Abu Dujana: Jemaah Islamiyah's New al-Qaeda Linked Leader

Publication: Terrorism Focus Volume: 3 Issue: 13
April 4, 2006 04:38 PM Age: 4 yrs

By: Zachary Abuza

With the death of Jemaah Islamiyah's (JI) master bomb-maker, Azahari bin Husin, there has been intense speculation over JI's current leadership, in particular the position of Amir ("spiritual leader"), which has been vacant since 2003. In recent weeks, Indonesian authorities have focused their sights on a little-known militant, Abu Dujana. Indonesian police have now made his arrest their "priority."

Dujana was born in Cianjur, West Java, around 1968. West Java was the traditional stronghold of the underground Darul Islam movement, and Dujana, like many JI members, appears to have close family connections to the Darul Islam movement. He was educated by Dadang Hafidz, a militant Islamist with deep ties to the Darul Islam organization.

After years of Quranic tutorial, Hafidz selected Abu Dujana for advanced training in Pakistan. He studied there for a few years before joining the mujahideen and leaving to fight in Afghanistan. Abu Rusdan, who would go on to lead JI in 2002, reported that he first met his compatriot in a mujahideen training camp in Pakistan in 1986 (indictment of Abu Rusdan). Dujana was trained in small arms, tactics and bomb-making. In Afghanistan he came into close contact and developed a deep friendship with Zulkarnaen, who would become head of JI's military operations. His other classmates in Pakistan were Riduan Isamuddin, better known as Hambali, who was the operations chief of JI until his arrest in August 2003, and Nasir bin Abbas (BBC, March 22).

In the early 1990s, Dujana returned to Southeast Asia, although there is little information about what he did in this period. JI was founded in 1992-1993 by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, and many of the Afghan veterans who were frustrated with Darul Islam's passivity became the core of JI's leadership, committed to waging an armed jihad against the Indonesian state. Cells were patiently established and recruiters began working as JI-controlled madrassas were established throughout the Indonesian archipelago and into Malaysia. Dujana spent a period of time as a teacher at one of those schools, the Luqmanul Hakiem School, outside of Johor, Malaysia, which was run by the leader of the Bali attacks, Mukhlas (Tempo, September 21, 2004; interrogation of Nasir bin Abbas).

It is not known if, after 1996, Dujana spent any time in Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) camps in the southern Philippines, conducting training for JI and MILF members along with al-Qaeda instructors.

Following the fall of Indonesia's strongman Suharto in May 1998, sectarian conflict erupted in parts of the archipelago. Although not started by JI, the organization was quick to take advantage of the situation. Senior JI members Abu Jibril and Agus Dwikarna established paramilitaries in the Malukus and Central Sulawesi, respectively. Owing to his Afghan experience, Dujana spent some time in these conflict zones and helped to coordinate JI's efforts from 1998-2001. His former mentor Hafidz was himself a key supporter and procurer of weapons for JI's sectarian strife.

In this period of time, Abu Dujana's rise through JI's Mantiqi II division was swift. By 2000, he was the secretary of Mantiqi II. One year later, he was attending almost every key meeting of JI's leadership that was held in Indonesia. Top JI members who have been arrested all cite his presence at key strategy sessions and leadership appointments. For example, Nasir bin Abbas states that Dujana was among the top 10 leaders present when he was elected to head Mantiqi III in April 2001 (interrogation of Nasir bin Abbas). In October 2002, following Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's arrest, Dujana and Zulkarnaen, Mukhlas, and Sulaiman met to elect Abu Rusdan as JI's new Amir. At that meeting, Dujana was elected to be Rusdan's secretary (indictment of Abu Rusdan). Rusdan, however, was arrested soon thereafter and Indonesian officials believe that Dujana became the acting Amir, though he is not a religious leader.

Dujana assisted a number of JI suspects who had fled the dragnet in Singapore in late 2001. In 2002, he turned his sights on executing Hambali's line of attacking Western targets. Dujana was among the plotters of the October 2002 Bali bombings, and met with Zulkarnaen, JI's military chief, and Mukhlas in Bali days before the attack (interrogation of Nasir bin Abbas). The ICG reports that Azahari bin Husin and Noordin Mohammad Top consulted with him before the August 2003 bombing of the JW Marriott in Jakarta (Tempo, September 21, 2004). Following that attack, Dujana was placed on the government's 10 most wanted list.

Dujana is thought to be a key leader of the organization, and not simply a default candidate from group attrition. He is one of the remaining leaders who spent time in Afghanistan and Pakistan and is personally known by the al-Qaeda leadership. As a senior police official recently said, "He has good relations with al-Qaeda...[He is] trusted" (BBC, March 22).

Authorities thought they had arrested him in November 2004 (Jakarta Post, November 28, 2004). In January 2005, they tracked him to Subang, West Java, in conjunction with the investigations into the September 2004 bombing of the Australian Embassy, although he and others escaped arrest. In November 2005, police raided the home of Abu Dujana's father, Achmad Tamami (Jakarta Post, November 13, 2005). He now uses the alias Sorim.

Among the other top JI leaders at large are Dulmatin and Umar Patek, both believed to be in Mindanao; the Malaysian, Noordin Mohammad Top, JI's top recruiter and money man; Zulkarnaen, JI's chief of military operations; Qotada; Nu'im; and Zulkifli bin Hir.

Email this article to a friend

The Jamestown Foundation
1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320, Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202.483.8888 | Fax: 202.483.8337 | pubs@jamestown.org

Site By New Village Media | © 2010 The Jamestown Foundation