

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

1. What is the geographic range of the RHB (Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan), also referred to as the RHB-ABB?
2. What is the relationship between the RHB and the NPA? (Is it such that the NPA would pursue RHB targets?)
3. It appears that the RHB targets government officials (including municipal officials). Is there evidence that they also target their families?
4. Do RHB acts of violence show any priorities, eg. political assassinations, criminal activities, fund-raising etc?

RESPONSE

1. What is the geographic range of the RHB (Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan), also referred to as the RHB-ABB?

The information in the sources consulted, indicates that the activities of the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) are mainly based in central and northern Luzon. There are also reports of the RHB being active in the Bataan area. A map of the relevant regions is provided as an attachment (Central Luzon Valley – Philippines 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000* – Attachment 1). Following are several articles which detail RHB activities in these areas.

A recent article from *The Manila Times*, dated 15 June 2005, reports on an encounter between RHB and the security forces in Central Luzon:

...security forces claimed that they wiped out the remnants of the communist Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) after soldiers and policemen engaged and killed 15 rebels in a three-hour firefight in Barangay San Nicolas in Mexico, Pampanga, on Sunday...

Reliable sources say the RHB rebels encountered by government troops maybe the last group from the movement given the major setbacks they have undergone due to a series of counterinsurgency operations by the military.

The RHB-MLPP is a breakaway group of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and is led by Luisita de la Cruz, Caridad Magpantay Pascual and Frank Pascual. The group was formed in the late 1990s after they were expelled from the CPP-NPA.

(Lazaro, Gilbert, Roxas, Mark Louie and Espinosa, Len 2004, '11 Troops killed, 3 wounded in ambush at Bessang Pass' *The Manila Times*, 14 June –

<http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2005/jun/14/yehey/prov/20050614pro6.html> – 14 November 2005 – Attachment 2).

In 2003, an article from inq7.net website also reported on anti-insurgency campaigns in Central and Northern Luzon involving the RHB:

At least 64 rebels and 44 soldiers and policemen were killed in the government's anti-insurgency campaign in Central Luzon and Northern Luzon this year, military records show.

The armed forces of the Philippines' Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) based in Tarlac City also said it captured 68 rebels in the Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera and Central Luzon...

The "commendable performance" of government forces reduced the number of rebels in those regions from 1,526 last year to 1,108 in the first week of December, said Lieutenant General Romeo Dominguez, Nolcom chief...

Dominguez said only 4 per cent of almost 8,000 villages in these regions remained under the influence or control of the NPA and its rival communist faction Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan.

(Orejas, Tonette & Visaya, Villamor Jr 2003, 'Anti-Communist War Casualty count in 2003 stands at 108', inq7.net website, 25 December – http://www.inq7.net/reg/2003/dec/26/reg_1-1.htm – Accessed 17 November 2005 – Attachment 3).

A number of other articles also documented RHB activities in Northern Luzon. On 3 July 2003 *Sun-Star Pangasinan* website reported on the discovery of an RHB safe house "at the boundary of Pangasinan, Tarlac, and Zambales provinces":

JOINT elements of the provincial and regional mobile police forces recovered four grenade rifles and ammunition in a rebel safe house they over ran last Sunday.

The safe house was located at the boundary of Pangasinan, Tarlac, and Zambales provinces.

This was learned Wednesday from Insp. Arnold Rasote of the 106th provincial mobile group who said they combed the Pangasinan side of the Zambales Mountain together with members of the regional mobile group.

"The house could have been used by the rebels for safekeeping of their firearms, especially at night when they move about in the mountain to ease themselves of heavy loads," he said during the Police Desk on the Air program of Super Radyo 1548.

Rasote, however, said these rebels had nothing to do with the assassination of Tayug Mayor Guerrero Zaragoza in eastern Pangasinan.

He disclosed that the rebels operating in western Pangasinan belong to the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), a breakaway group from the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA). ('Police overrun rebel safe house' 2003, *Sun-Star Pangasinan* website, 3 July –

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/pan/2003/07/03/news/police.overrun.rebel.safe.house.html>
– Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 4)

A 2003 article published by *The Manila Times* also maintains that the RHB “mainly operates in the jungles of Northern Luzon” (“3 Communist rebels slain in separate clashes with soldiers’ 2003, *The Manila Times* internet edition, 7 September – <http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:VNjhcw20uMAJ:www.manilatimes.net/national/2003/sept/07/metro/20030907met9.html+Philippines+npa+rhb+clashes+OR+splinter+OR+based+OR+operations+OR+clashes+OR+clashed&hl=en> – Accessed 16 November 2005 - Attachment 5).

Other reports noted RHB activities in the Bataan area. A 2005 article published on the *Sun-Star Pampanga* website details the arrest of three RHB members in the Bataan district:

Three suspected Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) members were reportedly killed in an encounter with joint elements of Bataan Provincial Police office (PPO) and the Regional Intelligence Office 3 (RIO-3) at Sitio Tutuban, Barangay Sto. Domingo, Orion, Bataan (Dagumboy, Marna H 2005, ‘3 ‘Hukbong Bayan members’ killed in Bataan clash’, *Sun-Star Pampanga* website, 5 February – <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/pam/2005/02/05/news/3.hukbong.bayan.members.killed.in.bataan.clash.html> – Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 6).

In 2003, *The Manila Times* also reported the arrest of suspected RHB members in Balanga City in Bataan:

In Bataan, combined elements of the military and the police announced the arrest Wednesday of three suspected members of the breakaway communist group Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan in Bgy. Camacho, Balanga City (Palangchao, Harley & Esconde, Ernie B. 2005, ‘2 Soldiers Die, 5 Others Hurt In Clash With NPAs’, *The Manila Times* online edition 7 February – <http://66.102.7.104/search?q=cache:xHtxjwm3Hn0J:www.manilatimes.net/national/2003/feb/07/prov/20030207pro1.html+site:www.manilatimes.net+”Rebolusyonaryong+Hukbong+Bayan”&hl=en> – Accessed 14 November 2005- Attachment 7)

A statement published by the NPA, on the Philippine Revolution Web Central website in 2004, also confirmed the RHB’s activities in Central and Northern Luzon. The NPA claims that only a handful of the group remains in Bataan and Zambales. They also state that the RHB “have been monitored as trying to worm their way into areas outside Central Luzon, like the Southern Tagalog region and now Eastern Visayas... They are also known to be roving in some barangays between Hinabangan and Paranas”. The NPA claim to have been involved in an incident “in Sitio Lim-ao, Brgy. Macalpe, Hinabangan, Western Samar”. However, the NPA’s assertions that the RBH are expanding their operations into the Eastern Visayas and Western Samar areas, were not substantiated by any other reports:

A unit of the NPA’s Arnulfo Ortiz Command had an encounter last July 20 with the counterrevolutionary bandit group Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) in Sitio Lim-ao, Brgy. Macalpe, Hinabangan, Western Samar. The incident occurred around 4:00 in the afternoon. The Red fighters were able to seize the initiative and to send the RHB gangsters fleeing in all directions...

The Efren Martires Command wishes to clarify to the public that the RHB is counterrevolutionary, anti-people, criminal and a tool of the fascist AFP. It was set up in 1997 in Central Luzon by the “Marxista-Leninistang Partido ng Pilipinas” (MLPP). The MLPP is composed of renegade leaders and members of the Communist Party of the Philippines in

Central Luzon, who were expelled from the CPP for factionalism, sabotaging the revolutionary movement and refusal to rectify their errors. The RHB and the MLPP have since degenerated into counterrevolutionary and criminal activities. Because of the NPA's active pursuit and exposure of the RHB's real nature, only a handful of the bandit group remains in Bataan and Zambales. But they have been monitored as trying to worm their way into areas outside Central Luzon, like the Southern Tagalog region and now Eastern Visayas...

Here in Eastern Visayas, the RHB was first monitored in February 2002, estimated to be squad-sized and armed with assorted long and short firearms. They are also known to be roving in some barangays between Hinabangan and Paranas ('Regarding the July 20 encounter between the NPA and the RHB bandit group' 2004, Philippine Revolution Web Central website, 25 July – <http://www.philippinerevolution.org/cgi-bin/statements/statements.pl?author=emc;date=040725;language=eng> – Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 8).

2. What is the relationship between the RHB and the NPA? (Is it such that the NPA would pursue RHB targets?)

The information in the sources consulted indicates that the relationship between the NPA and RHB is quite volatile. Most reports refer to the two as 'rival groups'.

In a statement issued on 25 July 2004, the NPA denounces the RPA as a "counterrevolutionary bandit group". The NPA states that "it is the policy of the revolutionary movement break up and smash the RHB and all counterrevolutionary and criminal groups in the Red territories":

The revolutionary movement in Central Luzon has documented the following counterrevolutionary and criminal offences of the RHB: collaboration with the AFP-PNP's counterrevolutionary campaign; serving as the private army of local politicians and gambling lords like the notorious Bong Pineda; extorting from the masses and small businessmen; abduction and disappearance of a Central Luzon CPP cadre; multiple murder; multiple rape; kidnap-for-ransom with murder; and harassment of several leaders and members of militant organisations...

The leader of these bandits is believed to be one "Anson", a former NPA member who resurfaced with the RHB after leaving the movement to work in Manila. But the RHB soon earned the dislike of the peasant masses for vilifying the NPA and the revolutionary movement. While pretending to serve the people, the RHB members bared their true selves when they began stealing chickens and other properties of the peasant masses, as well as extorting from small businesses in the barrios. A peasant was also murdered by a member of the RHB named Erning Bachicha. Like their Central Luzon cohorts, the RHB here is considered as conniving with the military. In fact, the RHB hideouts are located near the 52nd Infantry Battalion as well as the police, yet the bandits thrive with their nefarious activities without fear of retaliation.

It is the policy of the revolutionary movement to break up and smash the RHB and all counterrevolutionary and criminal groups in the Red territories. The Efren Martires Command calls on the peasant masses to be vigilant, monitor the movement of the RHB, and report their activities to the responsible NPA unit. The RHB should be denied any form of support, and denounced and expelled from all communities for destroying the peace and harmony in the revolutionary base areas ('Regarding the July 20 encounter between the NPA and the RHB bandit group' 2004, Philippine Revolution Web Central website 25 July – <http://www.philippinerevolution.org/cgi->

bin/statements/statements.pl?author=emc:date=040725:language=eng – Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 8).

An article published by *International Viewpoint* online magazine in March 2005 discusses an alleged assassination policy of the CPP-NPA-NDF, and claims that the RHB are on a “hit list” of the NPA (Rousset, Pierre 2005, ‘The CPP-NPA-NDF “Hit List” – a preliminary report’, *International Viewpoint* online magazine, IV365, March – http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/print_article.php3?id_article=616 – Accessed 16 November 2005 – Attachment 9).

A 2004 article from *The Manila Times* online edition quotes the chief of the Armed Forces’ Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) as saying that “leadership squabbles and mismanagement of party finances appear to be the reasons behind the falling out between the CPP-NPA and the MLPP-RHB and this led to the violent deaths of their respective members”:

A member of the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), a breakaway group of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA), was shot to death by two of his comrades for severing ties with the communist movement.

Gen. Romeo Dominguez, chief of the Armed Forces’ Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom), said the victim, Dominador Galang, was shot point blank with a .45-caliber pistol by two men who were onboard a tricycle.

Dominguez said the suspects are members of the RHB, the armed wing of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP), a breakaway group of the CPP-NPA operating in Central Luzon.

Galang, 59, was with a companion, Ofrepaño Ramos, when they were shot from behind by their assailants along Roman Expressway, Sitio Masapsap, Barangay Bayan in Orani, Bataan. Ramos was reported to have survived the attack.

Dominguez said “leadership squabbles and mismanagement of party finances” appear to be the reasons behind the falling out between the CPP-NPA and the MLPP-RHB and this led to the “violent deaths of their respective members””. (Exponosa, Len 2004, ‘Former communist rebel killed by comrades for bowing out’, *The Manila Times* online edition, 19 November – <http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2004/nov/19/yehey/prov/20041119pro8.html> – Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 10)

An article posted on the inq7.net website, in 2003, reports on a violent clash between the RHB and the NPA members and describes them as “rival factions”. A police director, who was quoted in the article, claims the two groups “were fighting over control of areas for the collection of ‘revolutionary taxes’”. The article states, however, that “sources from both groups have maintained that their conflict was mainly on ideology, and strategies and tactics in establishing a Marxist state.”

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga -- Two suspected members of the New People’s Army were killed in an encounter between the communist rebel group and its rival faction, the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), along the Pampanga River in Macabebe town on Saturday night.

Reports reaching this police camp identified the fatalities as Rogelio Pelena, 26, and Rodrigo Magpayo, 25, both of Barangay Bambang in Bulacan, Bulacan. Their bodies were recovered in Barangay Taliptip in Bulacan town.

Supt. Arnold Gunnacao, Bulacan police intelligence officer, said Pelena and Magpayo were patrolling the Macabebe stretch of the Pampanga River in Barangay Consuelo, Macabebe, when RHB members saw them and engaged them in a gunfight.

Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, Pampanga police director, said Macabebe policemen on Sunday morning also engaged the NPA in a 10-minute firefight in the same area but reported no casualty on both sides.

An RHB source confirmed the Saturday clash but said at least eight NPA rebels aboard a motorized boat were killed. The source reported no casualty on the side of the RHB.

The claim could not be independently validated. NPA sources have yet to confirm the number of fatalities in the encounter.

Mendoza said the RHB, the armed group of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines, and the NPA, the armed wing of the 32-year-old Communist Party of the Philippines, were fighting over control of areas for the collection of “revolutionary taxes.”

But sources from both groups have maintained that their conflict was mainly on ideology, and strategies and tactics in establishing a Marxist state (Reyes, Carmela and Orejas, Tonette 2003, ‘Communist rival groups clash; 2 die’, inq.net website, 19 May – http://www.inq7.net/reg/2003/may/20/text/reg_2-1-p.htm – Accessed 15 November 2005 – Attachment 11).

Another article published by *Philippine Headline News* online, in 2000, reports on the practice by the NPA and RHB of trying each others members in their “revolutionary courts”. These trials have sometimes resulted in executions for “crimes against the revolutionary movement”:

Mexico, Pampanga, Dec. 25, 2000 – A human rights group, Karapatan-Central Luzon (Karapatan), has accused the communist faction Rebolusyonaryong Hukbo ng Bayan (RHB) of killing two “innocent civilians” tagged as members of the New People’s Army (NPA) here last Dec. 20.

In a press statement yesterday, Karapatan condemned the murder of Noel de la Cruz and Jessie Bagtas, both of Barangay San Nicolas.

The two victims, the group claimed, were “legitimate members” of the farmers’ group Aguman da reng Maglalautang Capampangan (AMC) and were not NPA guerrillas.

Based on its fact-finding mission, Karapatan said the two were killed by three men believed to be RHB members in front of the San Lorenzo Elementary School while peddling tilapia.

De la Cruz sustained eight gunshot wounds in the head and body, while Bagtas sustained 11. Before they were fatally shot, De la Cruz reportedly had a heated argument with alleged RHB leader and neighbor Rey Lagman, alias Carla, who allegedly implicated De la Cruz in the killing of Bartolome Quizon in this town last Dec. 2.

Quizon was believed to be RHB’s top commander in Pampanga. The NPA later admitted “executing” him for his alleged crimes against the “revolutionary movement” and for his participation in attacks against the NPA in the past months.

Karapatan said De la Cruz was shot at close range by a man who pretended to be a fish buyer, who also shot Bagtas in the back of the head while the latter was fleeing.

“We challenge the local government of Mexico to investigate the crime and mobilize the police to go after the criminals behind the killings,” Karapatan said.

The RHB, the armed group of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP), has been at odds with the NPA, the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The MIPP broke away from the CPP in 1998.

Earlier this month, the RHB captured two alleged NPA members in Barangay Bangkal in Sasmuan town. The two were later tried by the RHB's "revolutionary court" but were later cleared of participation in the NPA's "counter-revolutionary" operations.

The two, identified only as Ka Ariel and Ka Amy, were released to the custody of San Fernando Archbishop Paciano Aniceto.

(Vanzi, Sol Jose 2000, 'Rival Pampanga Red Groups Clash, 2 dead' *Philippine Headline News* online, 25 December –

<http://www.newsflash.org/2000/12/ht/ht001415.htm> – Accessed 16 November 2005 – Attachment 12).

A 2004 report published by CDS Risk Management ("a multinational firm providing a full range of risk reduction services to multinational corporations throughout the world") discusses terrorist activities in the Philippines. The report notes that "the Rebolusyonyong Hukbong Bayan (Revolutionary National Force, or RHB), the NPA's splinter armed group operating in central Luzon, does not have the capacity to undertake bombings as they are often locked in internecine skirmishes with local NPA guerrillas over funds and territory ('Fighting Terrorism: NPA' 2004, CDS Risk Management – http://66.102.7.104/search?q=cache:JuvICCFubP0J:www.cdsrcma.org/cases_21.html++operates+OR+operations+OR+based+%22Rebolusyonyong+Hukbong+Bayan%22&hl=en – Accessed 23 Jan 2005 – Attachment 13).

3. It appears that the RHB targets government officials (including municipal officials). Is there evidence that they also target their families?

There is no evidence in the sources consulted to indicate that the RHB specifically target family members of government officials. The sources consulted only revealed general information regarding people connected with their intended targets.

With regard to people targeted by the RPB, an article published by *Philippine Headline News* online in 2004 states that they "known to threaten the lives of anyone whom they suspect of being members of or sympathetic to rival groups":

...scores of people have been killed in the past several years arising from rivalries among the five groups, namely the New People's Army (NPA), the Rebolusyonyong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), the Rebolusyonyong Samahang Anak Pawis (RSAP), the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB), and the Rebolusyonyong Gerilya ng Arayat (RGA)...

The groups are known to threaten the lives of anyone whom they suspect of being members of or sympathetic to rival groups. Many people have been killed in the past several years, and their remains have been found in mass graves (Cervantes, Ding 2004, 'For the Military, Arayat Town is a Terrifying Place', *Philippine Headline News* online, 17 July – <http://www.newsflash.org/2004/02/ht/ht004527.htm> – Attachment 14).

The US State Department's, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000 – Philippines*, describes an incident where the NPA executed an RHB cadre in front of his family and neighbours. The report does not indicate that the victim's family were also targeted:

On December 2, the Communist insurgent group Rebolusyonaryong hukbo ng Bayan (RHB) accused the insurgent NPA of the execution of a high-ranking cadre in Mexico, Pampanga. The killing reportedly took place in the presence of the victim's wife, children, and neighbors. In a written statement, the RHB, which has broken away from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), stated that the NPA wanted to "exterminate genuine revolutionaries." Two days later, the NPA claimed responsibility for the killing and in a written statement stated that the RHB cadre had been executed for grave crimes against the revolutionary movement. (US Department of State 2001, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000 – Philippines*, Section 1g, 25 February – Attachment 15)

4. Do RHB acts of violence show any priorities, eg. political assassinations, criminal activities, fund-raising etc?

The sources consulted seem to indicate that the RBH engage in violent clashes with police and the NPA, as well as a range of criminal activities including, banditry, extortion and "gun-for-hire" assassinations.

A paper issued by the International Federation of Journalists, which documented the deaths of journalists and media staff in 2000, reported on the killing of Vincent Rodriguez in the Philippines by the RHB in an ambush. The RHB claim the attack was politically motivated:

Police identified the attackers as rebels belonging to the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), a breakaway faction of the communist New People's Army (NPA). RHB members are known for extortion, robbery, looting and gun-for-hire activities in Pampanga. Bagasina insists that the ambush was politically motivated ('Journalists and Media Staff Killed in 2000 undated, International Federation of Journalists, p13 – <http://www.ifj.org/pdfs/killedlist2000.pdf> – Attachment 16).

The collection of revolutionary taxes seems to be another activity in which the RHB regularly engage. An article published by *Sun-Star* network online, dated 14 June 2005, details a police encounter with the RHB in Pampanga. The article claims the RHB were reported to the police by local residents who were "fed up with the group's collection of revolutionary taxes":

Government troops engaged rebels in a two-hour firefight in the town of Mexico in Pampanga Sunday, as the nation celebrated the 107th anniversary of Philippine independence.

The gun battle said to be one of the fiercest fights in the town, led to the death of 13 suspected members of the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RBH), the armed wing of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP) and a splinter group of the mainstream Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA)...

Colonel Samuel Narcise, 703rd Infantry Brigade commander, said the rebels were under the area party collective (APC) of the RBH, being led by a certain "Ka Argie", operating in the towns of Mexico, Santa Ana and Arayat.

Residents in San Nicolas, "fed up" with the group's collection of "revolutionary taxes" from them, informed the military of the presence of the rebel group.

Narcise said the encounter practically wiped out the RHB group operating in the areas. This group reportedly only had 15 members.

(Lacanlale, Albert B & Dagumboy, Marna H 2005, '13 Rebels Killed in Clash with Troops', *Sun-Star* network online, 14 June – <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/net/2005/06/14/13.rebels.killed.in.clash.with.troops.html> – Attachment 17)

Another article published by *Sun-Star Pangasinan* in 2003 quotes a police source who claims the RHB engage in “simple banditry”. The source asserts that the purpose of the group “is to take hold of a wide space in which they gaining from the proceeds of the produce of the lands”:

...rebels operating in western Pangasinan belong to the Rebolusyonyong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), a breakaway group from the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army (CPP/NPA).

Insp. Roseto Camaso, municipal chief of police of Mabino, corroborated Rasote’s disclosure, saying the RHB led by Ka Omar and his brothers is engaging in simple banditry.

“The purpose of this splinter group of the CPP/NPA is to take hold of a wide space in which they gaining from the proceeds of the produce of the lands,” Camaso said.

Rasote said the HRB (sic) and NPA are in conflict with each other after the former broke away as its members no longer believe in the principles expounded by CCP leader Jose Maria Sison.

Camaso admitted that the HRB (sic) is likewise collecting revolutionary tax from people in the far-flung barangays that it has infiltrated but in material form, like one ganta of rice, sugar, coffee and vegetables.

He said the RHB is holing up in Candelaria, Zambales at barangay Tapuso.

The group is believed to have been responsible in the raid of the town hall of Palawit in Zambales (‘Police overrun rebel safe house’ 2003, *Sun-Star Pangasinan* website, 3 July – <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/pan/2003/07/03/news/police.overrun.rebel.safe.house.html> – Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 4).

An article published on the ABS-CBN Interactive website also makes a similar assertion. This article quotes a police director in the Bataan region who “considered the CPP-NPS as having more staying power than the RHB. He describes the breakaway group as more involved in banditry”:

Bataan Police said it considers Communist insurgency a minor problem in the province, but guerrillas remain the potent threat to peace and order.

Superintendent Arnold Gunnacao, Bataan deputy director for operations, said the number of Communist rebels has continued to dwindle. However, the military and the police here have to be on guard against insurgents.

Gunnacao said that in the absence of highly organised crime syndicates, local insurgency remains the only threat to peace and order.

He said there are two warring factions of Communists in Bataan. They are the mainstream Bataan-Zambales Provincial Committee, or the Lino Blas Command of the Communist New People’s Army and the breakaway group Rebolusyonyong Hukbong Bayan.

The mainstream group is codenamed “Glorieta” and headed by Teofilo Salazar, alias Ka Dino, who acts as the secretary. The Marxist-Lennist Party RHB is codenamed “MCL Bus Line” and has Jose Victor Serrano, alias Paeng/Omeng/Ancel, as the leader.

Senior Superintendent Hernando Zafra, Bataan police director, considered the CPP-NPS as having more staying power than the RHB. He describes the breakaway group as more involved in banditry, but he said both terrorist groups are losing the support of local folks (Esconde, Ernie B. undated, ‘Rebels minor problem in Bataan’ ABS-CBN Interactive website – <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/storypage.aspx?StoryId=20890> – Accessed 14 November 2005 – Attachment 18).

A previous article from *Philippine Headline News* online, dated 8 September 2003 also reports on RHB extortion attempts. The article states that “the rebels were reportedly extorting money from the caretakers of Cojuangco’s fishpond” (Villa, Benjie 2003, ‘Army Troops Pursue Reds Spotted in Danding’s Fishpond’, *Philippine Headline News* online, 8 September – <http://www.newsflash.org/2003/05/ht/ht003714.htm> – Accessed 17 November 2005 – Attachment 19).

Earlier this year, there were also allegations that the RBH had been hired to assassinate a journalist. There are conflicting reports regarding the identity of the people who hired the RBH to carry out the assassination. Relevant excerpts from two articles are provided below:

- “On February 06, 2005, Task Force Subic issued a press release alleging that smuggling syndicates have hired the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RBH) to assassinate Jeff Tombado, local correspondent of the *Pilipino Star Ngayon* who had written a series of news articles critical of task force commander, retired Gen. Jose Calimlim” (‘Of Spooks and Plots’ 2005, Cyper Dyaryo website, 1 March – http://www.cyberdyaryo.com/statements/st2005_0301_01.htm – Attachment 20).
- “In a 15 February statement issued by The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines in Olongapo City – Subic Bay, west of Manila, 13 local journalists accused soldiers of asking a local gang, the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB), to kill the correspondent of the *Pilipino Star Ngayon*, Jeff Tombado, who had written a series of articles criticising General Jose Calimlim” (‘Journalist killed, others receive death threats or suffer brutal attacks’ 2005, Reporters Without Borders website, 2 March – http://www.rsf.org/print.php3?id_article=12724 – Accessed 16 November 2005 – Attachment 21).

An article posted by the *Manila Bulletin* online, dated 10 March 2005, indicates that the RHB will also retaliate against police for killing their members. The article reports on the killing of a policeman “by the RHB in retaliation for the death of three RHB members in a running gunbattle with lawmen”:

CAMP TOLENTINO, Bataan ? Ten sacks of ammonium nitrate used in making explosives and blasting caps were seized by the police on Tuesday afternoon while a policeman was killed in an ambush yesterday morning by suspected members of the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) in Barangay Bilolo, Orion, this province, reports reaching this camp said yesterday.

Reports received by Senior Superintendent Hernando Zafra, Bataan police director, from Senior Inspector Teodoro dela Rosa, chief of police of Mariveles, Bataan, said this was the largest batch of explosives seized by the police in the province.

Zafra identified the alleged owner of the ammonium nitrate and blasting caps as Matilde Masdo, a businesswoman of Lamao, Limay, Bataan.

Dela Rosa reported to Zafra that the arrest of Masdo was a result of the earlier arrest of three men who were nabbed for illegal fishing off the coast of Mariveles. “When we interrogated the three men, they admitted that the explosives that they are using came from Masdo, so we conducted a follow-up operation that resulted to the arrest of the woman.”

Zafra identified the slain policeman as PO3 Walter Baluyot, assigned with Orion, Bataan. He was killed by six armed men, suspected members of the RHB, and died of several bullet wounds in the body.

Police theorize Baluyot was killed by the RHB in retaliation for the death of three RHB members in a running gunbattle with lawmen last month in Sto. Domingo, Orion, Bataan. (Mar T. Supnad) ('Lawmen seize ammonium nitrate; rebels waylay cop' 2005, *The Manila Bulletin* online, 10 March – <http://www.mb.com.ph/issues/2005/03/10/MTNN2005031030360.html> – 18 November 2005 – Attachment 22).

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