

Insurgency Profile

How fares the insurgency? To this question, the usual, convenient recourse is to quantify.

Over the last few months, we have been treated to three different quantitative pictures of the insurgency situation: the "strategic analysis" of the Combat Research Department of the AFP Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations released July 1989; the CPP statement on the twentieth anniversary of the New People's Army (March 29, 1989); and recently declassified reports of several regional commissions of the CPP submitted to the 10th Central Committee plenum held during the first quarter of 1987 in Polangui, Albay. The latter were among documents retrieved by the AFP when they arrested CPP Secretary-General Rafael Baylisis last year.

The AFP report attempts a description of CPP-NPA decline. For this year, the AFP anticipates a 5% reduction in the number of guerillas of the NPA, along with a 9% decline in the number of barangays "controlled" by the rebels. The number of effective guerilla fronts is reported to have decreased from 71 in 1986 to only 61 this year. The AFP predicts these to decrease to only 45 before 1990.

The AFP study reports a decline in the number of guerillas from 25,200 to 23,060 by the end of 1988. By the end of 1989, the AFP expects the number of NPA fighters to go down further to 21,907 guerillas. How the study was able to arrive at such exact numbers was never made clear.

The same study estimated that 20.3% of barangays were "influenced" by the rebels in 1986. This went down to 19.4% in 1987 and 18.7% by the end of 1988. By December this

year, the AFP expects to bring down the number of "influenced" barangays to 16.82%.

The CPP statement, on the other hand, puts the number of guerillas "armed with high-powered rifles" at 10,000. In addition, there were 20,000 fighters "with inferior weapons" bringing the total up to 30,000. The grossly rounded figures provided by the CPP contrasts rather oddly with the exact numbers offered by the AFP.

In addition, the CPP statement puts the number of guerilla fronts at "more than 60" encompassing 65 out of the country's 73 provinces. This includes 800 out of the country's 1,500 cities and municipalities or a total of 12,000 barangays. The same statement claims the "continuous growth of the revolutionary movement" and the "further acceleration of the armed struggle". It reiterates earlier projections that "it is reasonable to aim for total victory in the national democratic revolution within the next 10 years".

Among the documents captured during the Baylisis arrest were the reports of the Central Luzon Commission (CLC), the Visayas Commission (VISCOM), the Mindanao Commission (KOMMID) and notes on the report of the Southern Luzon Commission (SLC). Missing were the reports of the Northern Luzon Commission and the Metro-Manila-Rizal Commission. These documents give a different profile of the insurgency.

The CLC reports 260 Party branches operating in 96 towns (1001 barangays) in the region. Party membership was placed at 3,000. They have 77 "partisan operatives", 200 militias and 340 belonging to the Yunit Gerilya. There are 455 "NPA members" and 508 high-powered firearms.

Although the notes on the SLC report did not contain the number of Party cadres, they did report a "regular force and staff" (presumably NPA) of 1,500. The militia was placed at 2,000; Yunit Gerilyas at 500; Partisan Operatives at 150; "organized mass base" at 100,000. The number of high-powered firearms was placed at 1,000.

The VISCOM reports Party membership at 13,804 (including those attached to the NPA). Of these, 5,698 were full members and 8,106 were candidate members. There are 3 NPA companies in Samar, 3 "fighting fronts" of 2 companies each in Negros and Panay and "platoon-size levels" in Cebu and Bohol. The number of high-powered firearms in the region was placed at 1,880.

The KOMMID reported its strength at 6,553 Party members; 1,200 Yunit Gerilyas; 50 Partisan Operatives and 2,100 in the Regional and Front Staffs (note that these categories have overlapping memberships, e.g. a Party member may also be counted in the category of Partisan Operatives or Regional Staff). Total

firearms (without discriminating between "high-powered" and "inferior") was counted at 3,995.

Because the regional reports were intended for internal, top-level CPP assessments rather than for propaganda purposes, we have reason to hold these figures to be more credible than those provided by the AFP "strategic analysis" or the CPP anniversary statement.

Assuming that the armed strength (at even 1986 levels) of the Northern Luzon and Manila-Rizal Commissions combined does not exceed that of KOMMID (a very safe assumption), then the totals suggested by available figures fall significantly below the claims of both the CPP anniversary statement and the AFP "strategic analysis".

The rather inflated claim of the CPP statement is quite understandable. But what inspires the inflated figures of the AFP's "strategic analysis", particularly as this "study" claims "gradual decline" in rebel strength?