



Armed Conflicts Report

Philippines-CPP/NPA (1969 - 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

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Summary:

2008 Skirmishes continued between the New People's Army (NPA) and military forces. The NPA continued its strategy of disrupting and drawing "revolutionary taxation" from mining operations, while the military targeted mining regions as a means to sever NPA funding and encourage foreign economic development. Hundreds became displaced this year, mainly in these mining regions. The government's Social Integration Program (SIC) provided financial assistance for 225 rebels in exchange for surrender, and may explain claims that NPA numbers have been reduced. Attempts to resume formal peace talks in late 2008 failed, as did attempts by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to create a joint campaign with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao. To date, no government or military personnel have been persecuted in relation to extrajudicial killings of leftist activists, despite a UN report and government taskforce documenting military involvement in cases of "disappearance."

2007 The international community has sharply criticized the Philippine government for its role in the extrajudicial killings of leftist activists since 2001. The United Nations began an inquiry into these killings, with the report due in 2008. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo remained committed to defeating the National People's Army (NPA) by the end of her presidential term in 2010, but government forces continued to struggle in the battle against the 7,000-strong NPA. Elections in May were considered free and fair, but increased violence and accusations of electoral fraud marred the results. Thousands of people were displaced due to the conflict this year.

2006 Rebels were responsible for bombing many private companies, and attacking police and military targets. The Philippine government announced funding to increase its anti-rebel program, strengthening its offensive and increasing clashes between the military and rebels. An estimated 200 combatants were killed.

2005 Peace talks between the CPP/NPA and the government remained stalled as escalated fighting claimed over 100 people. The RPM-M, a breakaway faction of the CPP/NPA in Mindanao, signed a ceasefire agreement with the government.

2004 Amid failed peace negotiations sporadic clashes claimed the lives of over 60 people, primarily combatants. The communist rebel groups remained on the US list of terrorist organizations and refused to negotiate further until removed.

2003 Sporadic clashes continued between the communist rebels and government forces, resulting in approximately 40 deaths. In spite of the lingering conflict, talks between the two sides resumed mid-year, but with little success. The government continued strengthening its military forces, with the aid of US arms and

training, as part of the global "war on terror".

2002 The conflict resulted in the death of at least 30 people this year as communist rebels continued to attack army personnel and civilians, and the government intensified its counterattacks by drawing on US counter-insurgency training and support.

2001 Clashes were reported throughout the year including one of the bloodiest in over a decade in November. In June, the government suspended peace talks after a congressman was killed by the rebels.

2000 There were sporadic clashes between the government forces and the communist rebels. At least 50 people (civilians and Philippine soldiers) were killed.

1999 Following the suspension of the peace talks in May, fighting between government forces and communist rebels escalated. At least 15 people died due to fighting and many more due to extrajudicial and political killings.

1998 Despite renewed peace efforts in 1998, the Philippine Army was reassigned counter-insurgency operations on the island of Negros as part of an escalating government campaign against communist rebels.

1997 After a short respite for peace talks, in April government forces were ordered to resume full hostilities against the communist rebels. Meanwhile, rebel attacks increased, especially on the National Police.

1996 Although there were few reported direct clashes between communist rebels and government forces, both sides continued to perpetrate political and extrajudicial killings.

1995 Fighting between communist rebels and government forces declined, but human rights abuses, including killings, continued, mostly by military and paramilitary groups.

Type of Conflict:

State control

Parties to the Conflict:

1) a) Government, led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, first elected in January 2001:

- Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP);
- Philippine National Police (PNP).

Arroyo was re-elected in a controversial and contested vote in June 2004 for another 6-year term as president. Elections held in May 2007 for both houses of congress as well as provincial and local governments were generally considered free and fair, with the opposition largely dominating the races. President Arroyo remains in power until her term ends in 2010, but her presidency remains controversial.

"President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has won a fresh six-year term in office, a congressional committee that finished the contentious vote count said yesterday." [*Arab News*, June 21, 2004]

b) The United States of America:

Since 2002, the US has had a significant military presence in the Philippines in order to train the latter's troops in "counter-terror" operations. Although under the Philippine constitution the US is presently only permitted to arm and train members of the Philippine Armed Forces, there are indications that this may lead to the direct involvement of US forces in the conflict. While relations between the US and Philippines were strained in 2004 with the Philippine decision to pull troops out of Iraq to save a hostage, the country remains a major recipient of US "security aid".

"An American colony for the first half of the 20th century, the Philippines receives the biggest U.S. security aid package in Asia to help it fight Muslim rebels in the country's south and communist insurgents across the archipelago." [*Reuters*, August 9, 2004]

"A 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement allows foreign forces to train Philippine troops. But a ruling last

year by the Philippine Supreme Court ... specified that foreign troops could not take part in offensive combat operations and could only fire weapons in self-defense. A key issue to be worked out, (Philippine Defense Secretary) Reyes said, is whether U.S. troops would be prohibited from opening fire except when fired on, or whether the Americans would be allowed to shoot while simply under threat of potential attack." [*washingtonpost.com*, March 1, 2003]

2) Rebels:

a) The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), led by party founder Jose Maria Sison, and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA); and the New Democratic Front (NDF), an umbrella group that represents the NPA and 13 smaller communist guerrilla groups in political talks. It is reported to have between 7,000-8,000 members. According to the PNP, NPA numbers were reduced to 5,700 by the end of 2007. Although official CPP policy prohibits the recruitment of child soldiers, a 2008 report by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers cited estimates that 3-20% of these forces are under the age of 18.

"There were continued reports of the involvement of children in armed groups including the CPP-NPA [...] the children who joined were predominately from large, impoverished, rural families in areas where economic opportunities were limited and government delivery of social services was weak." [Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Global Report 2008 - Philippines*]

"In brief, the CPP-NPA's ideology is based on Mao-Zedong considers the current Filipino government 'semi-feudal, elitist and a puppet of the imperialist U.S.A.' It aims to overthrow it and install a Maoist regime instead. To achieve this, the rebel group conducts a 'protracted people's war that from the countryside aims to encircle the cities, until the government collapses.'" [*World Politics Watch*, 26 March, 2007]

b) Several armed factions have broken away from the CPP/NPA including:

- The Revolutionary Army of the People
- The Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao (RPM-M) which signed a ceasefire with the government in October 2005.
- The Proletarian Revolutionary Army

Status of Fighting:

2008 Reports of NPA and CPP activity were sporadic. According to the PNP, the number of NPA fighters was reduced to 5,700 by the end of 2007. Nonetheless, the 67 existing NPA fronts remain active. Clashes in 2008 are believed to have displaced thousands, especially indigenous communities in Surigao del Sur, Davao del Norte, and Compostela Valley. Conflict particularly escalated in the Compostela Valley, a mining province in Mindanao. The government has intensified its counterinsurgency efforts, in accordance with its 2007 plan *Oplan Bantay Laya 2* (Operational Plan Freedom Watch), which seeks to eliminate the NPA by 2010, and its overall economic plan to encourage investment. According to government data, 225 NPA rebels have surrendered themselves, as well as 149 firearms, in exchange for financial assistance through the government's Social Integration Program in 2008 (SIP).

"Under a military operation entitled *Oplan Bantay Laya 2* (Operational Plan Freedom Watch), the stated aim of which is to crush the NPA by the end of Arroyo's term in 2010, the government accelerated counterinsurgency operations in central Luzon, southern Tagalog, Bicol, eastern Visayas, southern Mindanao, and northern Mindanao. In 2008, armed confrontations between the AFP and the NPA displaced thousands of people. Indigenous communities in Surigao del Sur, Davao del Norte, and Compostela Valley were most affected." [Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009*]

"Over the last nine months, fighting between the government and the NPA rebels has been escalating in the Compostela Valley, a mining province on Mindanao, where Monkayo is located. The area has become a centre of communist rebel activities due to the huge amount of money generated from extortion, said Torres, adding violence has been on the rise in the area where mainly small miners operate." [*Reuters*, November 17, 2008]

2007 The New People's Army (NPA) continued to attack mines and businesses with international backing or ownership. They also attacked local town halls and other buildings during raids in which they seized weapons and supplies. The NPA continued to disguise themselves as government soldiers during many of these raids. A ceasefire was declared by the Philippine government, but the rebels refused to comply. Further attempts at a ceasefire throughout the year were met with criticism by the NPA, and as a result, peace talks did not commence. Thousands were displaced by the conflict again this year.

"The Philippines has renewed an offer to communist rebels to accept a ceasefire deal as a step to restarting peace talks on ending a four-decade rebellion, an aide of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said on Thursday. But a rebel spokesman criticized the truce offer, saying to government must reopen peace talks without any conditions." [Reuters, 24 January, 2008]

"Communist rebels in the Philippines said on Wednesday they attacked a mine majority-owned by Xstrata Plc to 'punish' the Switzerland-based firm protect the environment and safeguard the rights of local tribes." [Reuters, 2 January, 2008]

"The Philippine government declared a 22-day ceasefire with the NPA earlier this month but the rebels refused to recognize it and killed three marines in an ambush in the western province of Palawan on the first day of the ceasefire." [Reuters, 23 December, 2007]

"Nearly 3,000 tribespeople have fled their mountain homes in the southern Philippines as the military stepped up an offensive against insurgents of the communist New People's Army (NPA), officials and church leaders said on Monday." [Reuters, 3 December, 2007]

"Disappearances and murders have plagued the Philippines in recent years and rights activists accuse the armed forces of systematically targeting leftists. The military has repeatedly denied this, but the problem and the controversy continue." [VOA News, 27 November, 2007]

"Communist rebels abducted three soldiers in a raid on an army base in the southern Philippines, the fourth such sting in as many months in the restive region. Around 40 members of the New People's Army (NPA) disguised as government troops, seized 15 weapons in the attack on Saturday in Montevista, a small-scale mining town on the island of Mindanao, Major Rodrigo Sosmena said." [Reuters, 8 October, 2007]

2006 NPA attacks on private businesses continued, including bombings of telecommunications towers and mining companies, with damages estimated at over US\$1 million. These attacks were following the companies' refusal to pay extortion fees to the rebels. Attacks and weapons raids on government, military and police targets were common, with rebels often posing as soldiers to gain access. Other attacks included burning a bus and raiding a school, holding approximately 50 children and teachers hostage. The Philippine government launched major anti-communist operations, retraining and redeploying 3,000 soldiers that had been stationed in the Mindanao region and storming rebel strongholds. The police force was granted permission to join the military in fighting the rebels, as police targets have become increasingly common. The fighting caused the displacement of roughly 2,500 people.

"Communist rebels have destroyed P43 million (\$ 860,000) worth of properties of companies in the Philippines that refused to pay revolutionary taxes in the first nine months of the year, the military said Tuesday. According to military records, the guerrillas have launched 38 attacks against various companies in the countryside from January to September, during which they torched or bombed various equipment and properties... The military records did not yet include the October 8 attack on a Japanese-funded international airport project in Silay City, Negros Occidental province, 495 kilometres south-east of Manila, where P30 million worth of equipment were burned." ['Damages from communist rebel attacks reach P43M', *Manila Bulletin*, October 24, 2006]

"At least 3,000 troops are being retrained and redeployed as part of a two-year campaign to crush the communist insurgency in three key areas around the Philippine capital, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said Tuesday." ['3,000-strong battalion redeployed for anti-communist offensive', *Agence France Press*, June 20, 2006]

2005 Low-level fighting escalated in the second half of the year as the NPA stepped up attacks on the military, police and private businesses. Fighting was concentrated in the northern Luzon island and in north and west Mindanao island in the south of the country. Government troops also clashed with the RAP, a breakaway faction of the NPA. In October, another breakaway faction, the Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao (RPM-M) signed a ceasefire agreement with the government.

"The security think-tank, Pacific Strategies and Assessments, records that the number of recorded NPA incidents rose from a little more than 30 per month in October 2004 to more than 40 incidents a month after June-- the start of the opposition effort to oust Arroyo." [AFP, November 22, 2005]

"The Philippines has signed a ceasefire agreement with a small faction of communist guerrillas on the southern island of Mindanao, officials said on Friday...the truce would cover hundreds of villages in northern, western and central areas of the island where the Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao (RPM-M) operates." [Reuters, October 28, 2005]

2004 A failure to reach a peace agreement with the NPA extended the conflict. Although there were few major battles, a series of minor clashes killed over 60 people.

"Despite the start of the exploratory talks between the government panel and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in The Netherlands, sporadic gunbattles between government forces and New People's Army (NPA) rebels continued yesterday..." [Manila Bulletin, May 4, 2004]

2003 Sporadic fighting between the New People's Army (NPA) and government forces occurred throughout the year. The communist rebel fighters continued guerrilla-style tactics against government forces, primarily on the country's largest islands of Luzon and Mindanao. There were reports of the NPA recruiting children into their ranks.

2002 The NPA called for intensified assaults during the Christmas season, refusing to observe a traditional Christmas time truce. The military pledged that the support received from the United States to fight Muslim extremists would also be used against the NPA.

"Welcoming the U.S. action, [Philippine Defense Secretary Angelo] Reyes said that his own military, having made gains against Abu Sayyaf, would focus more intently on combatting the communists. He said the U.S. training that Philippine forces are receiving is 'multipurpose' and could be applied to fighting communists as well as the remnants of Abu Sayyaf." [Washingtonpost.com, August 13, 2002]

2001 A number of attacks and counterattacks by the Philippines army and the rebels were reported, even as peace negotiations were attempted.

2000 There were sporadic clashes between the government forces and the communist rebels.

1999 Clashes between government forces and communist rebels increased following the suspension of peace talks in May 1999.

"Communist leader Jose Ma. Sison declared yesterday that the government 'asked' for the spate of New People's Army attacks when President Estrada terminated peace talks with the National Democratic Front last month. Sison said NPA guerrillas would heighten 'tactical offensives' nationwide, 'especially now that the peace process between the government and the (NDF) is already terminated.' NPA rebels on June 11 raided a police camp in Batuan, Bohol, and seized about 80 high-powered firearms without firing a shot." [Philippine Daily Enquirer, June 20, 1999]

1998 Despite renewed peace efforts in 1998, the Philippine Army re-initiated counter-insurgency operations on the island of Negros from national police as part of an escalating campaign against communist rebels.

1997 After a short respite for peace talks, government forces were ordered to resume full hostilities against the communist rebels in April. For their part, rebel attacks increased, especially on the National Police.

"Hostilities Resume: The Army and National Police were ordered to resume full hostilities against the communist New People's Army. Operations were suspended in December as talks went on with Communist Party leaders living in exile in the Netherlands. The suspension expired April 6. The guerrilla factions are also preparing to resume fighting." [*Asia Week*, Week of May 2, 1997]

1996 Although direct clashes between combatants declined, human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, continued. Most of these were perpetrated by the armed forces, the national police, poorly-trained civilian militias, and private security forces.

Number of Deaths:

Total: As many as 40,000 combat-related deaths have occurred since 1969.

"The conflict has killed 40,000 people and stunted economic development in rural communities, scaring potential investors as the rebels exact 'revolutionary taxes' on plantation, logging and mining companies." [*Reuters*, 24 January, 2008]

"Talks to end the conflict, the longest communist rebellion in Asia that has killed more than 40,000 people, have been stalled since August." [*Reuters*, June 14, 2005]

2008 The US State Department cites Philippine police and military figures that the NPA killed 140 members of the AFP in 2008. Commission on Human Rights, an independent government body, received complaint of 173 arbitrary killings throughout the year in the Philippines.

2007 Approximately 200 government soldiers and New People's Army rebels were killed as fighting continued this year. May elections brought a significant increase in violence, as over 120 civilians and politicians were killed leading up to and during the election process. Extrajudicial killings remained a serious problem for the government, but there was a substantial decrease in political killings this year. An estimated 62 extrajudicial deaths occurred in the first half of 2007, down from 148 in the same time period last year.

"Communist rebels killed seven Philippine soldiers on Wednesday in a dawn ambush in a northern province already wracked by election-related violence. Over 120 people have been killed during campaigning for congressional and local elections on May 14 and the military had warned the communist New People's Army would step up its insurgency while votes are still being counted." [*Reuters*, 16 May, 2007]

"The Philippine human rights group Karapatan says there have been about 800 extrajudicial killings since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo came to power in 2001. One hundred eighty six activists and others have gone missing...The group says from January to July there have been only 19 disappearances, compared with 60 for the same period last year. In addition, Karapatan counts 62 political killings up to July, compared with 143 for that time frame in 2006." [*VOA News*, 27 November, 2007]

2006 Approximately 200 people, mostly rebels and government forces, were killed in clashes and bombings throughout the year. (compiled from *Asia Pacific Daily Report*, 2006 news reports)

2005 Over 100 people, mostly rebels and government soldiers, were killed in a series of clashes and bombings. In June government troops clashed with rebels from the breakaway Revolutionary Army of the People and 24 combatants were killed. In October heavy fighting between the NPA and the Philippine army claimed at least 60 people.

"In the last two weeks, the NPA has said it has killed about 60 soldiers in 74 encounters in the Bicol region of the main island of Luzon and in northern and eastern areas of the southern island of Mindanao." [*Reuters*, October 13, 2005]

2004 Over 60 people, mainly combatants, were killed in clashes between government forces and the NPA.

"Thirty members of the New People's Army (NPA) have been killed by the military in its continued assault operations against communist rebels this month, which also claimed the life of an Army

officer, in Eastern Samar" [*Manila Bulletin*, July 19, 2004]

"Despite the start of the exploratory talks between the government panel and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in The Netherlands, sporadic gun battles between government forces and New People's Army (NPA) rebels continued yesterday as six communist dissidents and a member of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) were killed, while three other militiamen were wounded during two separate fierce clashes in Northern Mindanao." [*Manila Bulletin*, May 4, 2004]

2003 Independent media reports indicate that at least 40 people, including both rebel and government fighters, were killed in the fighting this year.

2002 Media reports suggested that at least 30 people, mostly rebels, were killed in the fighting.

"On the kill ratio, there were 4.5 NPAs killed or wounded versus one AFP or PNP killed or wounded. There were also increased number of returnees, arms surrendered or confiscated, and increase in special operations conducted by government forces.' [Philippine Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye] said." [*Manila Times*, December 10, 2002]

2001 According to media reports at least 40 people died as a result of the fighting in 2001, the majority of them combatants. In November one of the worst clashes in a decade occurred between soldiers and rebels leaving 28 dead.

2000 At least 50 people (civilians and Philippine soldiers) were killed this year as a result of the ongoing clashes.

1999 At least 15 people died as a result of fighting and more than 100 due to extrajudicial and political killings.

1998 Fewer died in fighting than those reported for 1997, but extrajudicial killings exceeded 200.

1997 At least 30 deaths were due to renewed fighting and likely more due to extrajudicial killings.

1996 Based on early reports, there were likely over 100 political killings during 1996.

1995 More than 56.
(172 political and extrajudicial killings in 1995.)

1994 At least 200.

Political Developments:

2008 The persecution, abduction and/or killing of leftist civil society leaders, accused of organizing "fronts" for the NDF, continued to be condemned by human rights organizations. A UN report described the government's traditional explanation for these disappearances and killings, that the CPP was purging itself, as completely baseless and "a cynical attempt to displace responsibility". In more positive developments, a group of activists known as the "Tagaytay Five" were released after a court found their 2006 arrest and detainment to be unlawful. In November 2008, a government taskforce released a list of 260 "disappearances", indicating military responsibility in 19 cases. To date, however, no soldiers have faced justice for involvement for the abduction, "disappearance" or killings of civilians. A CPP statement released in early 2008 called the prospects for renewed peace talks "dim and nil". Nonetheless – and although the military accused the CPP of using the capture of Lieutenant Vicente Camayo as a "bargaining chip" – an informal meeting between the government and the CPP was hosted in Norway. In December 2008, the CPP rejected the government's demand of indefinite ceasefire as a precondition for resuming formal peace talks, and no new meetings were scheduled. In late 2008, officials from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rejected a CPP call for a joint "intensified campaign" in Mindanao (see Mindanao conflict); however, the parties are said to have a "tactical alliance" insomuch as they have a common enemy but different aims in Mindanao.

"On May 15, 2008, unidentified gunmen shot and killed Celso Pojas, secretary-general of a leftist farmers' organization in Davao City, in southern Mindanao. Pojas had campaigned against military operations that allegedly displaced indigenous people and farmers in Compostela Valley. At this

writing, the police have not arrested any suspects. On the same day, in Cagayan Valley, unidentified men abducted Randy Malayao, former vice president of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines and a consultant to the National Democratic Front (NDF), a coalition of underground left-leaning organizations. A few days later, the military produced him, saying he was a rebel leader involved in the killing of former congressman Rodolfo Aguinaldo. At this writing, he remains in jail in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Valley, facing murder and attempted murder charges." [Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009*]

"The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has rejected an appeal by the Communist Party of the Philippines for a joint "intensified campaign" against the Arroyo government. Eid Kabalu, MILF's civil military affairs chief, said yesterday the communist rebels' campaign has always been different from theirs. 'While we have a tactical alliance, still we will not join them. Our focus is confined only in Mindanao and we don't want to expand our concern,' Kabalu said." [*Arab News*, December 27, 2008]

2007 Elections held on May 14 for both houses of congress as well as provincial and local governments were generally considered free and fair, however they were blemished by increased violence and accusations of vote-buying. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's plan to oust the New People's Army (NPA) by 2010 got a slow start, with only 5 of 100 NPA camps being dismantled in the first half of the year. Towards the end of the year, President Arroyo was attempting to revive an anti-subversion law that would punish mere membership with the NPA, but the opposition continues to argue that any such law would impede on human rights. Accusations of political killings and kidnappings of leftist activists brought international condemnation, although the government continued to deny involvement in any such activities. An offer of amnesty by President Arroyo to NPA rebels was rejected as a political ploy by the group.

"On May 14, approximately 73 percent of registered citizens voted in mid-term elections for both houses of congress and provincial and local governments. The election was generally free and fair but was marred by violence and allegations of vote buying and electoral fraud." [U.S. Department of State – *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Philippines 2007*, 11 March, 2008]

"Under fire for its human rights record and for falling behind the 2010 goal, the military re-adjusted its anti-communist strategy this year focusing less on combat operations and more on information campaigns and development projects to counter civilian support for the NPA. With its new strategy 'Bantay Laya II,' the military is predicting that 80 percent of the NPA's 100 bases will be dismantled by 2010, a tall order given that less than 20 camps have been removed since the beginning of 2002. The army wants to flush the 6,300-member NPA out of around 19 bases in 2007. It removed only 5 in the first half." [*Reuters*, 13 November, 2007]

"The Philippine army is pushing for tougher laws to help crush nearly 40 years of communist rebellion, favoring legislation similar to the internal security acts enforced elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the military chief said on Friday...On Thursday, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said she was supporting moves in Congress to revive an anti-subversion law that, among other provisions, would punish mere membership of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Arroyo was apparently trying all possible tools to defeat the 6,000-member communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels before she steps down in June 2010." [*Reuters*, 14 December, 2007]

"'In some parts of the country, the armed forces have followed a deliberate strategy of systematically hunting down the leaders of leftist organizations,' said Philip Alston, a New York University law professor charged by the U.N. Human Rights Council with investigating extra-judicial killings in the Philippines. Alston called on President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to stop further killings and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. The view echoes a recent demand by the U.S. Senate that the Philippines prosecute human rights violators – including soldiers – before it can receive additional military aid from the United States." [*Reuters*, 26 November, 2007]

"In late October, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a new measure called the writ of amparo, giving people a new weapon to find out about missing persons. Under the measure, the military can be forced to prove it is not holding missing persons. This shifts the burden of proof to the state in cases of political violence in which the government has refused to provide vital evidence.

Judges and police can even inspect military bases." [VOA News, 27 November, 2007]

"The United Nations, Amnesty International, the European Union and the United States have sharply criticized the Philippines over extrajudicial killings and Karapatan spokesman Clamor says that has helped. The Philippine military has repeatedly denied direct involvement in political killings and abductions, blaming many of the cases on purges within the communist New People's Army." [VOA News, 27 November, 2007]

"The continuing conditions of poverty and mis-governance are the structural causes of the rebellion,' Santos said. In the meantime, corruption is rampant. Transparency International consistently rates the Philippines among the world's most corrupt countries, while, in its latest corruption perception index, the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd. rated the country to be the most corrupt in East Asia." [World Politics Watch, 26 March, 2007]

2006 A coup attempt in February prompted President Arroyo to declare a state of emergency that lasted for one week. President Arroyo's troubles continued with the opposition filing an impeachment complaint in June, and discussions taking place between the opposition and the CPP regarding a possible alliance. The government declared an intensified campaign against the communist insurgents, putting 1 billion pesos (US\$19million) toward military and logistical efforts. The government also passed a law abolishing the death penalty in June. The CPP-NPA saw the arrest of a leader, Delfin de Guzman, alias "Rafael Cruz", and the surrender of a party organizer Eutequio A. Pones, alias "Ka Chong Uy" and his assistant Danilo M. Semproso, alias "Ka Omar.

"Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye laid down the government's three-pronged approach in its anti-insurgency crackdown a day after President Arroyo ordered the release of P1 billion to beef up the military arsenal and logistics against the rebels. 'The government shall pursue its campaign through a combination of military and police action, rural development to ease poverty and legal actions in order to constrict the influence of its leaders, here and abroad,' he said in a statement." ['Palace Vows to Defeat Insurgency', Manila Bulletin Online, June 18, 2006]

2005 The CPP refused to enter into peace talks with the Philippine government as long as the CPP/NPA remained listed as a terrorist organization by the US and the EU. President Arroyo survived a year of political scandals involving electoral fraud and corruption as Congress dismissed impeachment calls in September. The president's political troubles hampered the restart of peace negotiations throughout the year.

"Communist rebels accused Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on Thursday of scuttling peace talks aimed at ending decades of conflict after the government revoked the rebel leaders' immunity from arrest. The government said on Wednesday that it had revoked the immunity that applied to about 100 Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) members engaged in peace negotiations, who could now face arrest and prosecution." [Reuters, October 6, 2005]

"Communist insurgents on Saturday said they would not resume peace talks with the Philippine government unless US and European governments strike them from their lists of terrorist organizations. The statement from the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political wing of the insurgent Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), confirmed that the peace process was at a standstill despite earlier hopes that formal talks could resume next month. [Agence France-Presse, September 10, 2005]

2004 Official talks between the government and the Communist rebels were "indefinitely" suspended by the rebels in August because the NDF remained on the US terrorist organization list.

"President Gloria Arroyo on Tuesday offered to create a new amnesty commission, spearhead development projects in conflict areas, hold inter-faith dialogues and implement 'affirmative action' to end Muslim and communist insurgencies." [Agence France Presse, September 7, 2004]

"Philippine rebel group National Democratic Front (NDF) has 'indefinitely' suspended peace talks with the government since its political and armed wings are still on the US terrorist organization list, a local newspaper reported Tuesday." [Xinhua, August 17, 2004]

2003 In spite of occasional outbreaks of violence, efforts at resolving the conflict continued. The alliance between the US and Philippine governments was strengthened when the latter was designated a Major Non-NATO Ally of the US in May. The ceasefire signed between the government and the largest Muslim rebel group (MILF) in July may impact the NPA as government forces will likely be redeployed against the communist rebels. In November, President Arroyo declared that she would run in the May 2004 presidential election, contrary to earlier statements.

"Talks to end the insurgency broke down in 2001 although Philippine officials said last week that both sides had reached an agreement in principle to resume negotiations soon." [*Reuters*, July 14, 2003]

"The visit of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Washington and the designation of the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) of the US marks the beginning of a new phase of increased US military assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 28, 2003]

2002 The United States provided military support and training to the Philippines military in Operation "Shoulder to Shoulder" which the government used to step up security measures against the CPP and NPA, both of which were placed on the US government's list of foreign terrorist organizations. The national police also deployed 500 plain-clothes police officers or "secret marshals" in response to the NPA's refusal to observe the traditional Christmas truce.

2001 In April, the Philippine government and rebels met for peace talks in Oslo, Norway. The talks began on a positive note with both sides hoping for peace within 18 months. However, by June the negotiations stalled after the rebels killed a congressman.

"The two sides in a 32-year armed conflict in the Philippines took what they hope is a key step towards peace by discussing social and economic reforms to root out poverty at the heart of a communist rebellion. Though they released few details of the discussions, negotiators from both the government and the communist rebels said they were optimistic about possible changes. Despite continuing violence at home and disagreement on how to implement a previous accord, the sides claimed progress in a three-step process aimed at forging a peace in 18 months." [*The Guardian*, April 30, 2001]

"The negotiations stalled in June after the rebel killings of a congressman and other local officials." [*The Washington Post*, December 10, 2001]

2000 Following the suspension of peace talks in 1999, the peace process remained stalled.

1999 Peace talks between the government and rebels were suspended in May following the Senate's endorsement of the Visiting Forces Agreement that allows US forces to conduct joint military exercises with their Filipino counterparts.

"Communist rebels have suspended peace talks with the Philippine government in protest over the Senate's endorsement of the Visiting Forces Agreement allowing the resumption of large-scale military exercises with the USA. The National Democratic Front said it will resume talks only after Joseph Estrada term ends in 2004." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, June 9, 1999]

1998 A month after newly-elected President Joseph Estrada signed an August human rights accord with communist rebels, the government postponed planned peace talks.

"The human rights accord [signed by newly-elected President Joseph Estrada August 8] is the first of four accords that hopes to amicably settle three decades of insurgency. The three other accords cover social and economic reforms, political and constitutional reforms. And the disposition of the armed forces." [*ABS-CBN NewsOnline*, September 1, 1998]

"The government postponed the resumption of peace talks with communist rebels ... The talks were previously scheduled on Sept. 11 in the Netherlands." [*Ibid*, September 5, 1998]

1997 In November the government suspended more than two years of peace talks with Netherlands-based NDF leaders.

1996 Peace talks between the government and the NDF remain stalled.

"The present round of talks between the Philippine government and the Holland-based NDF is now on its third year, but have yielded little beyond accords on procedural issues." ["Philippines: Filipino Leftists May Also Do a Guatemala," Johanna Son, *InterPress Service*, September 24, 1997]

1995 Formal peace talks between the NDF and the government collapsed immediately after opening in Brussels in June. In contrast, the government reached an October peace settlement with military rebels who had attempted seven coups between 1987 and 1990.

"The Philippine government moved to close a bloody chapter in its history last week by making peace with military rebels, but the accord has instead sparked a debate about whether victims of past coup attempts got justice. The agreement, the first to emerge from peace talks with communist rebels and Muslim secessionists, grants 'full and unconditional amnesty' to military rebels. In turn the 5,000 rebels affected by the peace pact will turn over their anti-tank weapons and mortars and be reinstated into the military." [*InterPress Service*, 18 October 1995]

Background:

Since 1969, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA), have fought the national government for political control and land reform. The NPA's armed struggle against military forces, police, and civilian militia units resulted in heavy casualties during the 1980s. Failed 1986 peace talks with the rebels were not revived until after the government's 1992 National Unification Commission established an amnesty and negotiation process. In 1998, a month after newly elected President Joseph Estrada signed an August human rights accord with communist rebels, the government postponed planned peace talks. In spite of renewed efforts in 1999 and 2001, the peace process remains stalled. The global "war on terror" has impacted upon the conflict as Philippine government forces have received external arms, funding and training, mostly from the US, in order to defeat the rebel fighters. President Gloria Arroyo announced in 2007 an intensified campaign against the rebels, with the goal of destroying the group by 2010.

Arms Sources:

The USA is the largest recent supplier of arms to the Philippines. Other suppliers include Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Australia, Taiwan, Israel and others. The communist rebels are armed with weapons captured or illegally purchased from government forces, and there have also been reports of the Chinese government shipping arms to the NPA. In 2002, the United States offered a military training and support package to the Philippines government to help fight Muslim extremists. The government pledged to use the support to also fight the communist insurgency.

[Sources: *SIPRI Yearbook 2002-2005*, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1999-2002*, *The Military Balance 2000-2001 to 2004-2005*]

"Altogether...Washington budgeted \$284.8 million in military aid to the Philippines over US Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2004." [Robert Karniol, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, January 19, 2005]

"The PAF [Philippine Air Force] has a fleet of 11 C-130/L-100 aircraft, which are vital to Manila's lift capabilities in its campaign against communist and Muslim secessionist rebels...Tactical lift was bolstered with the delivery this year of the first six of 20 reconditioned UH-1H utility helicopters from Singapore Technologies Aerospace at a cost of \$12 million. The USA is also providing 48 UH-1H helicopters..." [Robert Karniol, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 22, 2004]

"The US government has recently supplied military equipment worth over US \$100 million to the Philippine government. The equipment included helicopters, transport planes and 30,000 M16 rifles. ... There is already a thriving illegal market in small arms in the Philippines and there are

fears that the injection of military equipment from the USA - which includes small arms - may contribute to a further proliferation of these weapons. Through loss, theft or illegal sale, Philippine government munitions sometimes end up in the hands of criminal and armed political groups. ... The Chinese government has reportedly shipped arms to the New People's Army ..." [*Amnesty International*, June 4, 2003]

Economic Factors

The CPP/NPA/NDF oppose the foreign ownership of Philippine's resources; thus, mines, plantations, logging concessions, construction companies and other foreign owned business tend to be the targets for their attacks. Gold mining areas in Compostela have become the main funding source for the New People's Army, according to military officials. However, rather than seizing and selling these resources, the NPA finances itself through extortion and protection rackets, dubbed "revolutionary taxation." The army estimates that the CPP/NPA raised almost 1 billion pesos in 2008 from this process of "revolutionary taxation", as well small-scale mining and marijuana cultivation. The government's plans to attract \$10-13 billion of investment by 2013 has been hampered by the ongoing conflict with the CPP, among other issues. Meanwhile, the defence budget increased by 20% in 2008, with another 9.6% jump planned for 2009.

The rich potential for mineral extraction in the Philippines, along with other geopolitical reasons, may explain the continued financial and military support of nations such as the United States.

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