

= Boricua Popular Army =

The Boricua Popular / People 's Army - or Ejército Popular Boricua in Spanish - is a clandestine organization based in Puerto Rico , with cells in the U.S. mainland . It campaigns for , and supports , the independence of Puerto Rico from the United States . In 2001 , FBI Director Louis J. Freeh linked the group to acts of terrorism , but some authors , including Ronald Fernandez , view such labeling as political convenience by the United States Government , intended to " shift the blame for any attacks on U.S. policy or personnel from us to them " .

Also known as Los Macheteros (" The Machete Wielders ") and the Puerto Rican Popular Army , their active membership was calculated in 2006 by professor Michael González Cruz , in his book *Nacionalismo Revolucionario Puertorriqueño* , to consist of approximately 5 @, @ 700 members with an additional unknown number of supporters , sympathizers , collaborators and informants throughout the U.S. and other countries . A report by The Economist placed the number of active members at 1 @, @ 100 , excluding supporters . The group claimed responsibility for the 1978 bombing of a small power station in the San Juan area , the 1979 retaliation attacks against the United States armed forces personnel , the 1981 attacks on Puerto Rico Air National Guard aircraft , and a 1983 Wells Fargo bank robbery .

Boricua Popular Army was led primarily by former FBI fugitive Filiberto Ojeda Ríos until his killing by the FBI in 2005 . Ojeda Rios 's killing was termed " an illegal killing " by the Government of Puerto Rico 's Comision de Derechos Civiles (Civil Rights Commission) after a 7 @-@ year investigation and a 227 @-@ page report issued on 22 September 2011 .

= = History = =

The name Machetero evokes images of an impromptu band of Puerto Ricans who assembled to defend the island of Puerto Rico from the invading forces of the United States Army during the Spanish ? American War , between July 26 and August 12 , 1898 . Macheteros de Puerto Rico were dispatched throughout the island , working in cooperation with other voluntary groups including the Guardias de la Paz in Yauco and Tiradores de Altura in San Juan . These voluntary units were involved in most of the battles in the Puerto Rican Campaign . Their last involvement was in the Battle of Asomante , where along units led by Captain Hernaíz , defended Aibonito Pass from invading units . The allied offensive was effective , prompting a retreat order from the American side . However , the following morning the signing of the Treaty of Paris was made public . Subsequently , both Spanish and Puerto Rican soldiers and volunteers disengaged and Puerto Rico was annexed by the United States .

The Boricua Popular Army was organized in the 1970s by Filiberto Ojeda Ríos , Juan Enrique Segarra @-@ Palmer and Orlando González Claudio . The group began its operations in 1976 , however it can trace its origins back to the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) .

Upon its beginnings , the group attracted a wide variety of Puerto Rican independence supporters , including some of the members of the University Pro @-@ Independence Federation of Puerto Rico (FUPI) and the Pro @-@ Independence Movement .

= = = Under Ojeda Ríos ' command = = =

In August 1978 , the group accepted responsibility for the murder of San Juan police officer Julio Rodríguez Rivera while attempting to steal his police car .

In 1979 , two attacks were made on unarmed US Navy technicians . In the first , on December 3 , Macheteros opened fire on a bus carrying sailors to Naval Security Group Activity Sabana Seca , killing CTO1 John R. Ball and RM3 Emil E. White , as well as wounding nine others . A second attack , on off @-@ duty sailors returning from liberty , killed one and wounded three . The attack was in retaliation for the murder in a prison of a member of the Macheteros by the prison guards who were retired Marines .

On January 12 , 1981 , in the 1981 Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport attack , Machetero

commandos infiltrated the Puerto Rico Air National Guard 's Muñiz Air National Guard Base , located on the northeastern corner of the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan . The infiltrators destroyed or damaged ten A @-@ 7 Corsair II light attack aircraft and a single F @-@ 104 Starfighter supersonic fighter @-@ interceptor aircraft . Total damages were estimated to be in excess of \$ 45 million in 1981 US dollars . The subsequent investigation concluded security at the base was so lax that the attackers managed to enter and depart the base without ever being detected . The attack later served as the basis for upgrading base security , especially flight line security , at all Air National Guard installations on civilian airports in the United States to the same level as active duty U.S. Air Force installations .

On September 12 , 1983 , in an operation entitled Águila Blanca (White Eagle) the group assaulted the Wells Fargo depot located in West Hartford , Connecticut stealing a total of seven million dollars . After the robbery , the Macheteros threw some of the stolen money into the air from high floor buildings and used most of the remaining sum to fund their continued operations . According to a written statement from the Macheteros , the action was a symbolic protest against the " greed @-@ infested men and mechanisms which strain our elected officials , government agencies , and social aspirations in this country , as well as in Puerto Rico . "

In 1998 , Los Macheteros claimed responsibility for an explosion at a small power station in the San Juan metropolitan area . The explosion caused limited power outages .

On September 23 , 2005 , the anniversary of " el Grito de Lares " (" The Cry of Lares ") members of the FBI San Juan field office surrounded a modest home in the outskirts of the town of Hormigueros , Puerto Rico , where Ojeda Ríos was believed to be living in . The FBI claims that it was performing surveillance of the area because of reports that Ojeda Ríos had been seen in the home . In their press release , the FBI stated their surveillance team was detected , and proceeded to serving an arrest warrant against Ojeda Ríos . The FBI claims that as the agents approached the home , shots were fired from inside and outside the house wounding an FBI agent . The FBI alleges it then returned fire fatally wounding Ojeda Ríos . A subsequent autopsy of Ojeda 's body determined that he bled to death over the course of 15 to 30 minutes . The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Civil Rights Commission started an investigation of the incident shortly after Ojeda Rios ' death that lasted 7 years . The 227 @-@ page report issued on 22 September 2011 stated that Ojeda Rios 's killing was " an illegal killing " by the FBI .

= = = Change in guard , Comandante Guasábara = = =

Following the incident that concluded in the death of its former leader , the command of the Boricua Popular Army was inherited by an anonymous figure known as " Comandante Guasábara " , named after the Taíno word for " war " . Under his leadership , the group appears to have shifted its focus towards intelligence . For example , the group has not recorded a single military action . Instead , Guasábara has generally used the media to publish classified information . The Boricua Popular Army took credit for denouncing what was called " paramilitary training " that private corporation Triangle Experience Group was carrying on in the mountains of the municipality of Utuado . The media later revealed that these exercises were being done illegally , in covert fashion and lacking the required permits .

= = Terrorism vs. national liberation = =

Supporters of independence for Puerto Rico argue that the U.S. favored the establishment of the present Commonwealth status to create a perpetual consumer base for U.S. and foreign products and services . Foreign products and services are redirected to Puerto Rico and other " unincorporated " lands of the United States to satisfy a portion of foreign trade agreements , while allowing domestic products and services a greater " home " market share . Another argument by the independence movement is that the Macheteros are continuing the historical rebellion that Puerto Ricans such as Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party have waged , against U.S. domination of the island . It is known , for example , that Los Macheteros deliberately chose

September 12 for their White Eagle assault on the Wells Fargo depot , because September 12 was the birthday of Puerto Rican Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos . Beginning in the 1960s , the FBI infiltrated Puerto Rico 's free press and political circles in order to monitor and disrupt efforts related to independence movements like Los Macheteros . This operation was part of COINTELPRO . In 2001 , FBI Director Louis J. Freeh claimed the group committed acts of terrorism , but some authors , including Ronald Fernandez , view such labeling as political convenience by the United States Government , intended to " shift the blame for any attacks on U.S. policy or personnel from us to them " .

= = Focus on public education = =

Recently , the Macheteros have focused on public education regarding the use of Culebra and Vieques as bombing targets for the U.S. Navy ; the disproportionate number of military bases on the island (compared to states in the Union) ; the proportion of deaths within the ranks of the Independence and Nationalist leadership , including the alleged experimentation with radiation on Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos while he was incarcerated ; the secret testing of Agent Orange on Puerto Rican soil ; and cancer " experiments " administered by Cornelius P. Rhoads , in which he claimed to have killed Puerto Rican patients and injected cancer cells to others , while working as part of a medical investigation conducted in San Juan 's Presbyterian Hospital for the Rockefeller Institute .

= = Documentary = =

An 80 @-@ minute documentary film about the Macheteros , titled MACHETERO , was released in 2008 . Starring Not4Prophet (Ricanstruction) , as Pedro Taíno , and Isaach De Bankolé (Casino Royale) , as French journalist Jean Dumont , the film takes place in both New York City and Puerto Rico . Other actors Kelvin Fernández (first starring role) and Dylcia Pagán . The film was the winner of the 2008 South Africa International Film Festival , 2009 Swansea Film Festival , 2009 Heart of England Film Festival , 2009 International Film Festival Thailand , and the 2009 International Film Festival Ireland .

= = Notable group members = =