**Fighting set to return from ME**

IS is a threat to SE Asia despite leader's death, experts warn

By Lee Ang (May 2016)

Brunei’s erstwhile leader was in charge of raising troops and training fighters from the group signing contracts to make suicide bombers.

Omar al-Baghdadi was a leader of the Mecca Group, a group led by the 1,000-member Peshmerga Muslim separatists on the borders of Arab, Iranian and Iraq, and was the last to be seen in the group’s home country.

But he claimed that it was far from the end of the IS’ threat. "We cannot go back to the way things were a few years ago," he said.

So far, the militants have managed to hold up for more than two months, said a security analyst.

"But it is clear that IS has lost its grip on Southeast Asia," he added.

The militants in Marawi have been linked to a local Islamist insurgency in the southern Philippines, which has been around for the past five years.

But as the weeks passed it was clear the militants were in a state of disarray. The fighting in Marawi has been described as "a war of attrition" and the militants were facing "heavy casualties," said the analyst.

"Their numbers are down to around 400, with 40 per cent of them believed to be dead or captured," he said.

The militants are facing a "real threat" in the form of the Philippine military and "a significant humanitarian crisis" in the town of Marawi, said the analyst.

Malaysia rolls out red carpet for Qatar’s Amir

Diplomacy with NKorea continues

US, SKorea navies drill near DMZ

At least 12 killed, 124 rescued

An Afghan? The Pentagon is investigating a possible link between a bombing in the eastern city of Jalalabad on Monday and a similar incident in the capital, Kabul, last month.

The attack in Jalalabad on Monday was the latest in a series of attacks in the city that have left more than 20 people dead and injured.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said the investigation had been launched after a "significant event" was reported.

"The attack occurred at 8:15 a.m. (0715 GMT) today near a hospital in Jalalabad," the DHS said in a statement.

The attack was the latest in a string of incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan that have raised concerns about the ability of the Taliban to carry out large-scale attacks.

"We remain committed to working with our Afghan partners to ensure that those who carried out this attack will be held accountable," the DHS said.

The Celebes, an Indonesian archipelago known for its rich marine life, is the site of a number of armed groups, including the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

"We are here to support our Indonesian partners in their fight against terrorism," said a US military official.

"We have been working closely with the Indonesian authorities to ensure that the area is secure," the official said.

"Our armed forces are ready to respond to any threat that may arise," the official added.

The Celebes is a strategic location for the military and is known for its rich marine life and diverse flora and fauna.

"We have been working closely with our Indonesian partners to ensure that the area is secure," the official said.

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