Are prisons really schools for terrorism?
Introduction

• My research focuses primarily on the Philippine correctional system – although international comparisons have been undertaken.

• It focuses on two of the main correctional facilities where terrorist inmates are held:
  – New Bilibid Prison (NBP), which integrates terrorist inmates into the general prison population.
  – Metro Manila District Jail (MMDJ), which segregates its terrorist inmates from the mainstream prisoners.

• The prison regimes offer a vital contrast and a natural experiment for our exploration of the impact of the prison environment on terrorist inmates.
Introduction

- Using classic penological theory (Clemmer (1958), Sykes (1958), Wheeler (1961) etc), the research challenges much of the contemporary thought on prison radicalisation and recruitment.

- It examines several factors that may affect prison radicalisation and recruitment including:
  - the prison environment
  - the prison regime
  - inmate culture
  - social barriers
  - basic survival needs
Research Questions

• Can different methods of incarceration, such as integration or dispersal, contribute to changes in beliefs and behaviour in terrorist inmates?

• Can the prison environment act to inhibit terrorist offenders from radicalising mainstream prisoners?

• Do the ‘pains of imprisonment’ enhance or inhibit terrorist inmates from radicalising mainstream prisoners?

• Are there different stages of a prison sentence where terrorist inmates are more likely to be disengaged from their militant pasts?
Philippine Counter-Terrorism Laws

• No specific offences for terrorism

• Anti-Terrorism Law - Human Security Act 2007
  – Article 3 defines terrorism as the commission of certain crimes, including murder, piracy, kidnapping, arson, and the destruction of property, that “sows and create a condition of widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace, in order to coerce the government to give in to an unlawful demand.”

• The act sets the mandatory sentence for the crime of terrorism at 40 years without parole
Philippine Correctional System

- Consists of 1344 different types of prisons and jails - not including police ‘lock-ups’

- Over 133,000 adult offenders

- Overcrowding is a significant problem - total capacity of Philippine prisons and jails combined is only around 35,000 inmates

- Overcrowding varies between 250 - 400 per cent (More than 400% in Quezon City Jail)

- There are a total of 555 terrorist inmates

- No offences for terrorism, but sentenced on kidnapping, murder, bombing and rebellion offences
International Comparison

- US – 2.3 m total: 430 terrorist offenders
- UK – 85,128 total: 162 terrorist offenders
- Canada – 40,633 total: 35 terrorist offenders
- Australia – 36,134 total: 52 terrorist offenders
- France – 66,678 total: 240 terrorist offenders
- Indonesia – 180,347 total: 270 terrorist offenders
New Bilibid Prison (NBP)
NBP

- Opened in 1940, NBP is the largest in the Philippines with a total population of just over 36,000 inmates

- Maximum Security section alone has approximately 15,500 inmates

- Now passing 210 per cent overcrowded
  - Over-stayers being the major problem
  - Ineffectual judicial system
NBP - Overcrowding

- Over-stayers being a major problem
- Lack of resources and space
- Ineffectual judicial system
- Contributes to the development of prison gangs
NBP

• Approximately 80% are Christians (majority Catholic)

• Of the remaining 20%, around 1,600 are Muslims

• Around 45 are known to be terrorist offenders due to their associations with proscribed terrorist groups
  – (even though they have been convicted for criminal offences)
NBP

- One mosque - al-Rahma

- The al-Rahma Arabic and Islamic School was founded in 2008

- NBP management became aware of the school in 2013

- Approximately 240 inmates have graduated in basic Arabic reading and writing (hard to verify exact figure)
NBP

• Terrorist inmates are integrated with the mainstream prisoners and distributed among 12 different gangs

• Gang territory is clearly defined
NBP

- Terrorist inmates are not obliged to join a gang
  - Gang membership provides inmates with a sense of order and discipline, protection, kinship, income and rehabilitation
  - Gang pressure usually results in terrorist inmates joining a gang

- The gangs vary in size depending on their city or region of origin, the largest coming from Metro Manila
NBP

• Terrorist inmates are given no special classification and are not treated any differently to other prisoners

• Over a period of time (?), fitting in with gang culture appears to become a primary objective for survival
  – Is radicalising other inmates a secondary consideration?

• Pressures to conform to the prison environment and the demands of the various dominant social groups seem unavoidable
• Prison gangs are usually the main source of violence and disruption
  – Usually over illicit enterprises and control of turf

• Gang loyalty is very strong
  – The gang is their family and being part of a family is ingrained in Filipino culture
  – Dire consequences for any inmates who disrespect or betray their Bosyo

• Powerful social pressures
  – Social interaction and belonging to a group helps inmates escape some of the pains of imprisonment
Metro Manila District Jail (MMDJ)
MMDJ

- Is the main maximum security jail in the Philippines for individuals on remand and for those sentenced to less than three years

- Is administered by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology

- Has total jail population of over 1,200 inmates
Special Intensive Care Area (SICA) 1& 2
SICA (1)

- There are four levels
  - Lower floor - Terrorist inmates
  - Second floor - New People’s Army (NPA) inmates
  - Third floor - Chinese drug traffickers
  - Forth floor - TB sufferers
SICA (1)
SICA (1)

• Currently houses around 370 detainees

• 250 are suspected of being members of terrorist organisations including:

  – the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)
  – the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
  – Rajah Sulaiman Movement (RSM)
  – Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)
  – The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)
  – Bombing Suspects (Affiliation Unknown)
  – New People’s Army (NPA)
SICA (2)

• Four floors designed to house 61 offenders

• 272 VEOs (all MNLF) Arrested after a stand-off in Zamboanga City between AFP and MNLF in September 2013

• Issues of overcrowding and deprivation
  – In SICA-2, a 3 x 5 meter cell accommodates 12 detainees (0.89m / inmate), while in SICA-1 the same size cell has 6-7 detainees (1.25m / inmate)
Intervention Initiatives

• Alternative Learning System (ALS) program
  – Inmates to attend elementary & high school

• Inmates develop livelihood/skills to help:
  – Reinforce positive behavior (through the introduction of educational and vocational programs)
  – Build self-esteem and identity
Intervention Initiatives

• Regular dialogue with inmate leaders to identify issues
  – To help address problems and prevent escalation of issues
    which might compromise security

• Monitoring of inmates activities, such as socialisation
  patterns and group activities
  – To map out proponents of radicalisation and recruitment
  – To thwart plans for escape and/or other jail disturbances
More Recent Developments

• In July 2014, a video appeared on the internet showing VEOs performing a Bay’ah to al-Baghdadi from within SICA 1 facility

• In SICA 1, signs of conversion to Islam of other inmates on the upper floors
  – Note: In most cases, such conversion is a healthy step for rehabilitation and minimizes the pains of imprisonment
SICA

- Signs of conversion to Islam of other inmates on the upper floors – Muslim majority rules

- Recent discussion with inmate Mayors reveal:
  - increasing tension – rioting is possible if conditions do not improve
  - growing hostility towards Western visitors
  - increasing feelings of hopelessness, insecurity and boredom
  - frustration from regular cancellation of trials
  - frustration from long periods on remand – sometimes up to ten years
Questions?