

Shining Path



OVERVIEW

AS OF MAY 2026

Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso (SL) in Spanish, is an insurgent group in Peru that began its armed actions in 1980 but has been in decline since the arrest of its founder, Abimael Guzman, in 1992. Following Guzman's arrest, the group shifted its focus from mostly antigovernment operations to activities supporting narcotrafficking. Despite SL's diminished operational capacity, it still conducts sporadic lethal attacks against Peruvian targets, usually through ambushes. Circa 2018, SL began referring to itself as the "Militarized Communist Party of Peru," and its political arm has been involved in protests—including in Peru's capital, Lima—calling for the release of imprisoned SL members.

Operating Area

Mainly operates in a remote area in eastern Peru, known as the Apurimac; Ene; and Mantaro River Valley, a vast jungle area near the Andes mountains (home to most of Peru's coca cultivation and production and the second largest such area in the world)

Members

Approximately 200 fighters

Tactics And Targets

SL conducts armed assaults, assassinations, extortion operations, and hostage-takings. The group mostly attacks Peruvian Government and military targets and civilians. SL equips its members with small arms, machineguns, mines, and IEDs.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated SL as a foreign terrorist organization in October 1997.

KEY LEADERS



Victor Quispe Palomino

a.k.a. Comrade Jose

Overall leader; oversees all of SL's illicit activities, including extortion, murder, and narcotrafficking



Shining Path *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS *(continued)*



Tarcela Loya Vilchez

a.k.a. Olga

Second in command; in charge of training and indoctrinating children



Abimael Guzman [DECEASED]

Founder; died in 2021 while serving life sentence for terrorism-related crimes

NOTABLE ATTACKS

23 May 2021

Vizcatan, Santipo Province, Peru

Members of an armed group affiliated with SL murder 16 civilians, stating that the victims' activities were inconsistent with the group's beliefs.

15 May 1997

Lima, Peru

SL detonates a car bomb in front of a police station, injuring at least 25 people.

28 February 1995

Lima, Peru

SL detonates a bomb across the street from the US Embassy, inflicting no casualties.

27 July 1993

Lima, Peru

SL detonates a car bomb outside the US Embassy, damaging part of the embassy building, killing one civilian, and injuring at least four others.

12 February 1992

Lima, Peru

SL detonates a car bomb outside the US Ambassador's residence, killing one police officer.

