

# Why Kintanar Was Killed - The Real Story

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The Communist Party of the Philippines has acknowledged killing former New People's Army chief Romulo "Rolly" Kintanar, claiming that he deserved capital punishment for his "criminal and counter-revolutionary acts."

## Was that the real reason for his assassination?

It is true that the NPA under Kintanar did engage in activities such as kidnapping-for-ransom, armed bank robberies and hold-ups. However, that such activities went on for a long stretch of time - even during the periods when Kintanar was captured and put behind bars - indicate that they were (or still are) CPP policy and not just Kintanar's adventurism.

If CPP leader had indeed been aghast and appalled by the kidnapping of businessman Noboyuki Wakaoji in 1986, why did they not speak out then? Why did they not remove Kintanar then? And what has the CPP-NPA to say about the wholesale extortion it regularly conducts during elections for so-called "permits-to-campaign"?

The claim that Kintanar was conniving with the Philippine military and police in counter-insurgency operations is speculative - the CPP has not presented any evidence. Same with the so-called assassination plot on CPP founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison. Besides, if Kintanar had really wanted to hit the CPP-NPA, he would not have done so through "surveillance operations, psy-ops and sabotage operations and attacking and attempting to destroy NPA units and guerrilla zones" as claimed, but through other means, as will soon be illustrated.

Kintanar has also been held as one of those responsible for the anti-infiltration purge in Mindanao in 1985-86 that claimed the lives of hundreds of suspected government spies. The charge is false - Kintanar had left Mindanao more than a year before the purge.

## The CPP-NPA's International Links

If it wasn't for criminal and counter-insurgency activities, why then did the CPP want Kintanar killed?

For one, he knew too much.

Kintanar was at the helm of the NPA at a time when the CPP-NPA was at its peak. The CPP's Maoist precepts dictated that to achieve revolutionary victory, the CPP-NPA had to move from guerrilla warfare to regular warfare. Thus, Kintanar boldly embarked on "regularization," building larger NPA formations and launching bigger "tactical offensives." Soon enough, however, Kintanar realized that regular warfare required a steady stream of arms and ammunition. This meant that the CPP-NPA would somehow have to find a reliable and stable arms source and also find a way of getting the arms into the country.

China, too busy building "market socialism" (read: capitalism), was no longer willing to export revolution as before. (In the early 1970s, the CPP had botched two attempts at procuring arms from China.) Thus, in the latter half of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, Kintanar and his deputies traveled to various parts of the globe, searching for possible sources of arms. Using Yugoslavia as their international base, they linked up with many revolutionary or "anti-imperialist" governments (like Libya, North Korea and Iraq) and movements (like the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Sandinistas and even the Japanese Red Army). Kintanar and company did secure promises of arms but they were never really able to solve the problem of smuggling the arms into the Philippines.

One of the "anti-imperialist" governments with which they developed close ties provided them with hard-to-detect counterfeit US dollars. The NPA widely used these fake dollars in both its international and domestic operations in the late 1980s. The fake dollar racket was busted in 1990, forcing the CPP-NPA to close certain accounts in international banks.

### **CPP-NPA on the Political Defensive**

The tagging of the CPP-NPA as a "terrorist organization" by Western governments and the Philippine government has been very much in the news lately. The US Central Intelligence Agency, Interpol and other Western intelligence agencies and the Philippine military intelligence are all well aware of the CPP-NPA's connections and activities, but they have never been able to convincingly prove its being a "terrorist" organization before a court of law.

Nonetheless, the CPP-NPA has been put on the political defensive. Note all the outcry against its being labeled "terrorist."

In a cheap and desperate bid to show that it is a respectable organization, the CPP-NPA is now trying to pin the blame on Kintanar for actions that could be deemed "terrorist" or "criminal" - kidnappings, fake dollars, etc. - and claiming that these were without authorization by the CPP leadership. Kintanar has become a convenient - and silenced - scapegoat.

When US military advisor Col. James Rowe was ambushed and killed by NPA partisans in 1989, CPP leaders were all in ecstasy. Now, however, Sison, apparently fearful of being extradited or spirited away to the US or Guantanamo, has issued a statement, crying: Kintanar's to blame, not me.

As a seasoned and shrewd politico-military cadre, Kintanar knew only too well that the CPP-NPA could not be defeated simply through military means. Assisting the military in such efforts as surveillance and attacking NPA units would not have had much effect. It was in the political sphere that the CPP-NPA was most vulnerable.

If he had wanted to, Kintanar could very well have spilled the beans - publicly - on the CPP-NPA's linkages with governments alleged to be promoting or coddling "terrorism" (especially those in Bush's "Axis of Evil") and with movements still considered "terrorist" like the JRA; on the counterfeit dollars; or on the NPA's "special operations," etc. As a former member of the CPP Politburo,

Kintanar had access to inside information on the party's discussions and assessments of the anti-infiltration purges not just in Mindanao but also in Southern Tagalog, Metro Manila, Northern Luzon in the 1980s. And, of course, access too to information regarding the Plaza Miranda bombing of 1971. His personal testimony as former NPA leader and former CPP Politburo member on any of these would have been damning for the CPP-NPA.

Kintanar did not tattle. In fact, perhaps out of his faithfulness to the revolutionary cause, he had expressly advised those who remained loyal or friendly to him to keep mum. He did not want to risk the revolutionary movement, or the left in general, being put in too negative a light.

If he wasn't talking, why would they still do him in then? Well, there was always the possibility that he could some day.

### **He Dared to Oppose**

But there is actually another factor to consider, a deeper reason. It has to do with the very frame of mind of at least some in the CPP leadership. Kintanar was killed because, over a certain period at least, he had dared to oppose.

In 1986, during a Politburo discussion on who should replace the newly-resigned Rodolfo Salas as party chairperson, Kintanar, newly promoted to the Politburo, pushed for an internal party investigation of the Plaza Miranda bombing. He was overruled, however. (Back in 1972, Kintanar had been present when Danny Cordero, an able NPA commander, made an astounding confession just before he was executed by the party for insubordination: that he had thrown the grenades at Plaza Miranda in 1971 and that Sison himself had ordered the bombing.)

The differences between Sison and Kintanar built up. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Kintanar resisted efforts of pro-Sison forces to break up large NPA formations. In Europe, Sison tried to wrest command of the NPA's international machinery, but Kintanar's operatives still basically followed the NPA chief's orders.

In 1992-93, the internal party struggles spilled out into the public arena when Sison faxed press statements from Utrecht, accusing Kintanar and two other Politburo members of being "renegades", "enemy agents" and "gangsters." In turn, the latter lambasted him for being a "dictator" and for being "Stalinist" and "dogmatist." A few months later, the CPP announced to the media that Kintanar, Filemon Lagman and other "rejectionist" leaders would be tried by "people's courts" and meted out death sentences.

After his expulsion from the CPP, Kintanar gradually drew away from the intense polemics and character assassinations that continued between the "reaffirmists" and "rejectionists." These were not his cup of tea, nor his forte. He pursued his new life as a consultant on security for various government agencies, which involved mainly going after criminal syndicates. He maintained links with old comrades, but these were largely of a social nature. He did give advice to those still politically active when they asked for it.

With Kintanar already out of revolutionary politics, why not let him be? For the powers that be in the CPP, however, expulsion was not enough.

Kintanar must have had prescience - but apparently not enough precaution - in his abhorrence of Stalinists. Even when he already was the absolute ruler of the Soviet Union, Stalin, in his megalomania, did not stop at merely expelling those in the Communist Party who opposed him. He

put them to death. It did not matter if the expelled dissenters remained politically active or not.

It is all so clear now that within the CPP, there are leading members of the same mold. They can brook no opposition, no challenge, no criticism. They view those who oppose them as being counter-revolutionaries, renegades, enemies of the people.

Kintanar? How dare he oppose! How dare he challenge and defy! How dare he put the party leadership to public scorn! The Party - the vanguard of the Philippine proletariat! NPA chief at that!

### **Ugod-ugod na!**

The vindictiveness, viciousness and long memories of at least a number of those in the CPP leadership should not be underestimated. I distinctly remember an account narrated to me by Charlie (pseudonym), one of Kintanar's closest deputies.

Sometime in the mid-80s, the NPA General Command received an "order of battle" i.e., a list of persons to be executed, from the CPP leadership. The list, they were told, had originated from prison. One of the names near the top of the list was an unfamiliar one. When the GC asked for clarification, they were told that the person concerned was a "Lavaite" (one belonging to the pro-Soviet Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, from which Sison and company had broken away before establishing the CPP in 1968).

In preparation for the kill, the GC sent an operative to Central Luzon to check the "Lavaite's" whereabouts. That proved easy. Neighbors simply pointed to his house, and said, "That's his house. And that's him, in the yard." The operative drew near but soon stopped dead in his tracks. He was shocked to find an old man, sweeping fallen leaves, doing so very slowly. Reporting back to the GC, he asked, "Why him? He's so old. Ugod-ugod na! (Already doddering!)" Kintanar and company quietly "demoted" the old man to the bottom of the list, thereby saving him from the gunman.

When the story was told to me, I recalled something I had read some time ago - that the intense ideological struggle of the young Maoists in the PKP with the "Lavaite" leadership had been in the 1960s. This meant that someone or some persons in the CPP leadership had not forgotten - nor forgiven - those who had opposed and criticized them even after twenty years!

The former NPA chief was tried in absentia by a kangaroo - or possibly even fictitious - "people's court" purportedly in 1993. Kintanar's executioners certainly took their time in meting out the sentence, but they did not have to wait for him to be old and doddering. If the perpetrators, especially the mastermind, of the Kintanar murder are not apprehended and punished, then the foremost question now can only be: Who's next in the order of battle?

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### **P.S.**

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