

# Philippines: CPP leaders Benito and Wilma Tiamzon arrested

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### CPP chief, wife nabbed in Cebu - military

MANILA, Philippines (4<sup>th</sup> UPDATE) - Two top leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) were arrested in Cebu on Saturday, March 22, over standing warrants of arrest for crimes against humanity, including murder, multiple murder, and frustrated murder charges.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Emmanuel Bautista said in a statement that military and police teams arrested Benito Tiamzon, chairman of the CPP-New People's Army (NPA), and his wife Wilma Tiamzon, CPP-NPA secretary-general, in Barangay Zaragosa, Alouguinsan, Cebu.

The Tiamzon couple was arrested along with 5 others while the group was on board a Starex van and a Toyota Innova.

They were brought to the Armed Forces of the Philippines central command headquarters in Lapu-Lapu for processing and documentation.

In a statement issued Saturday night, Bautista said:

*"At 3:15 pm of March 22, 2014, the AFP and the PNP arrested high-ranking NPA leaders Wilma and Benito Tiamzon at Bgy. Zaragosa, Alouguinsan, Cebu. Wilma Tiamzon is the Secretary General of the CPP/NPA, while her husband, Benito, is the Chairman of the CPP/NPA. They were arrested by virtue of a warrant of arrest for their crimes against humanity that include murder, multiple murders, and frustrated murder. They are currently undergoing processing and documentation for legal disposition. The arrest of Benito and Wilma Tiamzon is another victory for the combined efforts between the AFP, PNP and other stakeholders in pursuit of peace and security. We will then continue to strengthen our resolve to bring other criminals to justice in honor of the victims of the violence perpetrated by the CPP-NPA, and in honor of our people who deserve to live in a peaceful and developed society. We call on the rest of the CPP-NPA members to lay down their arms, abandon the armed struggle and return to the comfort of their families and join us in bringing peace and development to our nation."*

They were the high-profile fugitives that President Benigno Aquino III earlier said would soon fall into the hands of authorities [1], a Cebu-based police source said.

## Subject of surveillance

A senior government source told *Rappler* the Tiamzons have been the subject of intense surveillance since the onslaught of Super Typhoon Yolanda (international codename Haiyan), when they were monitored in Leyte.

“They have been in and out of Leyte since December, at the height of relief operations for Yolanda,” the source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said.

Benito Tiamzon joined the communist movement in 1969 but was arrested in 1972 after the declaration of martial law, according to intelligence reports. He eventually escaped from jail and rose in the party hierarchy, assuming key party positions in the Metro Manila-Rizal regional party committee and Eastern Samar, one of the former strongholds of the CPP.

It was in Eastern Samar where Tiamzon underwent guerrilla training, according to the same intelligence reports.

Tiamzon officially assumed the post of chairman of the CPP in the 1990s after a bloody party split that caused a decline in rebel strength.

However, he was believed to have lost control of the leadership after the 2010 presidential elections. There were squabbles regarding the movement’s involvement in that election, veteran intelligence officers told *Rappler*. But the military hierarchy insisted Saturday that he was still the chairman when they arrested him.

The guerrillas have been waging a protracted war for 4 decades now, reaching a peak of about 20,000 armed members under the administration of the late President Corazon Aquino. The split in the 1990s over ideological differences led to the creation of at least two major factions within the party, the so-called “reaffirmists” – or those who remained with the party and loyal to its founding chairman who lives in exile in Utrecht, Jose Maria Sison – and the so-called “rejectionists” – or those who questioned Sison’s alleged dogmatism and left the movement to form other groups.

### **Hardline position**

The CPP has slammed the government for offering a reward for the arrest of communist leaders even as it seeks peace negotiations with the rebel group [2].

Tiamzon, as senior party leader, was known to have taken a hardline position on the peace process with the Aquino government.

Last year, Sison expressed willingness to modify some of the conditions set by the CPP and the NDF [3], paving the way for some progress in the talks and backchannel negotiations between Sison and Secretary Ronald Llamas, the president’s political adviser. (READ: Joma wants peace, the ‘ground’ doesn’t - Padilla)

But in the latter part of 2013, the NDF again reverted to its conditions – such as land reform – leading to the collapse of the process.

### **Rappler.com**

\* POSTED ON 03/22/2014 8:19 PM | UPDATED 03/23/2014 10:04 AM:

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/53633-communist-tiamzon-couple-nabbed-cebu>

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## **Timeline: Arrest of CPP-NPA leaders under Aquino**

MANILA, Philippines - The arrest of two top leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) on Saturday, March 22, is the latest in the government's efforts to run after communist guerrillas fighting a 4-decade war.

Benito Tiamzon, chairman of the CPP-New People's Army (NPA), and his wife Wilma Tiamzon, CPP-NPA secretary-general, were arrested along with 5 others in Aloguinsan town, Cebu, while they were riding a Starex van and a Toyota Innova.

Here's a list of other alleged communist leaders who were arrested under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III, as reported by various news organizations.

### **2011**

January 5

Tirso "Ka Bart" Alcantara was caught during an encounter in Lucena City, Quezon.

Alcantara headed the New People's Army (NPA) in Southern Luzon and, at one time, was in contention for the position of NPA chief, according to intelligence sources.

Alcantara, who had 23 arrest warrants for murders out against him, was brought to the Army compound in Fort Bonifacio.

### **February 14**

Allan Jazmines, member of the CPP central committee and alleged secretary-general of the party, was arrested in Baliuag, Bulacan.

Jazmines was detained for alleged 13 counts of murder.

Intelligence documents refer to him either as "secretary-general" or "acting chairman" of the CPP.

### **2012**

December 25

Filemon Mendrez, alias "Tatay" and "Edon," was nabbed in Negros Oriental.

Mendrez used to head the Front Committee 2 in Central Visayas and was the deputy head of the Central Visayas Revolutionary Party Committee of the CPP.

The military said Mendrez was arrested on the basis of a warrant against him for rebellion and robbery.

He had a P5.25-million bounty on his head.

### **2013**

February 24

Kennedy Bangibang, secretary-general of the Kilusang Larangang Gerilya-Baggao in Region 2, was arrested in Cagayan.

Bangibag, who also had P2.5-million bounty on his head, was served a warrant of arrest for murder.

## **April 2**

Reynante "Ka Mike" Gamara and a companion were nabbed at Starmall in Las Piñas City.

Gamara, secretary of the CPP's Metro Manila Regional Party Committee, was wanted for the killing of a soldier and a former rebel in 2007 in Mauban, Quezon.

## **July 28**

Maria Loyda Tuzo Magpatoc, the front secretary of the group's Far South Mindanao Regional Committee, was captured in Digos City, Davao del Sur.

She became front secretary of the NPA's North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee in 2000. She was also part of the executive committee of Komisyon Mindanao (Mindanao Commission), the main party organ of the CPP in Mindanao.

Magpatoc is said to be responsible for a series of criminal activities such as murder, extortion and kidnapping in parts of Mindanao.

## **2014**

February 8

George Villacort Geluz, alias "Mario Dela Cruz, Ka Mulong, Rommel, or MC," was arrested by police forces at a police-military checkpoint in Gumaca, Quezon.

Geluz was the secretary of the CPP's Bicol regional committee. He had a standing warrant of arrest for charges of robbery in band with arson and double frustrated murder.

## **February 9**

Sylvestre Layones, also known as "Ka Eric or Dexter, was captured at a checkpoint in Naga City.

He was the alleged head of the NPA-Bicol regional urban committee.

He was served with an arrest warrant for murder.

## **February 10**

Sonny Gonzales, leader of the communist group in Palawan, and wife were captured in Bataraza town.

## **February 17**

Romulo "Ka Molong" Bitoon was arrested in Talisay City, Negros Occidental.

He was the secretary of the Regional United White Area Committee, and member of the Executive

Committee of Komiteng Rehiyonal-Negros.

Bitoon was arrested for a murder case in Cadiz City, and an arson case in San Carlos City, both in Negros Occidental.

He was earlier arrested in 2010 but was released on bail.

REYNALDO SANTOS JR.

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## **P.S.**

\* Rappler.com, POSTED ON 03/23/2014 2:38 PM | UPDATED 03/23/2014 7:14 PM:

<http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/53681-arrested-cpp-npa-leaders-aquino-administration>

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## **Footnotes**

[1] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/53361-aquino-brace-for-arrest-of-high-profile-fugitive>

[2] <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/307604/cpp-hits-p467-m-cash-bounties-for-rebel-leaders>

[3] <http://www.rappler.com/nation/31852-joma-peace-process-overruled-ground>