



NEW JERSEY DISMANTLES DOCUMENT FORGERY RING

SUMMARY: New Jersey's Police Office of Counter-Terrorism announced the arrest of 13 people involved with a document fraud ring that targeted illegal Filipino immigrants. The arrests results from a conscious effort on the part of New Jersey law enforcement officials to identify and target crimes, such as trafficking and using fraudulent documents, which are precursor crimes to a terrorist attack. This effort reflects an all-hazards philosophy by which law enforcement operations are designed not only to make it more difficult for a terrorist cell to plan and support an attack, but also for criminals and criminal enterprises to flourish. It is noteworthy that New Jersey officials have identified the nexus between the activities of Islamic terrorist groups based in the Philippines and criminal conduct in the State of New Jersey.

The excerpt is from Rick Hepp's article "State anti-terror agency breaks up alleged Filipino document fraud ring" in The Newark Star-Ledger on June 17, 2005. For more information, see the entire text of the article at <http://www.nj.com/enter/index.ssf?/news/ledger/index.ssf%3f/base/news-0/1118986239180250.xml&coll=1> or visit the Center for Policing Terrorism website at www.cpt-mi.org.

EXCERPT: "The Office of Counter-Terrorism initiated this investigation in part because document fraud is so often a terrorist precursor crime," said Director Sidney Caspersen. "Moreover, we know that the Philippines has increasingly become a theater for terrorist groups, some with connections to al Qaeda."

The case began 20 months ago when a disgruntled customer of the black-market ring called a state hotline with a tip that Romi Lumba was helping illegal Filipino immigrants procure New Jersey licenses, said State Police Capt. Stephen Serrao, the Office of Counter-Terrorism's bureau chief. Detectives later turned the tipster into a confidential informant to help them infiltrate the group.

Serrao said that, for \$1,000, the fraud ring would provide fake Philippine documents to illegal immigrants and then take them to the Motor Vehicle Commission in Eatontown to get driver's licenses or identification cards.

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Serrao said the illegal immigrants obtained the licenses before the state instituted its six-point ID verification system in September 2003, which requires multiple documents from different categories to qualify for a license or a renewal.

FILIPINO TERROR GROUPS

- There are three main Philippine terror groups currently active: Abu Sayyaf, Moro Islamic National Liberation Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). All of these groups have ties to al Qaeda
- These groups also have strong ties with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an Indonesian group also associated with al Qaeda
- The area of operations for these groups is located in the southern islands of the Philippines: Jolo, Basilan, and Mindanao. US Special Forces have been assisting government troops in fighting these groups in these islands
- These groups want to establish an Islamic state in the Philippines, known as a *Bangsa Tungga* (Single Nation). There are many Islamic converts in these areas, specifically amongst the Moro tribe
- According to Rohan Gunaratna, after al Qaeda was driven out of Afghanistan, it relocated its major training to the southern Philippines in areas controlled by Abu Sayyaf, MILF, and MNLF
- The main training camp on the island of Mindanao, Camp Abubakar, once housed facilities for Arabs (Camp Palestine), Jemaah Islamiyah (Camp Hodeibia), and Camp Vietnam. Government troops captured the Camp in 2002
- Training camps were subsequently established throughout Jolo, Basilan and Mindanao
- JI recently trained 40 Abu Sayyaf members to make bombs that could be set off by mobile phones
- Some intelligence analysts worry that the Philippines is a greater threat than other areas, because these groups can still train on remote islands and then deploy in the region or to other areas