



CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND DEFENCE POLICY

BRIEFING NOTE

FOR INFORMATION

SUBJECT: Peru's Shining Path Extremist Group

The Shining Path was formed in the late 1960s as a community revolutionary group centered on a Maoist communist ideology, with the majority of its more radical operations occurring in the 1980s.¹ The group has changed considerably since the capture of its leader, Abimael Guzman, in 1992, and has curbed many of its more radical political practices in favour of illegal activities such the production of narcotics and their trafficking. The group is currently classified as a terrorist organization by the Peruvian government, the United States, the European Union, and Canada.

The Shining Path has faced significant losses in terms of its influence and capabilities since 1992, and is only able to operate effectively in certain regions of Peru in small numbers. Many of the group's activities were confined to Central and South Peru, with very few incursions into the North and East.² Still, the group does represent a security risk for public and private security forces, and there have been multiple instances of armed engagements between public security forces and Shining Path members. The group's political agenda has decreased recently, with the group focusing more on the production and trafficking of narcotics as a means to acquire financial support for its activities, leading to speculation that the group may completely transition towards the narcotics trade. This has led to splits in the group's direction, with more ideological oriented groups wishing to continue their guerilla war while others seeing the narcotics trade as a means for personal profit.

The group has often clashed with government and local forces, and is not seen favourably by the majority of rural communities, relying instead on forceful tactics and fear to garner support in rural areas. The group is well known for radical and brutal tactics, including torture, assassination, and murder. There have been numerous instances of Shining Path members kidnapping individuals for ransom, both public and private figures, as well as attacks on public and private property for exposure or to acquire supplies. Theft from private property by Shining Path members has increased more recently to help the group acquire materials for its illegal production activities.

Even though the significance of the group has diminished, companies that have interests in areas where Shining Path operate need to be aware of the dangers the group presents as well as changes to government security initiatives. With the narcotics trade becoming a priority for many

¹ Kathryn Gregory. "Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, leftists)." *Council on Foreign Relations* (August 27th, 2009): <http://www.cfr.org/peru/shining-path-tupac-amaru-peru-leftists/p9276>

² http://www.monitor.upeace.org/archive.cfm?id_article=857

Shining Path members, there is a chance that the group will resume its more radical act to increase its economic interests.

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