



Armed Conflicts Report

India - Maoist Insurgency (1980 – first combat deaths)

Update: January 2009

Summary

Type of Conflict

Parties to the Conflict

Status of the Fighting

Number of Deaths

Political Developments

Background

Arms Sources

Economic Factors

Summary:

2008 Fighting between government forces and Maoist insurgents continued through 2008 in a number of eastern states with overall fatalities increasing to around 800, half of which were civilian. Reports are that all parties have used children in armed operations.

2007 Throughout 2007 clashes between Maoist insurgents and government forces resulted in the deaths of 650. In March, over 400 Naxalites attacked a police station in Chhattisgarh, seizing arms and killing dozens. Civilians continue to be intimidated into choosing sides between the Maoists and the government, resulting in widespread fear and insecurity among local populations.

2006 Fighting continued between Maoist rebels and government security forces, resulting in 500-700 deaths. Government response toughened and expanded to include arming and training village groups to fight against rebels. Despite government efforts, Maoist influence appears to be growing and taking hold in a number of Indian provinces.

2005 Fighting escalated following a breakdown in peace talks between the People's War Group and the Andhra Pradesh state government. In late 2004, the PWG merged with the Maoist Communist Centre of India to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist), now the largest Maoist rebel group operating in over nine states. Maoist rebels also increased cooperation with Nepalese Maoist rebels engaged in an insurgency against Nepal's monarchy.

2004 Sporadic conflict between People's War Group (PWG) rebels and government forces continued at a lower intensity than in recent years. The conflict resulted in the deaths of at least 40 people, the majority of whom were members of the police force and TDP party leaders. A three month ceasefire between the government and the PWG rebels led to negotiations but no peace agreement.

2003 The conflict between state security forces and the People's War Group (PWG) intensified in 2003, resulting in approximately 300 deaths – the highest toll in three years. An assassination attempt on Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister by the PWG served to reinforce the government's hard-line position against the rebels.

2002 Fighting between the People's War Group (PWG) and government security forces claimed over 100 lives in 2002. The government renewed a ban on the PWG, jeopardizing a peace dialogue initiated in June.

2001 The PWG increased its attacks against the government in 2001 and some 100 people lost their lives in the fighting. In July, the government of Andhra Pradesh called for talks with the rebels.

2000 The PWG continued its attacks in 2000 after three of its top commanders were killed in December 1999. Police officials estimated 3,000 armed leftist rebels were active in Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring states. Although at least 50 people were killed in 2000, this was a considerable decrease from deaths in 1999.

1999 In 1999 attacks by rebel groups on government forces and civilians continued to be met with summary executions of suspected Naxalites by the police. Over 350 combatants and civilians were killed, a likely increase from 1998 deaths in the conflict

Type of Conflict:

State control

Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government of India:

Indian Army;

State police.

Elections in 2004 resulted in the Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance coalition replacing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition and forming the national government with Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister. India's next national election is scheduled for 2009.

2) State Governments:

State police supported by various local paramilitary groups.

"Recent anti-Maoist measures initiated by the State Police include the January 10 setting up of an Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) to tackle anti-Maoist insurgency operations during any emergency. The State Government [Chhattisgarh] also allocated INR 9.41 billion, a hike of 22 per cent from the 2008 allocation, for the modernization of the Police force." [*Chhattisgarh Assessment 2009*, South Asian Terrorism Portal]

"An Indian state government said on Wednesday it will begin supplying arms to tribes people who have formed vigilante groups to protect themselves from attacks by Maoist rebels." [Mustafa Qureshi, *Associated Press*, July 20, 2005]

Allied with

2) The Salwa Judum Movement:

Created in 2005, Salwa Judum, or "peace mission" is a government-allied civilian militia group that is reportedly supported by the state of Chattisgarh. The group was responsible for a number of attacks on villagers throughout 2007. Reports of its involvement in coercion, human rights abuses and widespread displacement are rampant throughout the area.

"In Chhattisgarh, government security forces and state-government-backed vigilantes called the Salwa Judum are responsible for attacking, killing, and forcibly displacing tens of thousands of people in armed operations against Maoist rebels. The Naxalite rebels retaliate in a brutal manner, abducting, assaulting, and killing civilians perceived to be Salwa Judum supporters. The government has chosen to view those who do not join the Salwa Judum as Naxalite supporters." [*World Report 2009, India*, Human Rights Watch]

"Last summer, an anti-Maoist village defense movement was born, calling itself the Salwa Judum, or Peace Mission. The group has coaxed or hounded thousands of people out of their forest hamlets and into the squalid tent camps, where suspected Maoist sympathizers are detained...The Chattisgarh government has begin to allocate land and money to villagers who agree to abandon their forest homes and build new houses along the road to Bhairamgarh. It also supports the "special police officers" who work arm in arm with the Salwa Judum. So far, 5 000 have been trained, given uniforms and offered what counts here as a generous salary, about \$35 a month." [*The New York Times Online*, 13 April 2006]

2) Rebels: The Communist Party of India (Maoist), created after the 2004 merger of the Peoples' War Group (PWG) and the Maoists Communist Centre, is the largest Maoist rebel group in conflict with the government. Members of the Communist Party of India and other smaller Maoist groups call themselves "Naxalites" after the Indian town of Naxalbari where their movement began more than 25 years ago. Naxalites are believed to number from 10,000-20,000, and are active on a large scale in as many as 13 of India's 28 states, mainly Andhra Pradesh, Jharkand, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa and Chattisgarh. The Andhra Pradesh state government banned the PWG in 1992 and renewed this ban in August, 2006. The Naxalite movement includes a number of other autonomous groups such as the Revolutionary Youth Forum, and the Parakala Dalam.

"According to the State Police establishment, Chhattisgarh is home to roughly 10,000 "highly militarised" Maoists, who are backed by another 35,000-40,000 sangham cadres." [*Chhattisgarh Assessment 2009*, South Asia Terrorist Portal]

"Media reports in early January 2009 indicated the CPI-Maoist's decision to merge its operations in neighbouring Maharashtra with that of the larger and stronger Dandkaranya committee, active in Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh." [*Chhattisgarh Assessment 2009*, South Asia Terrorist Portal]

"Jharkhand secured the dubious distinction of being second only to Chhattisgarh among the States worst affected by Left wing Extremism (LWE)..." [*Jharkland Assessment 2009*, South Asia Terrorist Portal]

"Today the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which exists solely as an underground armed movement with no political representation, is a rigidly hierarchical outfit with toeholds in 13 of 28 Indian states. It stretches from the tip of India through this east-central state to the northern border with Nepal, where the Maoists have set off full-scale civil war." ("In India, Maoist Guerrillas Widen 'People's War'", Sengupta, Sonia, *New York Times online*, April 13, 2006)

"The recent merger of the two largest and best organized groups – the Peoples Guerrilla Army of the People's War Group, or PWG, and the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army of the Maoist Communist Centre of India, or MCCI – under the Communist Party of India, or Maoist, has created what one source described as 'an unparalleled pan-Indian naxal network from South India to the Nepalese border.'" [*JFK Special Warfare Center and School*, February 2005]

Status of Fighting:

2008 Civilians were most affected in the ongoing fighting between Maoist rebels and government security forces. Of the 16 states touched by this conflict, Chhattisgarh and Jharkland were the most affected. One positive note for Chhattisgarh was that fatalities, although still high, were significantly down from 2007. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh, the state with the most Maoist activity a few years ago, has improved security with a corresponding drop in fatality rates. Unfortunately, as conditions have improved in Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh, the Maoist forces seem to have shifted their operations to the state of Orissa where conditions have worsened.

"Chhattisgarh, in 2008, accounted for 39 per cent of the total incidents of Maoist violence that were reported from the entire country. According to the Institute for Conflict Management database." [*Chhattisgarh Assessment 2009*, South Asia Terrorist Portal]

"Jharkhand secured the dubious distinction of being second only to Chhattisgarh among the States worst affected by Left wing Extremism (LWE)..." [*Jharkland Assessment 2009*, South Asia Terrorist Portal]

"Maoist rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of poor farmers and landless labourers, regularly attack government property and policemen. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has described the Maoist insurgency as the gravest threat to India's internal security." [*Reuters*, 14 November, 2008]

"According to the Home Affairs Annual Report, 76 districts in the nine states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal were affected by Naxalite violence." [*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, India, 2008*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, US Department of State]

"All parties to the Chhattisgarh conflict have used children in armed operations. The Naxalites admit that it is standard practice to recruit children age 16 and above in their forces; they have used children as young as 12 in some armed operations. The Salwa Judum have included children in their violent attacks against villages as part of their anti-Naxalite campaign. The Chhattisgarh state police admit that in the past they recruited children under age 18 as special police officers, but claim they did so due to the absence of age documentation and that all children have now been removed from the ranks. Human Rights Watch investigators in Chhattisgarh found that underage special police officers continue to serve with the police and are used in counter-Naxalite combing operations." [*World Report 2009*, India, Human Rights Watch]

2007 Fighting continued between Naxalite Maoists and government security forces throughout the year. The majority of hostilities took place in Chhattisgarh, which turned especially deadly when over 400 Naxalites attacked a Chhattisgarh police station, seizing arms and killing dozens. Civilians are now wedged between joining the Maoist insurgency or supporting the Salwa Judum and face coercion from both sides.

"Security forces have armed poor farmers and tribals with guns while others are encouraged to counter the Maoists with bows and arrows. Scores of Salwa Judum activists were killed last year by Maoists, some massacred in attacks on their camps." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

"Instead of uniting the district, the movement, called Salwa Judum, has forced villagers to choose between two unforgiving opposites, unleashing an unprecedented cycle of killing and revenge as citizens bestowed with emergency police powers sweep through the countryside." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

"The threat posed by the Maoists is widely contested. Like many others, the leader of Salwa Judum, Mahendra Karma, calls them the greatest threat to Indian democracy. But the Naxalites' capabilities are limited. They can carry out quick strikes from their jungle redoubts, experts say, but they cannot take a small district seat like Dantewada, much less Delhi." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

"The line has blurred between the police and the people, and citizens recruited as Special Police Officers (SPOs) attempt to match the Naxalites blow for blow." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

"Up to 400 Naxalite rebels launched 15 March attack on Chhattisgarh police station, killing dozens of officers and escaping with arms, raising fears of increased Naxalite violence." [*CrisisWatch*, 01 April 2007]

2006 Maoists attacks continued, primarily on government and police targets. Civilians were also affected in landmine attacks affecting railway cars and truck convoys. Clashes between state police and rebels also resulted in deaths of members of both parties, and civilians that were caught in the crossfire. Fighting differs from state to state, depending on security and police force responses. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, security forces have been somewhat successful in maintaining control and combating Maoist rebels. The other state that is most affected, Chhattisgarh, has seen an increase in violence between Maoist rebels and villagers who are supported by the government.

"India's Maoist insurgents, also called Naxalites, have expanded their area of operations from just four states 10 years ago to half of India's 28 states today. ... Attacks on police forces, train hijacking, and brutal beheadings are common." (Maoist rebels spread across rural India, Chopra, Anuj. *Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 2006)

"The Maoist menace continues to expand, except where it has been confronted by coherent use of force – as is presently and substantially the case in Andhra Pradesh, where area domination exercise under the leadership of the local Police, backed by the armed reserve forces and the Grey Hounds, and a well-developed intelligence network has succeeded in beating back the Naxalites to a large extent, and has forced their leadership into flight." (*India Assessment - 2006*, South Asia Terrorism Portal)

2005 Violent clashes between Maoist rebels and state security forces and paramilitary groups increased following the breakdown of peace talks between the PWG and the state government of Andhra Pradesh. Rebels continued to employ a wide-range of low-intensity guerrilla tactics against government institutions, officials, security forces and paramilitary groups. For the first time in recent years, Maoist rebels launched two large scale attacks against urban government targets. Fighting was reported in 12 states covering most of south, central and north India with the exception of India's northeast and northwest.

"Hundreds of heavily armed Maoist rebels stormed a jail in eastern India, killing at least two people and freeing about 350 prisoners, including many fellow guerrillas, police said on Monday. The rebels entered Jehanabad town in impoverished and crime-ridden Bihar state on Sunday night in small groups, cut off power and raided the prison in one of the biggest ever attacks by Maoist guerrillas, a police officer said. The rebels, who were estimated to number 700, killed a prison guard and a member of a private army of upper caste landlords in a gunbattle with policemen. The guerrillas also abducted at least two dozen members of the Ranvir Sena, the private army of upper caste landlords, who were jail inmates." [*Reuters*, November 14, 2005]

"Succumbing to naxal threat, over 10,000 people in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh have moved to other areas in the past two months. 'In the last two months, over 10,000 people have left their villages, leaving behind belongings. The villagers are being provided all facilities, including tents and medical aid by the state government,' state's Revenue and Law Minister Brij Mohan Agrawal said. Over 100 people including 30 security personnel have been killed, in several incidents during the last two months." [*The Times of India*, September 14, 2005]

"Violence surged after peace talks with the Maoists broke down in January. The guerrillas have killed more than 175 people since the talks broke down." [*Reuters*, August 17, 2005]

2004 Sporadic, low-intensity fighting between the PWG and government forces continued for most of the year. Attacks on police and TDP party officials, believed to be carried out by the PWG, accounted for most major incidents and deaths. A three-month cease-fire, announced in late June, led to failed negotiations between the government and the PWG. A few days into the cease-fire, an attack attributed to the PWG placed the cease-fire in jeopardy.

2003 The conflict in Andhra Pradesh intensified as Naxalite rebel groups, in particular the People's War Group (PWG), continued guerrilla attacks on police and government targets while the security forces stepped up counter-insurgency efforts. An October assassination attempt on Chief Minister Naidu was consistent with the PWG's practice of targeting government officials to draw attention to their cause.

"The activities of Maoist guerrilla groups registered an upsurge in Andhra Pradesh despite significant successes by the state police in their operations against the rebels, a top official said here Wednesday." [*Indo-Asian News Service*, December 31, 2003]

"The People's War has suffered a major setback in Nalgonda and Rangareddy districts as well as in Hyderabad city [western Andhra Pradesh] with the death of Nomula Ramana Reddy [rebel leader] ... in an encounter on Sunday." [*thehindu.com*, April 20, 2003]

2002 The PWG intensified its attacks against politicians, police officers, and land and business owners in response to a July ban imposed on the group by the Andhra Pradesh government. The government responded by tightening security, allegedly ordering attacks on suspected PWG members by state police and the "Green Tigers". Police forces continued to enjoy virtual impunity for the murder and torture of PWG rebels during police "encounters". The Maoist Communist Center rebels intensified their armed campaign against Indian security forces following the killing of their leader by police in December.

"The Maoists have stepped up their campaign against Andhra Pradesh's politicians and policemen following the fracture of a peace dialogue between the rebels and the government in July." [*The Hindustan Times*, October 14, 2002]

"In Andhra Pradesh, the Disturbed Areas Act has been in force in a number of districts for over 4 years. Human rights groups allege that security forces have been able to operate with virtual

impunity under the act. They further allege that Andhra Pradesh police officers train and provide weapons to an armed vigilante group known as the 'Green Tigers', whose mission is to combat the Naxalite group in the state. Little is known about the size, composition, or activities of this group. Court action in cases of extrajudicial killings is slow and uncertain." [US State Department, *Country Report on Human Rights Abuses*, March 2002]

2001 The PWG increased attacks against the government, escalating the conflict.

"At least 17 people have died in clashes between an outlawed left-wing group and police in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Thirteen members of the People's War Group were killed by police, while the rebels killed at least four civilians. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu, has strongly condemned the rebels in what is being described as one of the bloodiest periods in the groups history." [CNW, June 10, 2001]

2000 The PWG continued its attacks in 2000 after three of its top commanders were killed in December 1999. Police officials estimated 3,000 armed leftist rebels were active in Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring states.

1999 In 1999 violent action by rebel groups against government forces and civilians continued to be met with summary executions of suspected Naxalites by the police.

Number of Deaths:

Total: More than 6,000 people have been killed as a direct result of the conflict in the last twenty years, with an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 deaths occurring in the last decade.

"More than 6,000 people have died during the rebels' decades-long fight for a communist state in parts of India." [BBC News, December 19, 2007]

"More than 6,000 people have been killed in the violence." ('Indian rebels kill 18 villagers', *The Associated Press*, New Delhi, Monday, July 17, 2006)

"The leftist insurgency has cost more than 4,500 lives in Andhra Pradesh since 1990, according to the South Asia Intelligence Review." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, October 29, 2003]

2008 South Asia Terrorist Portal (SATP)'s death count across the six states (Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh) which saw the majority of the fighting totalled 794. This included 399 civilians, 221 security force personnel, and 174 insurgents. The total count given by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies came to 864, and the number provided by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs was 721.

[Sources: SATP state assessments for the states noted above (<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/Assessment/index.html>); "Naxal Conflict in 2008: An Assessment", Rajat Kumar Kujur, *IPCS Issue Brief No. 93*, February 2009; "India govt admits Maoist-Naxal challenge as 'formidable'.", Sanat Mokerjee, *The Independent*, July 15, 2009]

2007 According to news reports, this conflict resulted in 650 deaths during 2007. Included are 240 civilians, 218 security personnel, and 192 militants. [Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)]

"Of the 144 people killed in Naxalite-related violence during the first three months of the year, 70 percent were from Chhattisgarh." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

2006 500-750 people were estimated to have been killed this year. Just under half of these were Naxalites, and approximately one-third were civilians.

"So far this year, the conflict has killed nearly two Indians a day." ("In India, Maoist Guerrillas Widen 'People's War'," Sengupta, Sonia, *New York Times online*, April 13, 2006)

"This year alone, fighting between rebel and government forces has claimed more than 500 lives - many civilian." ('Maoist rebels spread across rural India', Chopra, Anuj. *Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 2006)

2005 Over 700 people were reported killed this year in violent clashes. Over a third of those killed were civilians.

"At least 12 paramilitary soldiers have been killed in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand in a mine blast, the authorities say." [*BBC News*, October 8, 2005]

"The guerrillas, who say they are fighting for the rights of landless labourers and peasants, have killed more than 175 people – 150 of them civilians – since peace talks with the state government broke down in January." [*Reuters*, August 15, 2005]

2004 More than 500 people were killed in sporadic, low-intensity fighting, a reduction from recent years. Most victims were members of the police forces or the TDP party.

"Police are blaming the rebel People's War Group (PWG) for the attacks - the PWG has called for a boycott of the state and federal elections...They say at least 16 political activists have been killed in the past two months, 13 of them members of the TDP." [*BBC News*, March 18, 2004]

2003 According to independent media reports, as many as 500 people may have been killed in the conflict throughout the year, with Maoist rebels comprising over half of this figure.

"The rebels committed 908 [criminal] offences, including 151 murders, during 2003. The PWG [People's War Group] alone was responsible for 713 offences, including 128 murders. Fourteen policemen and 55 politicians ... were among those killed by the guerrillas. ... During the year, police killed 172 Maoists as against 87 killed during 2002. They also arrested 1,051 Maoists while 865 rebels surrendered." [*Indo-Asian News Service*, December 31, 2003]

2002 An estimated 140 people had been killed in fighting between the PWG and government forces throughout the year.

2001 According to media reports, an estimated 100 people were killed.

"The authorities in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh say nine policemen and a civilian have been killed by a land mine. Police have blamed the attack on the outlawed People's War Group." [*BBC*, August 20, 2001]

2000 Although at least 50 people were killed in 2000, this was a considerable decrease from 1999.

1999 Over 350 combatants and civilians were reported killed in 1999, a likely increase from the 1998 deaths in the conflict. [212 Naxalites killed. 151 (including 36 police) killed by Naxalites.]

"Since 1980 clashes between police and Naxalite Maoist revolutionaries of the Peoples' War Group (PWG) have occurred in northwestern Andhra Pradesh. Over the past few years, hundreds of policemen and suspected Naxalites have been killed, according to press reports and human rights organizations. According to local human rights groups, 135 persons were killed in police 'encounters' in the first 6 months of the year." [*India Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 2000].

1998 At least 300 according to a combination of police and press figures.

"As many as 160 people, including 42 policeman, were killed in extremist violence till July this year while 110 ultras died in encounters with police, he [the state director-general of police] said." [*Andhra Pradesh Times website* (www.aptime.com/fnews.html), November 2, 1998]

1997 At least 350 according to one report.

"As of September police had killed 102 Naxalites in approximately 80 'encounters.' ... As of September, Naxalites had killed 44 police personnel and 202 civilians." [*India Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department,

January 30, 1998]

1996 Police reported 156 deaths from 800 "violent incidents."

"Police said the Naxalites were behind nearly 800 violent incidents in Andhra Pradesh last year, killing 156 people." ["Rebels kill 16 at police station in India," *CNN*, (cnn.com), January 10, 1997]

Political Developments:

2008 Elections held in Chhattisgarh state late in the year saw the BJP party and Chief Minister Raman Singh re-elected. Reports credit the government's strong response to Naxalism as one reason for the victory. One of the main election issues was the behaviour of the Sulwa Judum movement which Indian and Chhattisgarh state governments maintain is a "voluntary and peaceful initiative by local people against Naxalites". This claim is made in spite of evidence of Sulwa Judum abuses found by many including Human Rights Watch. In response to these findings, in April 2008 the Supreme Court of India ordered the National Human Rights Commission to investigate complaints of Sulwa Judum abuses.

"Raman Singh's return to power in Chhattisgarh will give further fillip to the strong anti-naxal stance his government had taken in the previous five years." [*The Times of India*, December 9, 2008.]

"Even though some officials acknowledge that Salwa Judum's activities have exacerbated the violence, resulting in loss of civilian life and property, the Indian central and Chhattisgarh state governments have failed to prevent or stop these abuses or hold those responsible accountable. In April 2008 the Supreme Court of India ordered the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to investigate complaints of abuse." [*Being Neutral is Our Biggest Crime: Government, Vigilante, and Naxalite Abuses in India's Chhattisgarh State*, Human Rights Watch, July 2008]

"Police claim the low level of Maoist violence during the November 2008 elections to the State Legislative Assembly and a 53 per cent voter participation in the Maoist affected Bastar region reflected a declining militant capacity to take on the might of the State." [*Chhattisgarh Assessment 2009*, South Asia Terrorism Portal]

2007 Civilians continue to be caught in the crossfire between Maoist insurgents and government security forces. Intimidation on both sides has caused widespread fear amongst local populations of the Chhattisgarh state. Conflict over resources continues, as 85% of India's coal reserves come from the five states most affected by the Naxalite uprising.

"The Naxalites' ability to harass and terrorize, however, does have an effect on India's development. They can shut down certain roads at night and make a few districts like Dantewada off-limits for security reasons. But the greatest impact could be yet to come, as a growing thirst for electricity leads power companies toward the Naxalites' remote strongholds." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

"Some 85 percent of India's coal reserves come from the five states most affected by Naxalites. Since India is still heavily reliant on coal, "Naxalism puts almost half of India's total energy supply at serious political risk," says a report by the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security in Washington." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

2006 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called the Naxalites "The single biggest internal security challenge ever faced by our country." Government response to the rebels has toughened, and now includes supporting vigilantes with arms and training to fight against the rebels. The state of Chhattisgarh has seen the formation of a village-defense group called the Salwa Judum which recruits villagers to fight against the rebels, and has government support. The government of Andhra Pradesh extended its ban on the Maoists by another year, to August 2007. The Maoist leadership was substantially weakened this year, with the arrest of one major party leader, and the death of two others.

"To tackle the threat, Delhi is planning to deploy 11 battalions of paramilitary police and is

sponsoring opposing vigilante groups who espouse violence... The Indian government's tougher approach to the growing Naxalite problem includes arming thousands of villagers with guns, spears, and bows and arrows." ('Maoist rebels spread across rural India', Chopra, Anuj. *Christian Science Monitor*, August 22, 2006)

"Last summer, an anti-Maoist village defense movement was born, calling itself the Salwa Judum, or Peace Mission. The group has coaxed or hounded thousands of people out of their forest hamlets and into the squalid tent camps, where suspected Maoist sympathizers are detained...The Chhattisgarh government has begun to allocate land and money to villagers who agree to abandon their forest homes and build new houses along the road to Bhairamgarh. It also supports the "special police officers" who work arm in arm with the Salwa Judum. So far, 5,000 have been trained, given uniforms and offered what counts here as a generous salary, about \$35 a month." ('In India, Maoist Guerrillas Widen 'People's War"', Sengupta, Sonia, *New York Times online*, April 13, 2006)

2005 Peace talks between Maoist rebels and state officials in Andhra Pradesh broke down early in the year due largely to ongoing police attacks on rebels. In late 2004, the two largest Maoist groups, the People's War Group and the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army of the Maoist Communist Centre of India, merged to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist). Maoist rebels in India and Nepal also increased cross-border cooperation. In response to an increase in the intensity and territorial reach of rebel activity, the Indian federal government announced a counter-strategy which included plans to increase inter-state police cooperation and funding for poverty reduction in rural India where extreme socioeconomic inequality and poverty provide recruits for the rebels.

"The Indian government has said it will tackle rising Maoist violence through better police coordination and poverty reduction plans." "The Indian Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, who chaired the meeting, said the federal government will help set up joint regional task forces to share intelligence on Maoist activity across state borders. Mr Patil said the government will spend nearly \$366 million a year to modernise the police forces, the Associated Press news agency reports." [*BBC News*, September, 19, 2005]

"Maoist rebels this week announced their withdrawal from peace negotiations with the state government following a series of encounters with police." "Mediators appointed to arbitrate between the government and the Maoists say the government is at fault for the recent downturn, as it failed to restrain the police." [*BBC News*, January 18, 2005]

2004 A government decision to lift a ban on the PWG and a three month cease-fire failed to lead to a formal peace agreement. An attack on police forces just a few days into the cease-fire may have added to problems for the talks.

2003 The peace process initiated in 2002 proved to be short-lived as relations between the Naxalites and the state government of Andhra Pradesh worsened, as reflected in the attempted assassination of Chief Minister Naidu in October. Naidu subsequently announced his intention of "crushing" the Naxalites if he were re-elected in state elections in early 2004. The rebels further disrupted the political process by hindering the movement of election officials in remote areas. Meanwhile, the government of the state of Bihar indicated a willingness to hold talks with the People's War Group, an invitation welcomed by the group.

"For the first time in three decades since the naxalite movement took roots in the State, the Bihar Government has decided to hold talks with the banned outfits. The main naxalite group, the People's War (PW), has welcomed the initiative though with reservations." [*thehindu.com*, October 14, 2003]

2002 In May, the PWG agreed to a month-long ceasefire to facilitate a peace process launched in early June. However, in July, the Andhra Pradesh State Cabinet extended a ten-year ban on the PWG for another year, a move that seriously jeopardized the progress of the peace talks.

"The government of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh has welcomed a month-long ceasefire announced by the communist rebel organisation, the People's War Group. The

authorities say they're ready to begin talks, and have agreed to provide safe passage to the rebel delegation -- although they have ruled out sending government representatives into the group's jungle hideouts to negotiate." [BBC News, May 9, 2002]

"Talks between the authorities in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and a Maoist rebel organisation, the People's War Group, (PWG), are deadlocked. Both sides said the stumbling block was the government ban on the PWG." [BBC News, June 10, 2002]

2001 In response to an upsurge in violence, in July the government of Andhra Pradesh said it was willing to hold talks with the outlawed Maoist People's War Group. The government also stated that issues surrounding the violence needed to be addressed, such as rural poverty and unemployment.

"The government in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh has said for the first time that it is willing to hold talks with the outlawed Maoist People's War Group. The announcement follows an upsurge of violence in recent months by the PWG – which is the prominent among several Maoist rebel groups in the region. The authorities say they are now evolving a new strategy to fight rural poverty which, they believe, is the main cause of the violence. Andhra Pradesh Home Minister Devender Goud said the government believed the problem could not be tackled by the police force alone, and that several other departments would have to be involved. He said the core issues such as poverty and unemployment have to be urgently addressed. The aim of the new strategy would be to distribute land among the poor, ensure speedy functioning of various agencies and departments in remote villages." [BBC, July 31, 2001]

Background:

Taking their name from the Indian town of Naxalbari and inspired by Chinese leader Mao Zedong, "Naxalites" have advocated peasant revolt against India's caste system and oppression by landlords and government officials in the state of Andhra Pradesh since 1968. In 1980 the insurgents, especially the militant Peoples War Group (PWG), began guerrilla-style attacks on police who responded with extra-judicial executions of suspected Naxalites in "encounter" killings. Incidents of the latter declined in 1995 and 1996 when the state government unilaterally refrained from many enforcement actions. Following continued Naxalite violence, the state renewed counter-insurgency operations in August 1996, reintroduced a ban on the PWG first imposed in 1992, and allegedly established the "Green Tigers" armed vigilante group to combat Naxalites. In recent years, conflict casualties have escalated as combatants target not only rivals but also civilians suspected of supporting rivals. In late 2004, the PWG merged with the Maoist Communist Centre of India to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and fighting has spread to most of rural India outside Kashmir and the north-eastern Indian states, with significant conflicts in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar. In large parts of rural India the rebels form a parallel government including a parallel justice system and taxation that in many rural areas enjoys significant legitimacy. The rebels count on popular support among India's numerous rural poor who sympathise with their anti-caste and anti-landlords politics.

In response to rebel attacks, a government-allied civilian militia group called Salwa Judum, or "peace mission" was created in 2005. Reportedly supported by the state of Chattisgarh, the group was responsible for a number of attacks on villagers throughout 2007. In 2008 reports of Salwa Judum abuses grew to the extent that in April, the Supreme Court of India ordered the National Human Rights Commission to investigate these reports.

"Neither the government nor Naxalites leave any room for civilian neutrality. Seeking protection from one side leaves area inhabitants at risk of attack by the other. Local journalists and activists who have investigated or reported abuses by Salwa Judum and government security forces have been harassed and described as "Naxalite sympathizers" by the Chhattisgarh state government and live in fear of arbitrary arrest under the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2005." [Being Neutral is Our Biggest Crime: Government, Vigilante, and Naxalite Abuses in India's Chhattisgarh State, Human Rights Watch, July 2008]

"Last summer, an anti-Maoist village defense movement was born, calling itself the Salwa Judum, or Peace Mission. The group has coaxed or hounded thousands of people out of their forest hamlets and into the squalid tent camps, where suspected Maoist sympathizers are detained...The Chattisgarh government has begin to allocate land and money to villagers who agree to abandon

their forest homes and build new houses along the road to Bhairamgarh. It also supports the "special police officers" who work arm in arm with the Salwa Judum. So far, 5 000 have been trained, given uniforms and offered what counts here as a generous salary, about \$35 a month." [*The New York Times Online*, 13 April 2006]

"The naxal movement, which was inspired by Chinese leader Mao Zedong, took its root in tribal dominated Srikakulam agency in Andhra Pradesh in December 1968. It started basically as a revolt against the oppression of the landlord class on poor peasantry It soon spread to coastal areas and then to Telengana and Rayalaseema districts." [*The Hindustan Times*, January 14, 2000]

"As of September, Naxalites had killed 44 police personnel and 202 civilians.... In areas under their control, Naxalites dispense summary justice in 'people's courts' which in some cases condemn to death suspected police informers, village headmen, and others deemed to be 'class enemies' or 'caste oppressors.' The Naxalites extort money from business firms, and railway services in one area had to be canceled in July and August due to PWG destruction of stations, track and signaling equipment. The MCC and the CPI(M-L) Party Unity and Liberation factions are essentially engaged in caste warfare. Their victims, in addition to police and local government officials, include suspected police informers, village headmen, and landlords whom they accuse of oppressing scheduled caste members." [*India Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1998].

"The Disturbed Areas Act has been in force in a number of districts in Andhra Pradesh for more than a year. It gives police extraordinary powers of arrest and detention. Human rights groups allege that security forces have been able to operate with virtual impunity in parts of Andhra Pradesh under the act. They further allege that Andhra police have contributed to the establishment of an armed vigilante group known as the 'Green Tigers,' whose mission is to combat Naxalite groups in the state. The NHRC is investigating some 285 reported cases of so-called 'fake encounter deaths' allegedly committed by the Andhra police in connection with anti-Naxalite operations." [*India Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1997]

Arms Sources:

Government: see Kashmir.

The Rebels: some reports suggest that the rebels steal the majority of their weapons from the police and the government and obtains the remainder from other sources, including Maoist rebels in Nepal.

South Asia Terrorist Portal and others report that, in addition to looting weapons from paramilitary forces and police, the rebels are increasingly developing a domestic weapons manufacturing capability.

"Following the April 25, 2005 seizure of rockets from the Anantapur District, Director General of Police (DGP) Swaranjit Sen had stated that the Maoists were in an 'experimental stage' of using rocket launchers made with crude technology. However, the rockets seized in the latest recoveries of September 8, 2006, shows a marked improvement." [*Maoists: Deadly Arsenal*, South Asia Terrorist Portal, September 18, 2006]

"In February, here in Chhattisgarh, rebels attacked a warehouse of a state-owned mining company, killing nine security officials and making off with 19 tons of explosives. They build their own weapons, including crude pistols and mortars." ("In India, Maoist Guerrillas Widen 'People's War'", Sengupta, Sonia, *New York Times online*, April 13, 2006)

"The Naxalites have become even more daring, seizing police posts overnight and robbing weapons, holding a train hostage, and recently seizing 20 tonnes of high explosive from a mining concern." ('India steps up drive against Maoists', Lyon, David. *BBC News*, 10 May 2006)

"There are concerns that Maoist rebels in Nepal are finding common cause with groups here.

India's two main leftist insurgent groups have increased cooperation with Maoist rebels who control much of Nepal, sharing arms, training sites, and sanctuary. [*The Christian Science Monitor*, October 29, 2003]

"Suspected PWG Naxalites loot approximately nine tonnes of explosives being transported in a truck from Uttar Pradesh's Lalitpur to a copper project in Malajkhand, near Laungur Udghati, Balaghat district, Madhya Pradesh." [*South Asian Intelligence Review*, October 6, 2002]

Economic Factors:

Both government and rebel representatives suggest that the roots of this conflict are primarily economic. Andhra Pradesh is one of the poorest regions in India and suffers from extreme wealth inequality. Conflict over resources is growing with India's increasing demand for coal-fired electricity. 85% of India's coal reserves come from the five states most affected by the Naxalite uprising. In 2008 it was reported that the Maoists control large swathes of mineral-rich forests and mountains in a dozen states.

"Chhattisgarh is among a dozen Indian states where Maoists control large swathes of mineral-rich forests and mountains, from where they attack government buildings and security forces." [*Reuters India*, November 25, 2008]

"Some 85 percent of India's coal reserves come from the five states most affected by Naxalites. Since India is still heavily reliant on coal, "Naxalism puts almost half of India's total energy supply at serious political risk," says a report by the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security in Washington." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 01 May 2007]

"The Maoists say they are fighting for the rights of millions of India's poor labourers and landless peasants in an insurgency that has killed thousands of people in India." ('Indian state orders probe into Maoist surrenders', *Reuters*, Mon 8 Jan 2007)

"The leftist insurgency ... is fueled by ineffective and corrupt governance, entrenched feudalism, and militant ideology, analysts say. 'At the heart, it's a land war between the upper class and the lower classes,' ... The rebels survive through extortion of landowners and businessmen. They have 'redistributed' 350,000 acres of farmland ..." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, October 29, 2003]

"Leaders cutting across party lines say that solution to the naxal problem could only come by accelerating development in the region, considered one of the most backward areas in the country." [*The Hindustan Times*, January 14, 2000]

Project Ploughshares
57 Erb Street West
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 6C2
tel (519) 888-6541 fax (519) 888-0018 Email: plough@ploughshares.ca