

## **Philippines 'captures' top Abu Sayyaf chief**

**By Al Jazeera**

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Abu Sayyaf was founded in 1991 with suspected funds and training from Asian and Middle Eastern groups [AFP]

Philippine police have captured a man they say is a senior member of Abu Sayyaf, a group blamed for the country's worst bomb attacks, kidnappings and for beheadings.

Senior Superintendent Edgar Danao, a regional police commando, said a special police action force and agents of the Philippine Center on Transnational Crime arrested Ahmadsali Badron on Saturday in Lamion village in Tawi Tawi, the country's southern province.

Tawi Tawi is near Sulu province, where the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf has jungle strongholds.

Badron had been linked to past kidnappings and helped Southeast Asian "terrorists" travel in and out of the southern Philippines, officials said.

The captive, who also uses the names Asmad and Hamad Ustadz Idris, has been implicated in the 2000 kidnappings by Abu Sayyaf fighters of 21 people, mostly European tourists, from Malaysia's Sipadan diving resort, Danao said.

'Travel organiser'

Badron is also suspected of helping arrange the entry and exit from the southern Philippines of Asian operatives belonging to the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah group.

Among the top terror suspects who managed to travel in the country's south with Badron's help was Dulmatin, an Indonesian accused of helping plot the 2002 nightclub bombings that killed 202 people in Bali, Indonesia, Danao said.

Dulmatin, a suspected bomb-maker who was on a US list of most-wanted terrorists, hid for years with the Abu Sayyaf in the southern Mindanao region and returned to Indonesia, where he was gunned down by police in March 2010.

Badron allegedly received funds from a Palestinian that were used to spread Islamic extremism. A Muslim preacher from Sulu, Badron is also believed to have kept ransom money raised by the Abu Sayyaf.

He has been identified by former hostages held by the Abu Sayyaf, according to a police report.

The Abu Sayyaf was founded in 1991 on southern Basilan island with suspected funds and training from Asian and Middle Eastern radical groups, including al-Qaeda. It came to US attention in 2001 when it kidnapped three Americans, two of whom were later killed, and dozens of Filipinos.

The kidnappings prompted Washington to deploy hundreds of troops in the country's south in 2002 to train Philippine forces and share intelligence, helping the military capture or kill most of the Abu Sayyaf's senior commanders.

**Source: Agencies**