

Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army

AT A GLANCE

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Mapping Militants Project (MMP). "Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army." Last modified August 2018. <https://mappingmilitants.org/node/362>

SUMMARY

Formed: December 26, 1968

Disbanded: Group is active.

First Attack: August 21, 1971: Three members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) threw four grenades onto the stage of a Liberal Party rally in Manila's Plaza Miranda. Then-President Ferdinand Marcos was initially blamed for the attack, which had killed much of his opposition. (9 killed, 95 wounded).¹

Last Attack: August 15, 2015: A CPP-NPA unit launched two attacks on the same day in the province of Agusan del Sur. The fighters destroyed a truck using an improvised explosive device and later attacked two men, one a civilian, and one a member of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) auxiliary forces. (1 killed, 1 wounded).²

OVERVIEW

The Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army (CPP-NPA) seeks to overthrow the Philippine government in favor of a new state led by the working class and to expel U.S. influence from the Philippines. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) formed in 1968, and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), was founded in 1969. Because the CPP and NPA are so closely intertwined, they are often jointly referred to as the CPP-NPA. The CPP-NPA has historically focused on building support among the rural peasantry, although it has operated throughout the Philippines. While it peaked in size and influence in the 1970s and 1980s, the CPP-NPA still engages in significant levels of violence and is the world's oldest existing Communist insurgency.

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The Communist Party of the Philippines–New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) seeks to overthrow the Philippine government in favor of a new state led by the working class and to expel U.S. influence from the Philippines. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was founded in 1968, and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), was founded in 1969. Because the party and its armed wing are so closely intertwined, they are often referred to together as the CPP-NPA.³

The CPP-NPA was established by Jose Maria Sison, a popular former student activist. Sison previously led a Maoist-oriented youth faction within the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), which was established in 1930. For decades, the PKP participated in electoral boycotts and used a guerrilla army to fight Japanese colonialism, U.S. colonialism, and Filipino elites. In 1957, Republic Act No. 1700 banned the PKP and any of its successors, which would later include the CPP-NPA from participating in politics. Even after PKP elites largely gave up on the idea of armed struggle, Sison argued for continuing the violence. Beginning in 1967, in what he called the First Great Rectification Movement, Sison proposed major changes within the PKP. Allegedly, Sison called to reestablish the Communist movement properly in the Philippines.⁴ Sison criticized PKP leaders and was forced out of the party. On Mao Zedong’s birthday, December 26, 1968, Sison established the CPP with his supporters. Sison was chosen as the CPP’s chairman and adopted a pseudonym, Amado Guerrero.⁵ Also in December 1968, Sison met Bernabé Buscayno, another former activist who had commanded an armed group during a Communist-led uprising in the 1950s called the Huk Rebellion. Together with Buscayno, who still commanded his armed group, Sison set up the NPA on March 29, 1969. Buscayno became the NPA’s first commander, bringing his fighters into the newly established militant wing.⁶

The CPP-NPA was originally based in the city of Capas on the Philippines’ largest island, Luzon, and it began with sixty combatants and thirty-five rifles. Although it clashed with government forces, the CPP-NPA initially concentrated on furthering its own growth and strengthening its support among the peasantry. Party activists actively sought to rally peasants to its cause.⁷ The CPP-NPA gained members and momentum from the First Quarter Storm, a leftist wave of student demonstrations, rallies, and marches that occurred between January and March 1970. During those protests, held against then-President Ferdinand Marcos, student leaders demanded constitutional change. Outrage after Marcos’ brutal crackdown on the demonstrations boosted the CPP-NPA’s ranks. Participants in the protests joined the CPP-NPA, causing it to surpass the PKP in popularity.⁸

Also in 1970, Sison outlined the CPP-NPA’s guiding principles in a book called *Philippine Society and Revolution*. He identified three major problems in the Philippines: bureaucrat capitalism, feudalism, and U.S. imperialism. Sison called for major transformation in Philippine society and advocated for the Maoist concept of a protracted people’s war to achieve this change.⁹ In the same year, the Philippine government conducted a large military offensive against the CPP-NPA, decimating its small central group of fighters.¹⁰

In February 1971, Sison met with CPP-NPA Central Committee members to discuss his plan to attack a rally held in Manila by the Liberal Party, which opposed President Marcos. The purpose of the attack was to provoke another government crackdown and ideally gain support for the CPP-NPA. On August 21, three CPP-NPA members threw four grenades onstage at the rally in Manila’s Plaza Miranda before fleeing the city to a CPP-NPA camp. Liberal Party members blamed President Marcos for the attack, which had killed much of his opposition. Marcos, who blamed the CPP-NPA for the bombing, responded by suppressing leftist political activity and suspending habeas corpus. These measures marked an increase in Marcos’ power. In response to Marcos’ repression, hundreds of student recruits joined the CPP-NPA.¹¹ Meanwhile, Sison denied that the CPP-NPA had been involved in the attack.¹²

In July 1972, the Chinese government continued its support of the CPP-NPA by supplying arms to the insurgents. The group received its first shipment of weapons from China in a continuation of patronage that originated with the establishment of the CPP-NPA in 1969. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was able to seize most of the weapons, and in response conducted additional massive military operations against the CPP-NPA.¹³

In September, the Philippine government accused the CPP-NPA of attempting to assassinate the defense minister; many viewed this accusation as part of an effort to justify Marcos' declaration of martial law in the same month, which further consolidated Marcos' power and restricted political freedoms.¹⁴ Under martial law, thousands of Marcos' opponents were arrested. CPP-NPA activists living in Philippine cities fled to the organization's bases in the countryside, and some of the activists ultimately became fighters. Other student activists also left the cities and joined the CPP-NPA. During the time of martial law, the CPP-NPA successfully established relationships with local leaders in the countryside.¹⁵

In 1973, a commission created by the CPP-NPA founded the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF or NDFP). Attempting to unify and coordinate various leftist groups, the NDF served as an umbrella organization for the CPP-NPA and other mass revolutionary organizations. Media and academic sources have sometimes described the NDF as the CPP-NPA's political wing, since the CPP-NPA was still illegal under Republic Act No. 1700. The CPP-NPA dominated and led the NDF. The Philippine government, among others, has used the name "CPP-NPA-NDF" or "CNN" to refer to the larger entity formed through the cooperation of the CPP-NPA and the NDF.¹⁶

In 1974, Sison published *Specific Characteristics of Our People's War*, in which he outlined the CPP-NPA's first five years and set out policies for continued armed struggle. One policy was the decentralization of armed operations. Sison directed CPP-NPA units to stay independent of one another, to conduct attacks from mountainous areas, and to limit their offensives to small police and military ambushes.¹⁷

In 1976, the CPP-NPA lost the Chinese government's support. The Philippines and China normalized their relations and repaired diplomatic ties which had been severed by the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power in 1949.¹⁸ Throughout 1976, the Philippine government captured and jailed many important CPP-NPA members, including Buscayno. After Buscayno's capture, Rodolfo Salas served as the NPA's commander, and, when Sison was captured the following year, Salas also assumed chairmanship of the CPP.¹⁹ Despite the removal of key figures, the CPP-NPA was able to spread beyond Luzon to Visayas and Mindanao, the Philippines' other major regions. At the time, the Philippine military was fighting both the CPP-NPA and the Muslim separatist rebels in the south; their strategic priority was the latter.²⁰

The 1978 Philippine elections caused major tensions within the CPP-NPA. While the CPP-NPA's Manila-Rizal committee, based in the Philippine capital, was mobilizing support for candidates opposed to Marcos, the central leadership insisted on a total boycott of the elections and emphasized the importance of armed struggle. The overtly fraudulent election results in favor of Marcos' government again increased the CPP-NPA's membership.²¹

On January 17, 1981, Marcos formally ended martial law, thus allowing some room for political expression by the opposition and alleviating pressure on the CPP-NPA. Although Marcos intensified extrajudicial executions and other forms of domestic repression, the CPP-NPA was able to return to urban areas and form relationships with legal opposition organizations. While Philippine forces achieved victories against Muslim separatist rebels in the south, on which the government's efforts were focused, the CPP-NPA conducted increasingly successful attacks against the government throughout the country. A surge in recruits allowed the CPP-NPA to attempt tactics beyond small guerrilla units, eventually forming military battalions in Luzon and Visayas. Additionally, the CPP-NPA maintained so-called "sparrow" units, which consisted of one to five operatives who assassinated government forces in urban

areas. The Philippine army began its largest military offensive against the CPP-NPA in 1984. In 1985, CPP-NPA-related violence reached its height with 1,282 military and police deaths, 1,362 civilian deaths, and 2,134 CPP-NPA deaths. The CPP-NPA conducted especially deadly campaigns in Mindanao using urban-based guerrilla tactics. However, rising paranoia concerning the infiltration of the group by Philippine government agents led to massive purges within the organization, especially in Mindanao, in which hundreds of members suspected of collaborating with the state were killed. In addition to its militant activity, the CPP-NPA continued to build relationships in rural communities throughout the 1980s. Members taught and worked alongside peasants, as well as served as guards against bandits.²²

The 1986 elections caused major tensions within the CPP-NPA when Corazon Aquino—widow of a popular oppositional senator who had been assassinated—ran against Marcos. As in 1978, the central leadership ordered a boycott of elections, but many CPP-NPA members ignored the command. After days of mass protests called the People Power Revolution, which were held in support of Aquino and against Marcos, Aquino won the election and Marcos left the country. Later that year, Aquino ordered the release of political prisoners, including Sison and Buscayno. Only Sison returned to CPP-NPA-related activities; however, soon after his release, he went into self-exile in the Netherlands, from which he continued to play a leading role in the movement. He became chief political consultant to the NDF but denied continued involvement with the CPP-NPA. However, at around the same time, Salas was replaced as CPP chairman by Armando Liwanag, widely considered an alias for Sison.²³

Beginning in December 1986, the Aquino administration and the CPP-NPA engaged in short-lived peace negotiations and a ceasefire. However, in January 1987, CPP-NPA members—hoping to force a brutal government action that would justify ending talks—infiltrated a group of peasants who were protesting in support of agricultural reform outside Malacañang Palace, the official presidential residence. Government forces shot at the protesters, killing thirteen.²⁴ At the urging of the United States and domestic elites, Aquino declared total war on the CPP-NPA. In response to this declaration of war, the group conducted attacks, especially in Manila, that alienated moderate supporters and led to a decline in membership.²⁵

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the CPP-NPA suffered various organizational losses. The Philippine government captured key leaders, and internal purges again resulted in the deaths of dozens of CPP-NPA members. Internal debate over the organization's future further weakened it. On December 26, 1991, under the name Armando Liwanag, Sison published a document with the title, "Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Rectify Errors." He insisted that the CPP-NPA reaffirm its commitment to the protracted people's war, armed struggle, and a rural-based strategy rather than waste resources on negotiations or legal action.

Sison's publication sparked the Second Great Rectification Movement, which divided the CPP-NPA into rejectionists (RJs) and reaffirmists (RAs); the former disagreed with Sison's ideas, and the latter supported those ideas. Some rejectionists were forced out of the CPP-NPA, while others voluntarily left. This expulsion of rejectionists stemmed from their belief in at least some role for lawful protest and their disagreement with what they termed Sison's "Stalinism." Rejectionists established their own political parties or participated in other legal organizations promoting societal reform, such as trade unions or nongovernmental organizations. Some rejectionists engaged in local militant activity, but rejectionist groups generally remained small and easily dismantled. One exception was the Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB), which had been established as a CPP-NPA urban guerrilla force in the mid-1980s; the ABB broke away from the CPP-NPA in the early 1990s along with other rejectionists and continued its militant activities. On the other hand, the reaffirmists—who comprised most of the CPP-NPA—supported the principles espoused by Sison, and the CPP-NPA consequently returned its focus to the countryside. Additionally, the CPP-NPA's Central Committee approved Sison's policies in its July 1992 plenum.²⁶

There is conflicting information about the official leadership of the CPP-NPA after the early 1990s. After the Second Great Rectification Movement, Benito Tiamzon may have assumed the formal position of chairman. Some sources have continued to list Liwanag as CPP-NPA chairman from the 1990s onward, while others have listed Tiamzon as chairman for the same time period. Regardless of who held the formal title of chairman, Tiamzon and his wife Wilma directed the CPP-NPA's activities from within the Philippines since the early 1990s, while Sison – under the alias Liwanag – allegedly continued to influence the organization's strategic direction from the Netherlands.²⁷

Throughout the 1990s, the CPP-NPA regained some of its strength. According to its own statements, the group returned to the same level of popular support that it had enjoyed in the 1980s due to its revival of a rural, mass-based strategy. The Philippine military blamed other factors for the CPP-NPA's resurgence, such as the 1992 repeal of Republic Act No. 1700. The repeal allowed the CPP to become a legal political party, although the group continued to express its opposition to electoral participation. Despite the group's nominal rejection of anything less than armed struggle, the CPP-NPA has engaged in peace talks with the Philippine government, usually through the NDF. Even after the 1992 repeal of Republic Act No. 1700, the NDF has continued to represent the CPP-NPA in official talks with the government.²⁸

In 1995, under the administration of President Fidel Ramos, negotiations culminated in the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), signed by NDF leadership. The JASIG paved the way for future peace talks by guaranteeing free and safe movement—without fear of search, surveillance, or arrest—throughout the country for those involved with negotiations, whether Philippine government officials, CPP-NPA members, or other NDF members.²⁹ The parties signed another significant agreement in 1998, the Comprehensive Agreement to Respect Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), which was an attempt to protect civilians from the violence between the government and the CPP-NPA.³⁰ However, talks broke down soon after CARHRIHL, and conflict resumed at high levels when Joseph Estrada assumed the presidency.³¹

The pattern of alternating between negotiations and violence continued throughout the 2000s. When Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo replaced Estrada in 2001, she held some negotiations with the CPP-NPA, but those negotiations stalled after the United States listed the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization at Arroyo's request in 2002. Philippine forces increased their operations against the organization throughout the 2000s and claimed in 2010 to have drastically reduced its ranks.³² When Benigno Aquino III assumed the presidency that year, the government again attempted talks with the CPP-NPA. However, a ceasefire broken by the CPP-NPA, continued fighting, and alleged human rights violations by both sides have hindered the talks. The CPP-NPA has continued to conduct attacks and clash with Philippine forces, and the parties have been unable to agree on conditions for the resumption of negotiations. Within the organization, a rift between Sison in the Netherlands and the local CPP-NPA leadership has increased due to the former's growing willingness to engage in peace talks and the latter's continued reluctance.³³

On July 24, 2018, the Philippine House of Representatives passed the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the final name of the former BBL.³⁴ This replaced the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and created a Muslim regional entity in Mindanao. With the bill's passing, another insurgent group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), declared its support. MILF leader Ebrahim declared that 30-40,000 fighters would be decommissioned.³⁵ Although to date there has been no such response by the CPP-NPA, Philippine politicians have begun calling for the CPP-NPA to follow in the same direction and strike a peace deal with the government.³⁶

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

The CPP has a chairman, while the NPA has its own commander and a National Operational Command; however, the leadership of the party and its armed wing is effectively the same. The Central Committee, composed of twenty-six members, is the CPP-NPA's highest governing body. Information about the CPP-NPA's specific hierarchical structure is deliberately obscured.³⁷

Jose Maria Sison (1969 to Present): Sison, who has written under the names Amado Guerrero and Armando Liwanag, serves as the NDF's chief political consultant. He founded the CPP and, with Bernabé Buscayno, the NPA. He also helped establish the NDF. Sison served as the CPP-NPA's first chairman and continues to play an influential role in the strategic direction of the CPP-NPA and the NDF from his self-exile in the Netherlands, where he has lived since 1986. Beginning in the late 2000s, Sison showed greater inclination for allowing the CPP-NPA to engage in peace negotiations and electoral politics as temporary support-building measures within the context of armed struggle.³⁸

Bernabé Buscayno (1969 to 1976): Buscayno, also known as Kumander Dante, founded the NPA with Sison and served as its first commander. He was captured and jailed by government forces in 1976. He was released by then-President Corazon Aquino in 1987, but he entered legal politics instead of returning to the CPP-NPA.³⁹

Rodolfo Salas (1976 to 1986): Salas, also known as Kumander Bilog, became NPA commander after Buscayno's capture in 1976. He also took over the position of CPP chairman after Sison's capture in 1977. He was arrested in 1986 and released in 1992, after which he decided not to return to the CPP-NPA.⁴⁰

Romulo Kintanar (Unknown to Unknown): Kintanar, sometimes called Rolly, served as NPA commander for some time in the 1980s. He was active in developing the group's fighting tactics, including urban assassination as well as conventional attacks through the regularization of units. Sison criticized him for the latter approach. Kintanar was arrested several times, and after his 1992 release, he did not return to the CPP-NPA.⁴¹

Benito Tiamzon (Unknown to Unknown): Benito served as the nominal CPP chairman and NPA commander. His wife was Wilma Tiamzon, another important CPP-NPA figure. Benito played a leading role within the CPP-NPA since at least the early 1990s, when he and Wilma joined Sison in leading the reaffirmist movement. Beginning in the 1990s, the Tiamzons have overseen the CPP-NPA from within the Philippines. However, the Tiamzons and Sison began to disagree about the movement's strategy in the 2000s. The Tiamzons continue to oppose engagement in peace negotiations and electoral politics except when such engagement directly contributes to the armed struggle. On March 22, 2014, the Tiamzons were arrested. They remain in custody, although the CPP-NPA assert that their detention is illegal under the JASIG. An NDF spokesman noted that the CPP-NPA has likely already replaced Tiamzon as chairman, but this statement has not been confirmed.⁴²

Wilma Tiamzon (Unknown to 2014): Wilma served as the CPP-NPA's secretary general and as a member of the CPP-NPA's central executive committee. Her husband was Benito Tiamzon, another important CPP-NPA figure. Wilma played a leading role within the CPP-NPA since at least the early 1990s, when she and Benito joined Sison in leading the reaffirmist movement. Beginning in the 1990s, the Tiamzons have overseen the CPP-NPA from within the Philippines. However, the Tiamzons and Sison began to disagree about the movement's strategy in the 2000s.

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Adelberto Silva (2014 to Unknown): Silva allegedly succeeded Wilma Tiamzon as the CPP-NPA's secretary general after her 2014 arrest. He also led the CPP-NPA's National Organization Department and served as an NDF peace consultant. Silva was arrested in 2015, after which his leadership status has remained unclear.⁴⁴

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

- 1969: 60 (Encyclopedia of the Developing World)⁴⁵
- 1987: 25,200 (Armed Forces of the Philippines)⁴⁶
- 1994: 6,000 (International Crisis Group)⁴⁷
- 2009: 4,874 (Armed Forces of the Philippines)⁴⁸
- 2018: 3,700 (Channel News Asia)⁴⁹

D. RESOURCES

From its 1969 establishment until the 1976 normalization of Philippine-Chinese relations, the CPP-NPA received support, weapons, and funds from China. The CPP-NPA also sought support, weapons, funds, and training from like-minded groups overseas, including the Japanese Red Army (JRA), the Maoist factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, the Communist Party of El Salvador, and many other organizations. The CPP-NPA's efforts to build ties with these groups were partially successful.⁵⁰

Generally, the CPP-NPA has not received much financial support from outside entities. It principally finances itself by collecting "revolutionary taxes," a form of extortion in which businesses submit payments to the CPP-NPA in exchange for protection from CPP-NPA attacks. The CPP-NPA also sells campaign permits to political candidates who wish to campaign in areas that the group controls.⁵¹

The CPP-NPA allegedly acquires its weapons—including pistols, assault rifles, machine guns, and grenade launchers—mainly from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) through raids, battles, or illegal purchases. Political candidates have also contributed small arms in lieu of funds for permission to campaign in CPP-NPA-dominated areas. Additionally, the CPP-NPA produces its own anti-tank mines.⁵²

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

The CPP-NPA operates throughout the Philippines. It is strongest in Luzon, Visayas, and Southern Tagalog, but it has also conducted significant attacks in Mindanao's Davao City.⁵³

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY & GOALS

The CPP-NPA seeks to overthrow the Philippine government in favor of a new people's democratic state led by the working class, and the group also seeks to expel U.S. influence from the Philippines. Its other goals include redistributing land to the landless poor and initiating a cultural revolution. The CPP-NPA primarily models its armed struggle on China's Maoist movement, focusing especially on the idea of a protracted people's war and mobilizing the masses in rural areas.⁵⁴

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Passed in 1957, Republic Act No. 1700 banned the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) and any of its successors, including the CPP-NPA.⁵⁵ CPP-NPA leaders have often expressed opposition to engaging in political activity, including negotiations and electoral politics, and have instead emphasized armed struggle. However, despite verbally rejecting legal mechanisms for reform, the CPP-NPA has also sporadically engaged in peace talks with the Philippine government.

In 1973, a commission created by the CPP-NPA founded the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF or NDFP). Attempting to unify and coordinate various leftist groups, the NDF served as an umbrella organization for the CPP-NPA and other mass revolutionary organizations. The NDF has engaged in talks and signed agreements with the Philippine government. Historically, the CPP-NPA has influenced the activities of NDF, and media and academic sources have sometimes described the NDF as the CPP-NPA's political wing. The Philippine government, among others, has used the name "CPP-NPA-NDF" or "CNN" to refer to the whole entity formed by the interconnected CPP-NPA and NDF. Republic Act No. 1700 was repealed in 1992, thus legalizing the CPP-NPA. Regardless, the CPP-NPA has continued to verbally reject legal politics and still does not directly put forward its own political candidates in elections. The NDF has continued to represent the CPP-NPA in official negotiations.⁵⁶

In 1995, under the administration of President Fidel Ramos, NDF and Philippine government leaders signed the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The JASIG paved the way for future peace talks by guaranteeing free and safe movement—without fear of search, surveillance, or arrest—throughout the country for those involved with negotiations, whether Philippine government officials, CPP-NPA members, or other NDF members.⁵⁷ The parties signed another significant agreement in 1998, the Comprehensive Agreement to Respect Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), which was an attempt to protect civilians from the violence between the government and the CPP-NPA.⁵⁸ However, talks broke down soon after CARHRIHL, and conflict resumed at high levels when Joseph Estrada assumed the presidency. The pattern of alternating between negotiations and violence continued throughout the 2000s. When Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo replaced Estrada in 2001, she held some negotiations with the CPP-NPA, but those negotiations stalled after the United States listed the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization at Arroyo's request in 2002.⁵⁹

The CPP-NPA has also allegedly helped establish political parties, which are publicly not linked to either group. Some of those parties have performed well in congressional elections. For example, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, and Anakpawis – three parties thought to be fronts for the CPP-NPA and NDF – won a total of six congressional seats in 2004.⁶⁰

When Benigno Aquino III assumed the presidency in 2010, the government again attempted talks with the CPP-NPA. However, continued fighting and alleged human rights violations by both sides have hindered the talks. The CPP-NPA has continued to conduct attacks and clash with Philippine forces, and the parties have been unable to agree on conditions for the resumption of negotiations. Within the organization, a rift between Sison and the local CPP-NPA leadership has grown due to the former's growing willingness to engage in peace talks and the latter's continued opposition.⁶¹

C. TARGETS & TACTICS

The CPP-NPA has generally focused on building support in rural areas, aiming to inspire a people's democratic revolution among the peasantry. It deploys Sandatahang Yunit Pampropaganda (SYPs), which are armed propaganda units consisting of eight to fifteen fighters. The organization is guided by the Maoist idea of a protracted people's war (PPW), which consists of three stages: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic offensive. The CPP-NPA considers itself to be still in the first stage.

The CPP-NPA has historically used rural-based guerrilla tactics against small police or military units. It has also assassinated several individual Philippine and U.S. government soldiers, police officers, and officials. In the 1980s, it set up "sparrow" units, which consisted of one to five operatives, for urban assassinations. Especially beginning in the 1980s, the CPP-NPA has also engaged in urban guerrilla warfare and attempted more regularized military formations, such as battalions, to engage in large-scale, conventional attacks. In some regions, the CPP-NPA fought in groups of up to two hundred.⁶² However, in the early 1990s, Sison's criticism of these divergences from the strategy of rural-based guerrilla warfare led the CPP-NPA to return largely to its earlier tactics in the countryside.

The CPP-NPA generally targets politicians and government forces—using assassinations, bombs, or other means—but it has also attacked companies that do not pay "revolutionary taxes" to the CPP-NPA.⁶³ Because of its opposition to U.S. intervention and influence in the Philippines, the CPP-NPA has also attacked U.S. interests in the country. It conducted attacks against U.S. military installations before U.S. bases in the Philippines closed in 1992. After 1992, the CPP-NPA continued to target U.S. soldiers, embassy employees, and other personnel.⁶⁴

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

While there is not much information on individual attacks, the CPP-NPA is one of the most active militant organizations in the Philippines and has waged the world's longest Communist insurgency.⁶⁵ The Armed Forces of the Philippines has identified the CPP-NPA as the nation's most serious threat, and, in 2013, the CPP-NPA claimed responsibility for nearly a third of the fatalities caused by terror attacks that year.⁶⁶

August 21, 1971: Three members of the CPP-NPA threw four grenades onto the stage of a Liberal Party rally in Manila's Plaza Miranda. Then-President Ferdinand Marcos was initially blamed for the attack, which had killed much of his opposition (9 killed, 95 wounded).⁶⁷

April 21, 1989: CPP-NPA operatives assassinated Colonel James Rowe, who led a U.S. Army division providing military assistance to the Philippine government (1 killed, 1 wounded).⁶⁸

August 21, 2010: Approximately forty CPP-NPA fighters ambushed a police vehicle outside the city of Catarman, using two improvised explosive devices and gunfire. They killed all occupants of the vehicle (8 killed, 0 wounded).⁶⁹

August 6, 2011: Approximately thirty CPP-NPA fighters kidnapped Henry Dano—mayor of Lingig, Surigao del Sur—and two of his bodyguards. The CPP-NPA released the captives in October after Dano publicly apologized for his alleged human rights violations (0 killed, 0 wounded).⁷⁰

October 3, 2011: Three CPP-NPA units, totaling approximately two hundred fighters, attacked three mining companies in Surigao del Norte. The targeted companies allegedly had not paid the

so-called revolutionary taxes to the CPP-NPA. CPP-NPA fighters took four hostages, who were released shortly, and caused around \$1 billion in damage (3-4 killed, unknown wounded).⁷¹

January 27, 2013: Approximately thirty CPP-NPA fighters fired on a truck carrying policemen and civilians in the town of La Castellana (9 killed, 12 wounded).⁷²

August 15, 2015: A CPP-NPA unit launched two attacks on the same day in the province of Agusan del Sur. The fighters destroyed a truck using an improvised explosive device and later attacked two men, one a civilian, and one a member of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) auxiliary forces. (1 killed, 1 wounded).⁷³

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

- U.S. State Department Foreign Terrorist Organizations: August 9, 2002 to Present.⁷⁴
- European Union Terrorist List: October 28, 2002 to Present.⁷⁵
- Government of the Philippines: December 5, 2017 to Present.⁷⁶

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The CPP-NPA has traditionally depended on rural peasants as its main support base. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, CPP-NPA members focused on building their support in the countryside. They taught and worked alongside peasants, as well as served as guards against bandits. Additionally, CPP-NPA members established important relationships with local leaders in the Catholic Church, leveraging the church's network to reach even more potential supporters. In the 1970s and 1980s, many educated young people from urban areas joined the CPP-NPA's rural bases, especially after President Marcos' 1972 declaration of martial law that curtailed political activity. While the CPP-NPA eventually cultivated some support in urban areas, especially in Manila, the countryside has remained its greatest source of support.⁷⁷

During the 1986 election, CPP-NPA urged the continued rejection of political reform mechanisms through an electoral boycott. However, the organization was sidelined by the People Power Revolution that swept Aquino into office. In the late 1980s, the number of moderate CPP-NPA supporters decreased after a new eruption of violence between the CPP-NPA and the Philippine government that derailed peace talks.⁷⁸

In 2001, in contrast with its strategy in the 1986 election, the CPP-NPA supported the movement to oust then-President Joseph Estrada from office in favor of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. In the same year, Bayan Muna – a political party connected to the CPP and other groups in the Communist movement – was the most successful party in the congressional elections.⁷⁹

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

In its early years, around the 1970s, the CPP-NPA sought support, weapons, funds, and training from like-minded groups overseas, including the Japanese Red Army (JRA), the Maoist factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Sandinistas, the Communist Party of El Salvador, and many other organizations; the CPP-NPA's efforts were partially successful. The CPP-NPA has been linked to several Communist or leftist groups in the Philippines through the NDF, which serves as an umbrella for many organizations, including the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF), the Revolutionary Council of Trade Unions (RCTU), and the Liberated Movement of New Women (MAKIBAKA).⁸⁰

The Second Great Rectification Movement in the early 1990s split the CPP-NPA into reaffirmists and rejectionists, creating splinter groups like the Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB). The relationship between the CPP-NPA and the ABB has been hostile, with clashes between the groups. The ABB has also cooperated in government operations against the CPP-NPA.⁸¹

The CPP-NPA has allegedly cooperated tactically with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF); their cooperation has mainly involved avoiding clashes with each other and the safe movement of CPP-NPA operatives through MNLF- or MILF-controlled areas. The CPP-NPA has never collaborated in attacks with these groups, and the CPP-NPA viewed the MNLF's 1996 peace agreement with the Philippine government as a betrayal of a revolutionary cause. There have been no reported relationships between the CPP-NPA and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) or other militant groups in the Philippines.⁸²

D. STATE SPONSORS & EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

From its 1969 establishment until the 1976 normalization of Philippine-Chinese relations, the CPP-NPA received support, weapons, and funds from China. However, even though the CPP-NPA modeled its armed struggle on China's own Maoist movement, Chinese support for the CPP-NPA seems to have been limited. The CPP-NPA also sought support, weapons, funds, and training from like-minded groups overseas, including the Japanese Red Army (JRA), the Maoist factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, the Communist Party of El Salvador, and many other organizations. The CPP-NPA's efforts to elicit support from these groups were only partially successful. The extent of the group's connection with other foreign groups is unknown. Although the CPP-NPA attempted to expand its presence and support abroad from the 1970s onward – for example, by dispatching representatives throughout Europe and the Middle East – those efforts appeared largely ineffective, especially after the general decline of Communist groups in the late 1980s and 1990s.⁸³

MAPS

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