Mindanao. For countless Indonesian anti-Communist jihadists: perpetual battle against anything left-wing in this part of the world.

The result: tremendous suffering of people in Marawi, in fact all over the entire Mindanao Island. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children displaced, hundreds of people killed, as well as brutal, continuous poverty.

President Duterte who took office only a little over one year ago, has managed to implement great changes, siding with the poor. But he is now under tremendous pressure.

From the beginning, he tried to reach peace agreements with the Marxist guerillas, with the Muslims seeking further autonomy in Mindanao, and of course with China.

This war is putting his goodwill through a great test. However, there is no doubt that he is passing it with flying colors, no matter what the Western and local anti-government propagandists are declaring.

I drove at the back of military trucks and I saw adults and children waving and saluting, with no fear in their eyes. I spoke confidentially with the locals and they were all hoping for victory by the troops, over the jihadists.

General Rey who is de-facto in charge of the military operations, explained to me:

“The difference between this Martial Law and those that were imposed during the reign of Ferdinand Marcos, is that now the military is mainly doing real fighting, while providing assistance to the civilians. I absolutely don’t interfere in the work of local elected government officials. I’m actually encouraging them to do their job as before, asking them to contact me only when my assistance is needed. I never took, and I don’t intend to take, control of the area.”

I checked with the local officials and they confirmed his words.

I also checked with several relief volunteers, and was told that Manila does all it can to help, and in those cases when it fails, it is simply due to the scarcity of resources, not because of the lack of goodwill.

I witnessed both outgoing and incoming fire of Howitzers, as well as the bombing of jihadi positions by the air force,
and it was clearly targeted.

It is real war, and wars are never a hundred percent “clean”. However, this one is as clean as it gets, and I can say it with authority, after witnessing and covering dozens of them, in all corners of the world.

To claim the contrary would mean spreading outright anti-government propaganda, or showing ignorance, or both. But propaganda is exactly what the Western and pro-Western local mass media and NGOs are disseminating all over the Philippines and the world.

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I happened to be one of the extremely few foreigners who have managed to enter Marawi City, and to see first-hand the impact of the fighting. However, hundreds of Western reporters who have never even come near the city are constantly speaking and writing about the situation as if it was first-hand reporting. Their hostile intentions are clear and obvious.

Local jihadi cadres and foreigners have already done great damage to the city and the country. Some analysts are now comparing the situation in Marawi and the Philippines to the early stages of the foreign-ignited conflict in Syria.

But Marawi is not Aleppo. Here the military acted decisively, and the extremists were quickly contained in just one small neighborhood.

Near the front line I was told by one of the top army officers:

“We could take the city in just one day, but there would be great civilian casualties, as civilians are used as human shields by the terrorists. The houses in this area are very sturdy; they are 2-3 stories high and fortified, as there are constant and brutal family feuds, called ‘rido’, raging here, and have been for centuries.”

If the army attacks frontally, thousands of civilians would lose their lives. There is no appetite for such carnage, in Manila or on the ground in Marawi. And so the war drags on. The positions of the terrorists are bombed; hostages that manage to escape and cross the river are quickly brought to safety. The area controlled by the terrorists is hermetically sealed. Hope is that the ISIS-related extremists will soon run out of ammunition, of food, or both.

Marawi is just one new chapter in the already long book of horrors of brutal religious terrorist acts, most of them directly or indirectly triggered by Western imperialism. In the first wave of its fight again the secular socialist Muslim governments, the West destabilized Iran, Egypt and Indonesia. Then came the Afghanistan ‘gambit’, followed by the arch-brutal destruction of Iraq and Libya. Then it was Syria’s turn.

‘Jihad’ is consistently used against Russia, China as well as the former Central Asian Soviet republics.

All this I described in my 840-page book: “Exposing Lies Of The Empire”, but one can never write fast enough and fully catch up with the crimes committed by the West.

It is often easy to pinpoint Western involvement in the religious conflicts, particularly in such places as Afghanistan and Syria. In the Philippines, the link is still indirect, well concealed, but it certainly exists.

To rebel against the Western Empire is always a costly and bloody affair. It often leads to coups sponsored by Washington, London or Paris, and even to direct military conflicts, interventions and full-scale wars.

But by now, the people of the Philippines have had it ‘up to here’. They had enough of being submissive; enough of being plundered while remaining silent. They are assembling behind their president. Duterte’s popularity is still around 75%. The army is clearly winning the war against the hardened local and foreign jihadists. Relief operations are effective and well organized. Things are just fine.

In only one year, the country has diametrically changed. For the first time in decades, there is great hope. To break the spirit of the liberated masses, to force people back onto their knees would be difficult, perhaps almost impossible, even if jihadi terror is unleashed brutally.

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