



Country Reports on Terrorism 2016 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Shining Path (SL)

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aka SL; Sendero Luminoso; Ejercito Guerrillero Popular (People's Guerrilla Army); EGP; Ejercito Popular de Liberacion (People's Liberation Army); EPL; Partido Comunista del Peru (Communist Party of Peru); PCP; Partido Comunista del Peru en el Sendero Luminoso de Jose Carlos Mariategui (Communist Party of Peru on the Shining Path of Jose Carlos Mariategui); Socorro Popular del Peru (People's Aid of Peru); SPP

Description: The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso or SL) was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on October 8, 1997. The Peru-based terrorist organization was formed in the late 1960s by former university professor Abimael Guzman, whose teachings created the foundation of SL's militant Maoist doctrine. In the 1980s, SL was one of the most ruthless terrorist groups in the Western Hemisphere. In 1992, the Peruvian government captured Guzman who remains, along with key accomplices, in prison serving a life sentence. The group is now led by brothers Victor and Jorge Quispe Palomino along with SL leader Tarcela Loya Vilchez. Under their direction, the group aims to overthrow the Peruvian government and names the United States a principal enemy.

SL's area of activity and influence is mostly confined to the remote special military emergency zone known as the Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro River Valley (VRAEM). SL is involved in all logistical aspects of drug trafficking in the VRAEM area.

Activities: SL committed 13 terrorist attacks in 2015, in comparison to 20 terrorist acts in 2014 and 49 in 2013. In 2016, SL terrorist attacks declined. On April 9, the group struck a six-vehicle military caravan transporting election materials ahead of the country's April 10 election; eight soldiers and two civilian contractors were killed when SL members armed with long-range rifles and grenades attacked the caravan.

Strength: Estimates of SL's strength vary, but experts assess SL to number between 250 and 300 combatants.

Location/Area of Operation: Peru, with most activity taking place in rural areas, specifically the Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro River Valley of central Peru.

Funding and External Aid: SL is primarily funded by the illicit narcotics trade.

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