

Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)



OVERVIEW

AS OF MAY 2026

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is a Philippines-based Islamic extremist organization with historical links to al-Qa'ida. The group formed in 1991 when it splintered from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, an insurgent group that made peace with the Philippine Government in 2014. ASG's stated goal is to establish an independent Islamic state, governed by Islamic law, in the Muslim-majority provinces of the southern Philippines. Since the early 2000s, ASG has intermittently engaged in criminal activities, including several high-profile kidnap-for-ransom incidents, alongside pursuit of its extremist objectives. In 2014 an ASG faction pledged allegiance to ISIS and later formed ISIS's Philippines branch in 2016.

Operating Areas

Based in the southern Philippines, primarily in western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

Members

Fewer than 400

Tactics And Targets

ASG engages in bombings, assassinations, extortion, and kidnap-for-ransom operations that have occasionally targeted US citizens. The group focuses most of its attacks on Philippine military targets and civilian defense forces, as well as Christians and other civilians who the group perceives are working against its interests or oppose its interpretation of Islamic law.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated Abu Sayyaf Group as a foreign terrorist organization in October 1997.

KEY LEADERS



Radullan Sahiron

Leader



Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS *(continued)*



Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani [DECEASED]

Founder; killed in 1998

NOTABLE ATTACKS

27 January 2019

Jolo Island, Sulu Province, Philippines

Two suicide bombers affiliated with both ASG and ISIS-Philippines kill 23 people and wound more than 100 at the Jolo Cathedral.

14 February 2005

Manila, Davao City, and General Santos City, Philippines

Militants simultaneously detonate explosives against several targets, killing 11 people and wounding about 140.

27 February 2004

Manila, Metro Manila Province, Philippines

A suicide bomber sinks a ferry in Manila Bay, killing more than 100 people.

27 May 2001

Dos Palmas, Palawan Province, Philippines

Militants kidnap 20 people, including three US citizens, from a tourist resort; one US citizen was beheaded and another was killed during a rescue operation.

