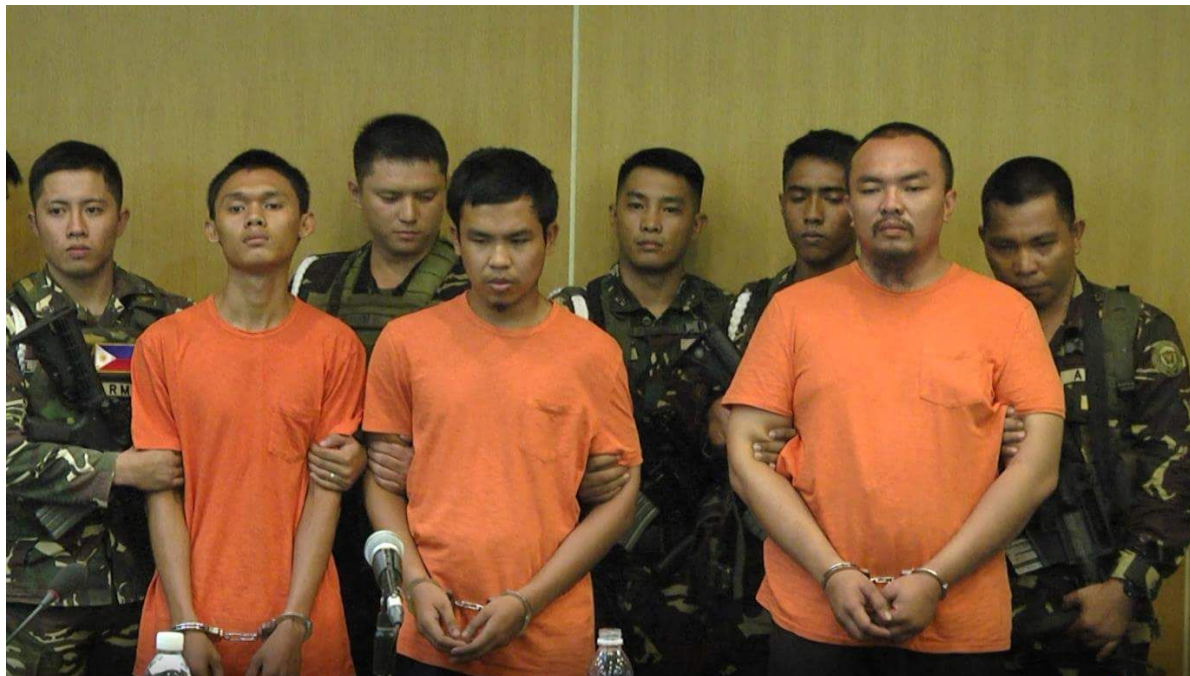


PRESS RELEASE

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3 suspects in Davao City bombing arrested



The three suspects of the Davao bombing were arrested on 04 October 2016, and were presented to the media on 07 October 2016, at the Department of National Defense. (Photo by PO3 Jayson Rutao /PAO AFP)

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City—Three suspected terrorists responsible for the Davao City bombing last September 2 were arrested in a mobile checkpoint by joint elements of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police on Tuesday, October 4, in Cotabato City.

The Secretary of National Defense Delfin C Lorenzana led the presentation of the suspects on October 7, at the General Headquarters Conference Room here. National Security Adviser General Hermogenes C Esperon (Retired), AFP Chief of Staff General Ricardo Visaya, PNP Chief Director General Ronald Dela Rosa, and Commanding General of the Philippine Army Lieutenant General Eduardo M Ano were also present.

“We have recovered solid pieces of evidence showing that they are indeed the terrorists who bombed Davao City on September 2,” Secretary Lorenza said.

The three suspects identified as TJ Tagadaya Macabalang, Wendel Apostol Facturan, and Musali Mustapha, members of the Maute Group, were arrested after attempting to evade the checkpoint on board a motorcycle with no license plate.

Confiscated from their possession were materials for improvised explosive devices, a sub-machine gun, a cal. 45 pistol, their motorcycle, and cellular phones.

Based on initial investigations and debriefing, it was found that Macabalang detonated the bomb that was placed in position by Facturan. Mustapha, meanwhile, took a video of the incident using his cellular phone.

The said video, along with the other photos of the incident were recovered from the cellular phones and were supposed to be used for propaganda. A 20-second propaganda video showing Facturan and a photo showing a bomb manual were also recovered from the suspects.

“There are indications that the Maute Group is trying to align themselves with the ISIS as seen in the recovered video. We have also established their link with the ASG as they revealed their intention to disrupt the government’s massive military operations in Sulu,” Army Chief Lieutenant General Eduardo M Ano said.

The Maute Group’s plan to bomb Davao City was conceived more or less two weeks before the actual incident. Accordingly, the plan was conceptualized to disrupt and divert the government’s massive military operations in Sulu that started in July 2016 and in Central Mindanao that started in August 2016.

Moreover, the attack was conducted in retaliation for the heavy casualties suffered by the terror group in Butig, Lanao del Sur. The operations in August 2016 also resulted in the capture of eight Maute members in a checkpoint on August 22. The arrested members later bolted out of prison on August 27.

Further investigations also revealed that there were more or less 10 members of the Maute Group that participated in the Davao City bombing. Aside from the three arrested suspects, it was found that another plan to use hand grenades was in play in case the original bomb failed to explode and to inflict more casualty.

Cotabato City raid

Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao and Cotabato City Police and elements from the 6th Infantry Division conducted a raid, backed by a search warrant issued by the Regional Trial Court 12 Branch 13, on the residence of Teng Macabalang, father of TJ Macabalang.

The search was conducted at Brgy Rosary Height 6, Cotabato City at 2 a.m. today and resulted to the arrest of Macabalang and the recovery of numerous high-powered and short firearms,

ammunitions, and IED materials.

Macabalang and the confiscated pieces of evidence were brought to the local police office for proper documentation and disposition.

“The AFP and the PNP continue to conduct follow-up operations in pursuit of the remaining suspects and other members of the Maute Group in Cotabato City,” said AFP Chief of Staff General Ricardo Visaya. He added that the AFP and the PNP have already informed President Rodrigo Duterte and Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte on this major development.

“Once again, your Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police have shown their firm resolve and joint capabilities to stop this bunch of extremists,” Secretary Lorenzana concluded. #####