The year began somewhat precariously. Sadly, the death of General Bo Mya in December 2006 left the playing field open for those individuals who had been seeking an accommodation with the SPDC throughout the previous years to finally realize their intentions. Led by an ex-Bo Mya confidante - Pastor Timothy Lakkem - the group, supported by a number of business interests in Singapore and Rangoon – primarily Saw Blah Htoo and Dr Simon Tha - was able to convince 7th Brigade Commander Htain Maung and at least seventy of his soldiers to make an agreement with the Junta in late January.

The inevitable split, the foundations of which had been laid as early as 2003 at a Saw Blah Htoo organized seminar in Singapore, was to dramatically change the shape of the Karen political environment. Seeking to legitimize itself not only with the Karen people but more specifically with the international community the group was able to rely on a number of pro-engagement academics and far-right Christian supporters in the United States. Such groups were able to support its fledgling existence and its largely unsubstantiated claims of widespread corruption and communism within the mainstream KNU leadership.

Initially the Peace Council, which strongly believed that only the Karen military could take responsibility for brokering a ceasefire agreement, was challenged after a number of assumed supporters refused to become involved. Most notably among these was the wife of the late General Saw Bo Mya who declared the organization to be an ‘…evil set-up’. Faced with a lack of support especially after the majority of military commanders reconfirmed their allegiance to the KNU leadership, the group, under provisional control of Htain Maung and advised by Timothy and Maung Kyaw, had very little recourse but to declare its separation from the Karen National Union as the ‘KNU/KNLA Peace Council’ by the end of January.

The SPDC allowed the Peace Council, limited control over a small area based around the village of Toh Kaw Koe in Kawkareik Township, but it immediately found itself racked by defections as a number of troops rejoined the KNU. The Burmese regime had arranged a lavish welcoming ceremony for what it characterized as a major success for its ‘arm’s for peace’ program but still found it necessary to use DKBA to augment the ranks (evidence also suggests that a number of teenagers from Mae La were also deceived into joining the ranks – a claim the group denies).

While the political establishment continued to be shaken by the emergence of the new group the situation on the ground in Karen State remained little different from the prior year. While the 7th Brigade leaders were in Rangoon in January seeking a compromise the offensive launched in 2006 continued throughout northern Karen State resulting in yet more people displaced, herded into relocation zones or fleeing from abuses including arbitrary execution, rape and forced labour. While the offensive had remained primarily in the North the SPDC was able to take advantage of the fractured political situation within the KNU to widen the offensive to include the eastern borderlands with Thailand.
An attack against the DKBA’s 907 Battalion provided the impetus for a joint DKBA-SPDC attack against the KNLA’s 201 Battalion in 6th Brigade. This displaced hundreds of villagers and, in a rare show of political mobilization, caused over 500 villagers in Waley, opposite Thailand’s Umphang district, to demonstrate against the renewal of hostilities between the DKBA and KNU.

Further animosity between the Karen groups was also fostered when Ler Moo, the son-in-law of Htain Maung, came under attack whilst travelling along the Moei River. The attack which left Ler Moo and two children injured was blamed by the Peace Council on the KNU. However the allegation was denied by KNU General Secretary Padoh Mahn Sha, and rumours among the local Karen community surfaced that either business interests were behind the attack or it was the result of an internal conflict within the Peace Council itself.

The situation in the 6th and 7th Brigades continued to deteriorate from April onwards as attacks against the KNLA intensified and civilians were forced to flee across the border into neighbouring Thailand. Perhaps the most devastating attack occurred in the second half of April when a joint SPDC/DKBA offensive enabled them to take control of a number of KNLA bases including the 7th Brigade, 101 Battalion, 24th Battalion, KYO and KND0 headquarters, greatly weakening the Karen Liberation movement.

Elsewhere in the country the deteriorating political and economic situation led to mass protests in September as monks spearheaded mass demonstrations against the military regime. The so called ‘Yellow’ or ‘Saffron’ uprising was brutally crushed by the military as demonstrations also spread throughout ethnic areas. KNLA units were reported to have attempted to hamper Burmese troop deployment to civic centres while the role of the DKBA became surprisingly ambiguous with widespread, and eventually unfounded, rumours that they were mobilising in support of the monks.

The DKBA, along with other Junta-allied Karen groups, issued declarations in November in support of the regime’s seven-step road map and National Convention. The groups, including the above-ground political party Union Kayin League, The Haungthayaw Special Region Group and Phayagon Special Region Group, issued the announcements in response to a statement made by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and released by Ibrahim Gambari. The groups insisted that the NLD did not represent the ‘national races’ and that no single person or party could solely represent them.

The end of the year saw a further build-up of Burmese troops preparing for the annual dry season offensive; large scale road building through the use of forced labour; continued construction of a number of federalism. Regardless of all its tenacity, it is only a war in self-defense to prevent elimination, or genocide against the Karen people.”

Sources say the mission to Rangoon, nevertheless, is being followed by the KNU with concern about is purpose and consequences.

Shah Paung Irrawaddy 03/01/07

KNU’s 7th Brigade holds talks with junta

A Karen delegation led by the Commander of the 7th Brigade Brigadier-General Htain Maung have begun discussions for a ceasefire with Major General Ye Myint of Burma’s Military Affairs Security in Rangoon.

The controversial Karen delegation led by Commander Htain Maung of the 7th Brigade, under the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA),the armed wing of the Karen National
The KNU has waged guerrilla warfare against the central government since 1949.

“The delegation arrived in Rangoon and met General Ye Myint. The talks will be on for three or four days. As far as I know, they are discussing right now. But we will get the whole picture when General Htain Maung is back here,” Colonel Nerdah Mya, the tactical commander of the KNU’s general headquarters battalion told Mizzima. Nerdah Mya is the son of late KNU leader General Bo Mya.

When asked which areas will come under the ceasefire if the talks succeed he said, “We will ask for ceasefire in the whole of Karen but we will get the answers on whether it is possible when the delegation is back”, Nerdah Mya said.
that the trip of the Brigade 7 delegation to Rangoon did not have the consent of the KNU Central Standing Committee.

During the dialogue, the Burmese junta did not mention its military offensives in Taungoo and Nyaunglebin districts, the source added.

“They [junta] will withdraw its troops from three areas only,” said the source. “It is not what the KNU as a whole wants. What KNU wants is the rights for all oppressed ethnic people in Burma.”

He added that the oral promise by the Burmese junta to withdraw some of its troops cannot be totally relied upon because it was not a signed agreement.

The junta has carried out more attacks in Taungoo and Nyaunglebin districts after it declared the cancellation of the oral ceasefire agreement which was reached during negotiations between the junta and the KNU in September 2004.

NMG 10/01/07

Some Burmese troops to withdraw, says Karen delegation

A delegation from the Karen National Union’s 7th Brigade returned on Thursday from a meeting with Burmese officials in Rangoon, who said that the ruling junta would withdraw troops from some KNU-controlled areas.

The delegation, led by Brig.-Gen Htain Maung, crossed into the Burmese border town of Myawaddy on January 3 and traveled overland to Rangoon by car.

There, the eight-member delegation met Li-Gen Thein Sein, secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council, and Maj-Gen Ye Myint from Military Affairs Security, who said that the junta would pull out some of its troops from Karen State.

“They will withdraw [troops] from areas considered unimportant,” a senior leader of the KNU’s 7th Brigade said on condition of anonymity. “But in important areas, the [SPDC] will continue to control.”

The 7th Brigade leader added that Burmese troops will pull out of an area of Htee Mu Kee village in Paphun district in 1st Brigade, where the late Karen leader Gen Bo Mya was born, and some areas in 6th Brigade’s Waley Kee, and 7th Brigade, where the KNLA’s Battalion 202 is based.

SPDC representatives told the delegation that if other KNU brigades wanted the withdrawal of Burmese troops, their leaders would need to conduct similar negotiations in Rangoon.

Following the announcement of the 7th Brigade delegation’s trip to Rangoon, KNU officials said that they were acting independently of the KNU and did not represent the interests of the group’s Central Committee.

“It seems like the Burmese [junta] is trying to divide us [KNU],” the senior 7th Brigade leader said. “I don’t believe that they will withdraw as they said.”

The SPDC’s latest offensive in northern Karen State and Pegu Division has led to the displacement of more than 20,000 villagers, with thousands more seeking refuge in camps along the Thai-Burmese border.

The delegation included Col Paw Doh, head of the KNU’s Liberation Army Battalion 101; Maj Shwe Ro, second-in-command of Battalion 202; Htain Maung’s bodyguard Mar Ner, Say Plow Poe, the former head of 1st Brigade, Pastor Timothy, a former member of the KNU’s Executive Committee, and two other Karen pastors.

The group arrived back in Shwe Khoko village on Thursday and will hold a press briefing at 7th Brigade headquarters at an unspecified date.

Shah Paung Irrawaddy 11/01/07

7th Brigade cease-fire talks”against Karen interests” -- KNU CC

The Central Committee of the Karen National Union has dismissed a Karen faction’s attempts to reach a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese military junta, as “against Karen interests”.

The KNU’s Central Committee in an internal circular on Thursday, which was leaked to the media, denounced the ceasefire talks between a group of their leaders led by the commander of The 7th Brigade and the junta. “They are going to ally with SPDC to go into developmental business. It is not the right way, especially without the permission of the Central Committee. Moreover, it is against the interest of the Karen ethnic nationalities,” said Padoh Mahn Sha, spokesperson for the Karen rebels.

The war of statements, between the Central Committee and the faction, followed soon after the Karen delegation led by the Commander of the 7th Brigade, Brigadier-General Htain Maung of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the KNU, went to Rangoon to meet high ranking officials of the military junta to negotiate peace.

The ceasefire hungry faction released a statement on January 24, which said that they would go ahead with the talks with the junta and would not tolerate any attempt to derail it.

Padoh Mahn Sha La Phan, KNU General Secretary

“It cannot be called talks with the 7th Brigade, it is only an attempt by its commander”, Mann Sharr said.

“Actually, we did not release this as a statement. It was only for members of the Central Committee. But dishonest people leaked it,” he said.

Officials of the other faction were not available for comment at the time of reporting. However, sources in the 7th Brigade described the ceasefire talks as, “so far, so good” and talked about plans to go to Rangoon again in the near future for further discussions.

Sources close to the military junta said that the possibility of a ceasefire agreement with the KNU faction was high, which the junta views as a political success. Meanwhile, fire fighting broke out between KNLA’s No. 16 and 17 battalions on January 14, and the situation is tense.

Twelve Burmua Army troops including two officers were killed and nine injured in the skirmish, KNU claimed. Karen delegation returns to base

The Karen peace delegation hopes to be back in their base on the Thai-Burma border today after a series of meeting with high-ranking officials of the Burmese military junta, sources said.

The 10-member delegation led by Brigadier-General Htain Maung, the Commander of the 7th Brigade of the Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Karen National Union, held discussions with Burmese junta’s representatives including General Ye Myint of Burma’s Military Affairs Security in Rangoon.

Sources close to the Burmese Army said the Karen delegation also met Major General Ko Ko, the southern military Commander, Brigadier General Thet Naing Win, the southeastern military commander and the First Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council Lieutenant-General Thein Sein.

The ceasefire talks attempted by the commander of the KNLA have been rejected by the Central Committee of the Karen National Union, the strongest ethnic rebel fighting against the government for over five decades.

Sources close to the KNU said that there are major differences among Karen leaders over peace talks but they are trying to sort it out.

Mizzima 11/01/07

Finn says to fight with KNLA in Burma - Paper
A 28-year-old Finn identified only as Mika intends to fight the Burmese military junta in the ranks of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the largest insurgent group in Burma, the Bangkok Post reported on Sunday.

“The Burma issue and the KNLA are well known in Finland,” Mika told the paper, adding he had served in both the Finnish Defence Forces and the French Foreign Legion.

“Military types are well aware of the problems facing Burmese people and of the brutality of the (Burmese military). I want to join the KNLA to protect civilians,” he said.

Some people help the Karen community. I have military skills, so I am helping with those.”

Mika recently approached the Thailand-based All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), which told the paper it had hundreds of volunteers serving in Burma’s ethnic armies. According to the Bangkok Post, Mika, if accepted into rebel ranks, will probably travel to one of the ABSDF’s training camps in Burma to learn guerrilla warfare tactics and jungle survival skills.

Rifts in KNU seen as bad for security

The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU) which could affect border security. The conflicts have surfaced a little more than a month after the death of its former leader Bo Mya on Dec 24, said a KNU officer. If the friction within the KNU continues to widen, it could stall the ongoing peace process between the KNU and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Burma’s military junta, the officer said, adding that fresh armed clashes were likely between the two sides along the Thai-Burmese border.

Border trade would suffer as a result. The value of cross-border trade at Tak’s Mae Sot district has peaked to 12 billion baht during the past two years. Gen Bo Mya was a skilled negotiator who had initiated truce talks with former Burmese prime minister Gen Khin Nyunt, now serving a jail sentence for corruption, in late 2004 in Rangoon.

Gen Bo Mya died at the age of 79 at a private hospital in Mae Sot district from natural causes. Signs of a split in the KNU ranks first appeared when the commander of KNU’s 7th Brigade Maj-Gen Htain Maung led a delegation to undertake a peace dialogue with Burma’s military government on Jan 3, the KNU officer said.

According to an officer of the 7th Brigade, the Burmese military government has agreed to withdraw its troops from non-strategic areas in Karen state, but will keep troops in other key locations.

“However, the 7th Brigade delegation acted purely on its own accord and did not represent the KNU’s Central Committee. It seems that the Burmese are plotting to divide and rule us. I don’t believe they would really pull out,” the KNU officer said.

The KNU’s central committee made it clear at a meeting on Thursday that they had not endorsed the dialogue and also condemned it as going against the KNU’s interests.

KNU secretary-general Mahn Sha said the latest negotiations were initiated by Maj-Gen Htain Maung and the delegation was not appointed by the committee.

“They (the delegates) are willing to go along with the SPDC so that they could get an opportunity to expand their businesses in Burma. “This would not be in the best interests of the KNU,” said Mahn Sha, though he insisted the KNU has not abandoned peace talks with Rangoon. The talks, however, must be pursued on an equal footing, he said.

The KNU was the first among Burma’s nationalities to rebel against the central government following the country’s independence in 1948 from Britain.

It is one of the last armed groups that continues to actively oppose the military junta, prompting annual offensives in Karen state that have driven an estimated 140,000 civilian refugees to border camps.

By Supamart Kasem
Bangkok Post
28/1/07

KNU 7th brigade prepares for ‘Peace Areas’

The commander of the Karen National Union 7th Brigade, Brig-Gen Htain Maung, is apparently following through with plans to move the brigade’s headquarters while also surveying regions to designate as “peace areas.”

A contingent of KNU/KNLA “peace representatives” toured areas in Karen State together with officers from the Burmese military government and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, Maj Maung Kyaw, liaison officer of the 7th Brigade, said on Monday.

“We went to those areas to survey the situation for those who will go back and stay in the old villages,” said Maung Kyaw.

Some Tatmadaw [armed forces] government officers went with us, and the DKBA was providing our security,” he declined to identify the areas visited.

Maung Kyaw said people who want to return to the designated peace areas can go back any time they choose. “It is not forced relocation,” he said.

Leaders of the 7th Brigade and Burmese junta officers agreed to a cease-fire in Rangoon on January 16. Htin Maung described it as a “peace agreement.”

Because of the recent tension between the KNU and the break-away 7th Brigade, the KNU will not celebrate the 58th anniversary of Karen Revolution Day on January 31, Mahn Sha said.

“We have ordered our people to celebrate the day by their own accord and did not represent the delegation acted purely on its own accord and did not represent the KNU’s Central Committee,” he said. “Our [KNU] Central Committee will not celebrate this day with a big ceremony like in past years.”

Karen people around the world have taken a strong interest in the standoff between the policies of the KNU Central Committee and some 7th brigade leaders, seeing it as a political wedge dividing the Karen community.

Some reports have speculated that Htain Maung plans to move the 7th Brigade headquarters to Maw Paw Thoo on the Taungyin River near Khoko village, the headquarters of DKBA Special Battalion 999. Maw Paw Thoo is one of the designated control areas of the DKBA, a Karen cease-fire group that broke away from the KNU in January, 1995. However, liaison officer Maung Kyaw said if the 7th Brigade headquarters relocates it would not be to Maw Paw Thoo but rather to Toh Kaw Koe village of Kawkareik Township, Karen State. The Karen hero Ba U Gyi was killed in the village on Aug 12, 1950, a date designated as Karen Martyr’s Day.

Shah Paung
Irrawaddy
29/01/07

Brig-Gen Htai

Brig-Gen Htain Maung expelled, remains loyal to KNU

The commander of Brigade 7 of the Karen National Liberation Army, Brig-Gen Htain Maung (left) has been expelled by the Central Committee of the Karen National Union but all the regiments are still under the organisation’s control. The stringent action was taken against the commander because he ignored the committee and initiated a dialogue with the Burmese military junta for a ceasefire, KNU sources said.

The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the armed wing of the KNU.

“There are six regiments under the command of Brigade 7,” said Padoh Mahn Sha, KNU secretary general. “None of these regiments are following him [ Brig-Gen Htain Maung]. All the regiments are now under the command of Col. Kyaw Nee [Johnny] and Col Tun Kyaying. Some of his [Htain Maung] associates and his family have gone with him.”

Padoh Saw Ah Toe, chairman of Pa-an district confirmed that none of the regiments under Brigade 7 are following the former Commander Brig-Gen Htain Maung, but are very much under the command of the KNU. His family, security personnel and Col. Nerdah Mya (left), a son of late Saw Bo Mya and some of his associates have gone along with...
him.

Brig-Gen Htain Maung has been dismissed from the posts he held by the KNU Central Committee at the committee meeting today, said Padoh Mahn Sha.

“He was a member of the Central Committee and a Brigadier. He went on to talk with the junta and reach a ceasefire agreement turning his back on the organization. We, the committee members decided to dismiss him from his posts,” said Padoh Mahn Sha.

Chairman of Pa-an district, Padoh Saw Ah Toe and Padoh Aung Maung, Col Johnny and Col Tun Kyaing have taken over the duties of Htain Maung.

“What he has done has affected us,” said Mahn Sha. “But the regiments didn’t support him.”

The conflict of interests between the KNU Central Committee and Brig-Gen Htain Maung came in the wake of a delegation of Brigade 7 led by the Brigadier travelling to Rangoon on January 3 and starting a dialogue with the junta for a ceasefire without the consent of the KNU.

Brig-Gen Htain Maung and his group went on to negotiate with the junta while the KNU as a whole was preparing to send a delegation to talk to the Burmese military brass.

The Burmese military junta has agreed to some of Brig-Gen Htain Maung’s proposals.

NMG
30-1-07

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**Who’s involved in the Split**

Brigadie Htain Maung (Htay Mg) - 7th Brigade Commander and KNU Forestry and Mining Minister

Maung Kyaw, Former KNU Representative for Germany and ex-Karen Service Team

Pastor Timothy Laklem, founder Chiang Mai based Tribal Ministries, General Bo Mya confidante

Major Nerdah Mya, H.Q. Battalion Commander, son of the late Bo Mya (would later remain with the KNU)

Ler Moo, son-in-law of Brigadier Htain Maung and business man (assassinated 2008)

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**February**

“The fact that my name is put in the position of vice chairperson, and my children are included as members of this organization is an evil set up.”

Thramu Lar Poe
Wife of the Late General Bo Mya and President of the Karen Women’s Organisation

OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
KAREN NATIONAL UNION
KAWTHOOLEI

Statement regarding KNU-KNLA Peace Council

- Not only have I not known entirely the so-called KNU-KNLA Peace Council that has appeared currently, but I cannot also absolutely accept it.

- The fact that my name is put in the position of vice-chairperson and my children are included as members of this organization is an evil set-up. I do not absolutely accept it.

- The KNU is the mother organization of all the Karen people. I cannot totally accept any acts of dividing it, breaking away from it or acts tantamount to surrender to the enemy.

- I am a central committee member of the KNU. I am also President of the Karen Women Organization (KWO). Accordingly, I will perform my duties firmly. I would like to declare that I will steadfastly follow the policies laid down by the Thirteenth Congress of the KNU.

2/2/2007

Naw Lar Poe
Member of KNU Central Committee
President of KWO
Widow of Gen. Saw Bo Mya


Karen Women’s Organization rejected her role in the KNU/KNLAPC and pointed out that the enlistment of her and her sons’ names was only an attempt to divide her family and the KNU which is her mother organization.

Karen Journalists Face Threats, Intimidation over KNU Crisis Reports

Media groups based along the Thai-Burmese border claim that threats against them have hindered their ability to cover news about conflicts among leaders of the Karen National Union.

Reporters with the Mae Sot-based Karen Information Center and a new KNU splinter group called Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council have received threats after publishing news reports on the growing strife within the ethnic political opposition group.

One international BBC broadcaster who requested anonymity said that Pastor Timothy, the leader of a break-away faction of the KNU, threatened his life over the BBC Burmese Service say they have received threats after publishing news reports on the growing strife within the ethnic political opposition group.

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KNU promises not to harm defectors

Senior leaders of the Karen National Union said yesterday they would not physically attack members of a newly formed splinter group, despite speculation some members were planning to join forces with the Burmese military.

KNU general secretary Padoh Mahn Sha told DVB yesterday the organisation’s armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army, had already been ordered not to harm former seventh brigade leader Saw Htain Maung or his followers.

Saw Htain Maung released a statement under the name Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council on January 31, formally rejecting the KNU’s central working committee and announcing the formation of a new splinter group.

“He’s still in our territory but as he has worked for our revolution for some time, we’d still give him a free chance to join with the military. We won’t harm him,” Padoh Mahn Sha said.

The news of Saw Htain Maung’s decision to break away from the KNU came just days after he was sacked by the group over his trip to Rangoon for peace talks with the Burmese military without the permission of the KNU’s central committee.

“Karen people are disgusted by such an act—bowing before the enemy. He has some people with him now. But those are our people and we don’t know when he’s going to leave them,” Padoh Mahn Sha said.

Saw Htain Maung’s January 31 statement also listed 18 people designated take over the existing KNU central committee, including Saw Htain Maung, the wife of the late KNU leader general Bo Mya, Naw Mu Lar Poe, and two of his sons.

But Naw Mu Lar Poe, who is also head of the Karen Women’s Organization said yesterday she wanted nothing to do with the splinter group.

Karen Heritage

Shah Paung
Irrawaddy
06/02/07

The general secretary said the group comprised largely low-ranking military commanders but also included Maj Yin Nu of 7th Brigade, a close colleague of Htain Maung and an early member of the splinter group.

Htain Maung was dismissed from the KNU’s central committee and as head of 7th Brigade in January 30 after organizing negotiations with Burma’s ruling State Peace and Development Council without permission of the central committee. In response, he formed a break-away faction known as the KNU/KNLA Peace Council.

The more than 60 soldiers—the exact numbers are not confirmed—have left Htain Maung and returned to the KNLA’s 7th Brigade, currently under the joint temporary command of Col Johnny and Lt-Col Tun Kyaing.

An official at KNLA headquarters told The Irrawaddy on Thursday that an additional group of soldiers loyal to Htain Maung—estimated at about 60—have gone to Toh Kaw Koe village in Kawkareik Township, Karen State, to establish headquarters for the splinter group.

Toh Kaw Koe has significant historical connections to ethnic Karen opposition forces as the site where Ba U Gyi, the father of the Karen resistance, was killed by Burmese troops on August 12, 1950.

The area is deep in SPDC-controlled territory in Karen State, and additional soldiers wanting to return to the KNU would find it difficult to do so, according to the KNLA official. Despite the risks, five soldiers are known to have returned from Toh Kaw Koe, and more are expected in the future.

Col Nerdah Mya, son of the late Gen Bo Mya, is said to be the secretary-1 of Htain Maung’s Peace Council, but this has been disputed by his family.

Lar Poe, Nerdah Mya’s mother, has denied any connection to the splinter group. “The fact that my name is listed as the vice chairperson [of the splinter group], and my children are included as members of this organization is an evil setup. I absolutely do not accept it.”

Nerdah Mya has yet to publicly deny his involvement with Htain Maung and still retains his position as a tactical commander within the KNLA headquarters and commander of Battalion 201.

Mahn Sha confirmed that Nerdah Mya has not been dismissed from the KNLA but that he is under suspicion. “Because of his father’s influence, people [KNU leaders] sympathize with him,” Mahn Sha said. “But if he is involved with the growing conflict, nobody will accept him.”

According to sources along the Thai-Burmese border, security around the Mae La refugee camp, located opposite 7th Brigade across the border, has been tightened because of concerns that Htain Maung and the soldiers with him might join Burmese military units and attack the KNU.

The KNU’s break-away faction Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, formed in 1995, attacked Mae La camp in 1996 with support from the Burmese army.

Shah Paung
Irrawaddy
08/02/07

Break-away Karen Soldiers Return to KNU Fold

A group of more than 60 soldiers from the Karen National Liberation Army’s 7th Brigade who joined a break-away faction of the Karen National Union led by Maj-Gen Htain Maung have returned to the fold, according to KNU General Secretary Mahn Sha.

The former commander of the Karen National Union abandoned a KNU-controlled area along the Thai-Burmese border on Friday, according to reliable sources.

Maj-Gen Htain Maung, who formed a breakaway group called the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council on January 31, formally rejected the KNU and returned to the Burmese army.

Mahn Sha confirmed that Nerdah Mya has not been dismissed from the KNLA but that he is under suspicion. “Because of his father’s influence, people [KNU leaders] sympathize with him,” Mahn Sha said. “But if he is involved with the growing conflict, nobody will accept him.”

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Shah Paung
Irrawaddy
08/02/07

Breakaway Group Leaves KNU-

controlled Area

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Col Nerdah Mya, son of the late Gen Bo Mya, is said to be the secretary-1 of Htain Maung’s Peace Council, but this has been disputed by his family.

Lar Poe, Nerdah Mya’s mother, has denied any connection to the splinter group. “The fact that my name is listed as the vice chairperson [of the splinter group], and my children are included as members of this organization is an evil setup. I absolutely do not accept it.”

Nerdah Mya has yet to publicly deny his involvement with Htain Maung and still retains his position as a tactical commander within the KNLA headquarters and commander of Battalion 201.

Mahn Sha confirmed that Nerdah Mya has not been dismissed from the KNLA but that he is under suspicion. “Because of his father’s influence, people [KNU leaders] sympathize with him,” Mahn Sha said. “But if he is involved with the growing conflict, nobody will accept him.”

According to sources along the Thai-Burmese border, security around the Mae La refugee camp, located opposite 7th Brigade across the border, has been tightened because of concerns that Htain Maung and the soldiers with him might join Burmese military units and attack the KNU.

The KNU’s break-away faction Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, formed in 1995, attacked Mae La camp in 1996 with support from the Burmese army.

Shah Paung
Irrawaddy
08/02/07

Breakaway Group Leaves KNU-

controlled Area

The former commander of the Karen National Union abandoned a KNU-controlled area along the Thai-Burmese border on Friday, according to reliable sources.

Maj-Gen Htain Maung, who formed a breakaway group called the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council on January 31, returned with his family and followers to Toh Kaw Koe village, Kawkareik Township, Karen State.

The source could not give the number of people who accompanied Htain Maung. Col Myat Hun Oo of Military Affairs Security in the Burmese military government welcomed Htain Maung and his group in Myawaddy, opposite Mae Sot in northern Thailand.

The group was then transported to the village in a motorcade of 14 cars, sources said, and the village will probably become the group’s headquarters. It was not clear if more of Htain Maung’s followers would arrive at a later date.

The general-secretary of the KNU, Mahn Sha, confirmed the return to Burma of the breakaway group.

Other sources said Burmese authorities may hold a formal celebration to welcome the group to Toh Kaw Koe village during the weekend.

On January 30, Htain Maung was dismissed as head of 7th Brigade by the KNU after organizing negotiations with the military government without approval of the KNU central committee.

Irrawaddy
09/02/07

Htain Maung Faction Joins Legal Fold

Brigadier General Htain Maung’s
Ashley, General Officer Commanding (General Headquarters) officers, reiterated their full confidence in our current leadership, the EC (Executive Committee) and CC (Central Committee). Among the signatories were Saw Mutu, General Officer Commanding; all brigade commanders minus Saw Htein Maung, Commander of the 7th Brigade, who in January concluded a solitary deal with the Burmese Army; and all 5 battalion commanders from the 7th Brigade.

Saw Hsar Gay ”It was an initiative by some GHQ (General Headquarters) officers to effectively counter rumors circulating in the media about the impending split between the movement’s political and military wings,” explained Brig-Gen Saw Hsar Gay (left), who heads the Special Warfare Section. “The GOC himself put down his signature at a later stage in the GHQ document signed by Brigade commanders loyal to the KNU. We all know that this was not true but at that time it was not prudent to expose who was fabricating these stories which were leaked to the press. It was part of the plan to destabilize the KNU.”

HG:  The purpose was to unequivocally show where we stood at the time when a lot of speculations about the KNLA wanting to part from the political leadership of the KNU. We all knew that this was not true but at that time it was not prudent to expose who was fabricating these stories which were leaked to the press. It was part of the plan to destabilize the KNU.

SHAN: Why did the political leadership not act sooner when 7th Brigade commander started to question the authority of the central leadership?

HG: It was out of prudence and in the hope that he would see that he was being manipulated and enticed and was acting against the cause and the people.

SHAN: Manipulated by whom?

HG: By people who were out to look for their personal agenda: power or influence, money and limelight where the motivations of those who were steering Htein Maung in that direction. Now he will be abandoned as he became useless to their plans and they will be plotting as how to pursue their objectives. They used and misused the name of our great hero General Saw Bo Mya and supporting the leadership. I met with the battalion commanders of 7th Brigade at that time and discerned no wavering from their part. 2 IC (Second in Command) and a few company commanders met at that time were also all in tune. We have professional and dedicated commanding officers in 7th brigade who are politically alert and loyal. They all respect the leaders individually as well as the constitution. Our G.O.C has created an atmosphere of consensus within the KNLA so that while we obey orders but we are allowed to speak our minds and we feel that our opinions are listened to which is very motivating.
Karen Heritage

HG: Well, first of all the KNU and its current leadership have proven to be prudent, cautious yet firm and, above all, through collective leadership and mutual respect the 142 delegates who voted the Central Committee and chose the big 5 of the EC, namely, President, Vice President, General Secretary and Joint Secretaries 1 and 2, have made a good choice if we judge at the performance of our leadership under extremely difficult conditions.

Secondly, it was good to see that our political allies whether the other ethnic nationalities and the Burmese pro-democracy forces, even if they sometimes were worried and confused due to the course of these sad events, have always believed in our ability to handle the situation and supported us politically and morally. It was a victory for what we have stood for six decades!

SHAN: What will the SPDC reaction be you think?

HG: It is difficult to predict but I hope that they will not respond by increasing their military pressure especially in the 7th Brigade area in order to test the new command as this will lead to unnecessary suffering on both sides and as there is no military solution to this conflict but only a political one. We are, as we have always been, ready to negotiate a political settlement but as an organization and not individually, nor geographically and never forgetting Saw Ba U Gyi’s 4 principles, our people and our allies.

SHAN: How do you think that this whole episode has affected the cause internationally?

HG: It promoted our cause and all those who oppose the SPDC but naturally it has promoted the role of the ethnic nationalities proving how crucial and important they are in the arena of the Burma political equation. Every time we survive a crisis like this one, we earn more and more respect from the international community and our allies, and convince our enemies that the greater the pressure, the more united we become.

Q: More on Gen Htein Maung?

A: On the 24th and 26th of January, a meeting was called by the GOC. To which Htein Maung replied that he could not attend the meeting and that he had been authorized by the Burmese government to be a mediator and that if anyone wanted to meet the SPDC for peace talks, it could be only through him.

Q: We heard Htein Maung was involved in Hutgyi and cross border contract farming projects initiated by the Thai business sector. Is it true?

A: Yes, it is correct Htein Maung and the people who have been manipulating him are in cahoots with businessmen involved in cross border contract farming and the Hutgyi dam projects, which are in the 7th Brigade operational area of Pa-an district.

Q: Can we now say the KNU has overcome its biggest internal challenge to its existence?

A: I would not call this the biggest internal challenge as the ideological splits at the 3rd Kawkhooleti Congress between the KNUP and KRC and later in 1994 the breakaway of the DKBA from the KNU which were much more threatening than this episode, which although creating some uneasiness has not been a real challenge to the integrity of the KNU as it has really no followers and no support. I think many more of these challenges will arise in the future. They are part of a long-lasting revolutionary struggle where the enemy tries to work on personal ambitions and greed of individual people to try to divide their opponent. We have to be prepared for such events and as a whole support our leadership without personal considerations as long as the leadership acts in accordance with the principles of the constitution, the decisions and principles laid down by of Congress and by the Central Committee.

The present leadership has always practiced collective leadership by allowing free internal discussion and by consulting the CC regarding important decisions not only by calling the regular Central Committee meetings but by calling extraordinary CC meetings so that all matters can be discussed and decided within a proper forum which has given our organization a cohesion. This is indeed remarkable considering the existing hardships and pressure at all levels of our revolutionary society.

Karen National Union 7th Brigade Denies Surrender To Myanmar Junta

A Karen National Union (KNU) faction that entered into peace negotiations with Myanmar’s junta last month denies that it has surrendered, diplomats and academic who visited the rebel faction said on Friday.

“It was not surrender,” KNU spokesman Saw Htain Maung, 77, told a gathering of journalists, diplomats and European academics who on Thursday attended a press conference at Htotkawkoe village, Kawkareik township in the Karen State.

“We still defend the Karen. The Karen decide their own political destiny. And the Karen State must be recognized within the country as well as internationally,” Saw Htain Maung told the gathering.

On February 11 the KNU 7th Brigade led by Brigadier General Htein Maung entered into peace negotiations with Myanmar’s military regime, prompting some to accuse the faction of surrendering.

Saw Htain Maung said the faction had decided to enter into peace talks with the government because their people were tired of war. “People are the most vulnerable from the lack peace, establishment of which is the responsibility of the whole world,” said Saw, who joined the KNU at the age of 17.

Since signing the peace agreement some 450 7th Brigade troops have moved to Htotkawkoe where the government has provided their families with farm land, livestock and assistance in the construction of churches and health clinics, observers said.

“They seem totally content with the peace agreement they have signed and at the same time they are maintaining their independence,” said Paul Pasch, the Myanmar representative for the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. The foundation organized a visit to the camp by 10 European academics to the Karen camp, including Robert Taylor, an expert on Myanmar’s recent history.

“These are the first seeds for sustainable development and hopefully for a lasting peace agreement,” said Pasch.

The 7th Brigade is only one faction within the KNU, which has been waging a guerrilla struggle against the central government for the independence of the Karen State since 1949.

There are an estimated 4,000 KNU troops still in the field against the junta.

Brigadier General Htein Maung was a close associate of former
KNU leader Bo Mya, who died in January.

The KNU is one of the last ethnic minority insurgencies to enter into a peace agreements with the ruling junta, which has monopolized political power since it crushed a pro-democracy movement in 1988 leaving an estimated 3,000 people dead.

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), as the junta styles itself, allowed a general election in 1990 but then denied power to the National League of Democracy when it won the polls by a landslide.

Instead, the junta has launched a National Convention process to draft a new constitution and prepare for a new election.

“They have not decided yet whether they will send representatives to the next session of the National Convention,” said Pasch, of the KNU 7th Brigade.

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02/03/07
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KNU camp attacked by Burma Army and DKBA troops

A camp of the Karen National Union near the Thai-Burma border was attacked by troops of the Burmese Army and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army early today morning.

The combined force of the military junta and the cease-fire pro-junta DKBA launched its offensive on the Maekalawki camp, 30 kilometres from Myawaddy close to the border.

“The fighting broke out around 5:30 a.m. and continued for about an hour,” said Pado Man Sha, spokesperson of KNU, the ethnic rebel group fighting the military junta for self-determination.

“There were about 50 or 60 soldiers from their side. But I don’t have details,” he said. Man Sha was hesitant about ruling ranks of the Burmese military were struggling under poor economic conditions.

“We talked about [the SPDC] soldiers poor food and living conditions while senior leader are at Pyinmana enjoying their privileges. Basic privates among the SPDC troops are not willing to prepare for a new election.

“We will oppose all kinds of defeatism within the Karen community and cooperate with those who truly have patriotism. We urge every Karen to see the actual common enemy of the Karen people, not to do anything benefiting the enemy and oppose the treacherous tactics of the enemy, using Karen to fight against the Karen.”

KNU statement on new offensives

out further attacks. Causality and injuries have not been determined yet.

The KNU has been fighting against the Central government for more than five decades and has failed to reach a cease-fire agreement although both sides have tried repeatedly.

Mizzima
08-03-07

KNU leader briefs Oslo meeting on Burma conflict

Colonel Nada [sic] Mya, son of the late Karen National Union leader Bo Mya, addressed a group of prominent politicians and diplomats in Norway on Thursday, wearing full KNU uniform.

Nerdah Mya told an audience a seminar at the Grand Hotel in Oslo, organised by the Foundation Northern Alliance, that the lower Burma Army troops

Hundreds displaced by Karen attacks

Between 200 and 500 Karen villagers from Dooplaya district have been forced to flee to Thailand after fresh fighting between the Karen National Union, the Burmese military and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

The Burmese military and the DKBA launched a joint attack on the KNU’s armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army, last Thursday causing casualties in all three groups, KNU foreign affairs spokesperson old DVB.

The Burmese military and the DKBA are reportedly trying to seize the KNLDA Division 201’s base. Sources in the area told DVB late last week that the fighting was expected to continue.

“The SPDC and DKBA troops jointly attacked the camp this morning . . . the fighting is still going on and the villagers don’t dare to return to their homes,” David Taw said.

The DKBA was not immediately available for comment on the fresh fighting. Estimates on how many villagers have been displaced vary from 200 to 500, with the Free Burma Rangers—a grassroots humanitarian group operating in Karen State—saying about 500 had fled to Thailand.

“Local leaders reported that more Burma Army troops are on the way to that area and that the attacks are expected to continue,” an FBR statement on the attacks said.

DVB
11-03-07

Burma Army and DKBA likely to launch fresh offensive

The joint forces of the Burma Army and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army are gearing up to lunch a fresh offensive on the Karen National Union, according to KNU officials.

Posts under battalion 201 of the Karen National Liberation Army, located 30 kilometres from Myawaddy, near the Thai-Burma border might be the target of the combined units of the military junta and cease-fire group, the DKBA, said KNU secretary Man Sha.

“I heard they will attack 201. They may want to control the territory,” he said.

The BBC Burmese service quoted a Thai security official as saying two camps in Myawaddy-Waley Kee and Maekyan would be attacked any time.

Local sources said Thai security forces are concerned about the possible attack and monitoring the situation closely.

On March 8 and 9, DKBA forces backed by the government troops attacked a KNU post. At least 10 people from both sides have been killed.

Almost 200 Karen refugees who escaped the fighting have been given shelter in a monastery on the Thai-Burma border.

Waley Kee is situated 80 kilometres south of Maesot in Thailand and Maekyan is 120 kilometres away.

Thaan Htike Oo
Mon 12 Mar 2007
Mizzima News

Myanmar military offensive leaves 14
Karen flee to Thailand

Clashes between the Myanmar military and ethnic Karen rebels killed 14 people and forced at least 300 civilians to flee into neighboring Thailand, a rebel spokesman and a Thai military official said Saturday.

The Myanmar military and the pro-junta Democratic Karen Buddhist Army launched attacks Thursday against the Karen National Union, said David Taw, a spokesman in Thailand for the KNU, the largest group representing the Karen.

Thaw said 10 Myanmar troops and four rebel soldiers were killed in the clashes. He said the military was "trying to pressure the KNU into returning to the negotiating table."

Col. Phanu Wacharopas, a Thai military commander in charge of border districts in Tak province, said 300 people had fled across the border into Thailand.

Phanu said most of the refugees were staying in a Buddhist monastery in Umphang district near the border. He said the fighting had stopped and the refugees would probably return home soon.

A spokesman for the junta in Myanmar, also known as Burma, was not immediately available for comment.

The KNU has been fighting for half a century for greater autonomy from Myanmar's central government.

Cease-fire talks between the KNU and the government broke down in 2004, and the Myanmar army launched a major offensive in Karen State in eastern Myanmar in 2005. Since then, it has repeatedly tried to bring KNU members to the bargaining table in an effort to split the group. The Thailand Burma Border Consortium, the main aid agency caring for tens of thousands of refugees along the Thai-Myanmar frontier, estimates that in 2006 alone the violence forced 82,000 people to leave their homes.

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by members of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) last Thursday at the western Thai border district of Sangkhlaburi in Kanchanaburi province.

First Army Region Commander Lt-Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha said Sunday that the Third Army Region, which is responsible for security affairs in the north, had been assigned to negotiate the release of the two border patrol police officers.

Gen Sonthi Boonyaratkalin, chairman of the Council for National Security (CNS) and Army commander, said the two police officers were taken to Phitsanulok province for debriefing. He also said that Gen Prayuth will report to him the result of investigation of the incident.

Meanwhile, Col Surasi Surasi, deputy commander of the Surasi Task Force in Prachaup Khiri Khan province, confirmed that Singkhon border checkpoint will reopen at 1 pm Monday after being closed temporarily along with main Burma border checkpoints since Saturday, as a way to pressure Rangoon to release the policemen.

Bangkok Post
26/03/07

Kidnapped Thai Officers Released by Karen Rebel Army

Two kidnapped Thai border patrol policemen were released Monday by the Democratic Buddhist Karen Army after being detained for five days. Sources say the kidnappings were probably related to a dispute between the DBKA and the KNU.

According to Kwekalu, a Karen online news Web site, a senior KNU official on the border who asked not to be identified said the DBKA detained the two border policemen because it wanted to exchange them for three Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) officers who work in the DKBA-controlled area. Police Sub-Lt Chavalit Rattanaphan and Lance Cpl Prayonyuth Panthang were kidnapped by the DBKA on Thursday.

The general secretary of the Karen National Liberation Army, Mahn Sha, told The Irrawaddy that the kidnapping incident was related to illicit drugs, logging and human trafficking. Thai Third Army Commander Lt-Gen Jiradet Hnoke Khan Hmwe has been summoned to headquarters in Myaing Gyi Ngu, Karen State, regarding the latest incident and recent clashes with the KNU.

Security remains tight in the area with numerous border checkpoints remained closed on Monday. Officials said the Thai First Army and the Surasi Task Force, the policemen’s unit, are investigating.

Shah Paung & Sai Silp Irrawaddy
26/03/07

“It’s not a surrender” - KNU/KNLA Peace Council

The KNU/KNLA Peace Council, a splinter Karen rebel group led by Brig-Gen Htain Maung, said it has not surrendered to the Burmese Army but has changed its strategy by first striking a peace deal.

Major Maung Kyaw, liaison officer of the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, said no negotiation can be possible without first reaching a peace agreement. But it does not mean surrendering of arms.

“Our principle is that there can be no dialogue and no development as long as there is continuous fighting. So, we need to find a way to stop this fighting,” Kyaw told Mizzima over telephone.

Kyaw added that despite criticism that the KNU/KNLA Peace Council is following a new strategy, it does not mean “we are surrendering.”

Brig-Gen Htain Maung, commander of the 7th brigade KNLA, the armed wing of the KNU, and a team of delegates on January 3 left for Rangoon for peace talks with the Burmese Army without the approval of the KNU central committee. Following the trip, the KNU central committee dismissed Brig-Gen Htain Maung from his post for flouting the central committee’s orders and trying to negotiate peace with the Burmese military junta without consulting the KNU.

However, Brig-Gen Htain Maung and his group continued the peace process and formed the KNU/KNLA Peace Council on January 31. The Peace Council also declared that a peace deal has been struck with the Burmese junta and went back to Toh Koe village, Kawkareik Township, Karen State with its followers.

Kyaw said, members of the Peace Council are able to move freely in the Toh Koe area, where the Karen revolutionary leader Saw Ba U Gyi had died in August 1950, without fear of military attacks and are able to hoist the Karen national flag.

“But we are in no way going to give up our arms,” said Kyaw adding that the word “surrender” used by a few media groups to label the Peace Council, was disgusting.

“It’s been 58 years that we have been fighting. This is not child’s play and just to say we are surrendering is ridiculous,” said Kyaw.

Kyaw said following the agreement between the Peace Council and the junta for a peace deal, the lives of Karen people in the area had been peaceful with development projects on the anvil. Currently Brig-Gen Htain Maung is demanding that the Burmese junta build a channel that will supply water to the vast fields in the peace zone, said Kyaw.

Mizzima
30-3-07

Dr Simon Tha, Karen Development Committee, Rangoon based.

Dr Rebecca, wife of Dr. Simon Tha, Rangoon based.

Saw Blah Htoo, Singapore based Business man

Peace Council
People behind the scenes

Image: KNAPC Calendar 2008

DKBA Leaders meet with Htain Maung (Video capture)
April

We do not want a war between Karen groups. Our principle is to make peace, that’s why we have even reached a peace agreement with the enemy.

Karen Heritage

Karen Defense Force Flee to Thailand as Burma Army Attacks

Over 130 Families Flee to Thailand as Burma Army Attacks

On 7 April 2007, at midnight, the Burma Army, along with the DKBA launched a series of attacks against the Karen (KNU) along the Thai-Burma border north of Mae Sot. The attacks proceeded through the 8th and are ongoing as of 9 April 2007.

Eight columns from at least three Burma Army battalions (355, 356, and 357) are involved in the attack. They are accompanied by two columns of DKBA Battalion 999, commanded by Chit Tu, and one column under ex-KNU 7th Brigade commander Htin Maung (who has made a personal alliance with the dictators’ army).

The attacks occurred from south to north targeting villages and KNU positions along the Moei River. On the 8th, two columns hit KNU 101 battalion area at the Law They Ha twice, once in the morning and once in the evening. Also in the evening, the Burma Army attacked Thay Kai Yah, an IDP site. The villagers had heard of the coming attack and had fled to the Thai side the day before (on 7 April 2007). During these attacks, a KNLA captain was killed (The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the military branch of the Karen National Union (KNU)).

On the morning of the 8th at about 2:15 am, the Burma Army attacked Hua Law, the Karen Youth Organization head quarters. This is opposite from Mae Rah Mat along the Thai/Burma border. The Burma Army now occupies that area.

Following this, five columns attacked KNLA 24 Battalion area at Maw Pana Hta. North of this, the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO), another military branch of the KNU base on the Moei River was attacked.

In support of these attacks, the Burma Army is using 81mm and 60mm mortars and .50 caliber heavy machine guns. These attacks have displaced more than 130 Karen families, who have all fled to the Thai side of the border. An estimated 30 families fled from Loh Di Tah, 50 families from Thay Kai Yah, 30 families from Tha Koh Klah, along with 20 more families from areas near the fighting. These numbers are low estimates and may still increase because of continuing attacks.

Free Burma Rangers 8-8-07

Myanmar border clashes kill 17, wound 19 - rebels

Clashes along the Thai border between Myanmar soldiers and an ethnic rebel group have killed at least 17, wounded 19 and forced hundreds to flee to Thailand, Thai officials and a pro-Myanmar militia said on Sunday.

Myanmar troops and its allied militia, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), raided three outposts of the Karen National Union (KNU) in the Karen State along the Thai border at 2 a.m. on Sunday (1900 GMT), a Thai security official told Reuters.

DKBA troops travelling by boat on the Moei River launched rockets that killed at least three KNU guerrillas. The DKBA also lost eight men in a landmine set by the KNU, said the official who declined to be identified.

Funeral of Former Karen Defense Force Leader

More than 300 mourners attended the funeral on Monday of Gen Kyaw Thaung, a former head of the Karen National Defense Organization, who died aged 83 after a two-year fight against cancer. The funeral took place at the base of the Karen National Liberation Army’s Battalion 101.

Kyaw Thaung, who was born in Pantanaw township, in Irrawaddy division, led the KNDO until ill health forced his retirement in 2004. The KNDO was formed in 1947 to provide security in areas controlled by the Karen National Union.

KNU/KNLA Peace Council accuses KNU of attack

The splinter Karen rebel group, KNU/KNLA Peace Council has accused the Karen National Union of launching a one-sided attack on its members, including a senior leader of the group on Sunday.

Major Maung Kyaw, Liaison officer of the Peace Council, told Mizzima today, “The attack was deliberate and was planned to kill Col Ler Moo (pictured left with his uncle Brig. Gen. Htain Maung) and his followers.” He warned that such attacks in the future could instigate rivalry between the two Karen rebel groups.

A group of armed men on April 1, attacked Col Ler Moo, a senior member of the Peace Council, and five of his followers, who were traveling on a boat in Thaungyin River along the Thai-Burmese border.

Col Ler Moo, reportedly sustained several injuries on his back and a boy of 12, lost his right eye. The liver of another aged 13, was damaged and he is in a critical condition.

Kyaw said the attack was carried out on the orders of the KNU general Secretary Padoh Mahn Sha. “We have information that Man Sha had ordered Col Johnny to carry out the attack.”

Col Ler Moo and followers were attacked near the base of the KNU’s 7th Brigade, which is under the charge of Col Johnny, Padoh Saw Ah Toe and Col Htin Kyawing following the dismissal of former commander Brig-Gen Htain Maung.

“Do not want a war between Karen groups. Our principle is to make peace, that’s why we have even reached a peace agreement with the enemy [Burmeses junta],” he added.

However, Kyaw said, “If such incidents continued in the future it might be difficult to control members of the Peace Council not to react as it costs people’s lives.”

Padoh Man Sha, General Secretary of KNU, however, denied all the allegations saying “we don’t know anything about the incident.”

Their [Peace Council] claims are baseless. The KNU will never do such things, and how can they prove that it was KNU soldiers who attacked them,” Man Sha told Mizzima.

Man Sha said there are a lot of conflicts among members of the Peace Council itself. And between the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the Peace Council, led by Brig-Gen Htain Maung, who was removed from the central committee of the KNU for flouting committee rules.

“Their [Peace Council] claims are baseless. The KNU will never do such things, and how can they prove that it was KNU soldiers who attacked them,” Man Sha told Mizzima.

“Do not want a war between Karen groups. Our principle is to make peace, that’s why we have even reached a peace agreement with the enemy [Burmeses junta],” he added.

North of the KNDO position, the 7th Brigade head quarters at See Ta Taw were also attacked.

In support of these attacks, the Burma Army is using 81mm and 60mm mortars and .50 caliber heavy machine guns. These attacks have displaced more than 130 Karen families, who have all fled to the Thai side of the border. An estimated 30 families fled from Loh Di Tah, 50 families from Thay Kai Yah, 30 families from Tha Koh Klah, along with 20 more families from areas near the fighting. These numbers are low estimates and may still increase because of continuing attacks.

Free Burma Rangers 8-8-07

Myanmar border clashes kill 17, wound 19 - rebels

Clashes along the Thai border between Myanmar soldiers and an ethnic rebel group have killed at least 17, wounded 19 and forced hundreds to flee to Thailand, Thai officials and a pro-Myanmar militia said on Sunday.

Myanmar troops and its allied militia, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), raided three outposts of the Karen National Union (KNU) in the Karen State along the Thai border at 2 a.m. on Sunday (1900 GMT), a Thai security official told Reuters.

DKBA troops travelling by boat on the Moei River launched rockets that killed at least three KNU guerrillas. The DKBA also lost eight men in a landmine set by the KNU, said the official who declined to be identified.
The clashes, which lasted about an hour, also wounded at least 19 people on both sides. The KNU retrogressed and their respective positions have been taken by Myanmar and DKBA soldiers, said a Reuters journalist who was observing from the Thai side of the river.

The raids, which prompted 300 Karen villagers to cross the river to the Thai border town of Mae Ramard, came shortly after KNU troops raided a checkpoint in the Myanmar border town of Myawaddy (late Saturday) on Saturday, killing five policemen and a soldier, a DKBA official said.

“The KNU has broken the agreement with the Myanmar government that it would not attack the Asia 1 highway during the temporary ceasefire,” agreed in December 2003, the DKBA official said.

No formal peace deal has been agreed and skirmishes continue with government troops and their allies.

The KNU and its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), have been fighting the central government for greater autonomy since 1949.

The rebels suffered a major setback in late 1994 when a Buddhist faction, now the DKBA, staged a mutiny against the Christian-dominated group, breaking away and eventually defecting to join the Myanmar government side.

The split was a key factor in the collapse of the KNU headquarters at Manerplaw in early 1995. Fighting between the KNU and the Myanmar troops along the Thai border has intensified since last month when Bangkok called in Myanmar’s ambassador to protest over the death of a Thai soldier killed in clashes between Myanmar troops and the KNU.

Reuters 8-4-07

SPDC pressures DKBA to support KNLA Peace Council

Sources close to the DKBA have confirmed that recent military operations inside the KNLA’s 7th Brigade area are a result of SPDC pressure on the DKBA’s 999 Special battalion to support the recent breakaway faction of Brigadier Htain Maung and to further exacerbate Karen factionalism.

Two columns of the DKBA, under the command of Maung Chit Thu, have joined a Burmese army offensive and have been engaged in strikes against the KNLA resulting in the loss of the two KNLA headquarters at 101 and 24 Battalion.

Tensions have been rising along the Thai-Burma border after the 7th Brigade commander Brigadier Htain Maung, split with the KNLA and formed, with the support of the SPDC, his own separate faction in late January. The faction, which is militarily weak after a number of its members returned to the KNLA, has been given defacto control of a small area based around the village of Toh Kao Ko.

KHCPs 11-4-07

KNU’s 7th Brigade Under Fire

Fighting continued on Thursday in Karen State’s 7th Brigade between the Karen National Liberation Army and junta-backed splinter groups, with the KNLA abandoning several of their camps.

Soldiers from Battalion 101 of the KNLA, the military wing of the Karen National Union, told The Irrawaddy from the front lines of the fighting that at least one skirmish broke out on Thursday with soldiers from the Burmese junta-backed Karen breakaway group Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

“About 200 of them are now moving towards our position, and more clashes are imminent later today,” one KNLA soldier said.

Sources near the Thai-Burmese border say that the Burmese army has requested Thai authorities to allow their soldiers and members of the DKBA to operate within a one-mile area of Thai soil—a request that has reportedly been granted—without interference from both the Thai military and border police.

Furthermore, sources say that Thai authorities have ordered Thai villagers to seize KNLA weapons from soldiers if they cross into Thailand bearing arms. A spokesperson from Thailand’s 17th Regiment Infantry Task Force was unavailable for comment on Thursday. Clashes have occurred regularly since April 7, according to the KNU/KNLA Peace Council.

The Burmese troops have also occupied areas of KNU 6th Brigade and are reportedly receiving assistance from a Karen ceasefire group known as the Haungthayaw Special Region Group led by Thu Mu Hei, the former Battalion 16 commander in 6th Brigade, who surrendered to the junta in 1997.

Recent fighting has displaced nearly 200 villagers who have fled across the border to Mae Ramat in Thailand’s Tak province—opposite Karen State’s 7th Brigade—according to the Karen Refugee Council.

About 200 of them have since returned to Karen State. The KRC said an additional 200 villagers crossed the Thai border in Pop Phra district, Tak province to escape the fighting.

Shah Paung Irrawaddy April 12, 2007

200 Karen cross border from Burma

At least 200 Karen refugees fled to Thailand after Burmese forces seized the headquarters of Karen National Union’s 7th brigade on Tuesday.

The refugees started arriving in Tak’s Mae Ramat district after fighting broke out on Sunday between about 700 Burmese government troops and KNU fighters. The Thai army yesterday fired smoke shells as a warning after five stray mortar rounds landed on Thai soil. “This battle is close to the Thai border. Impacts on Thailand are unavoidable, particularly on the refugees. “Our much-awaited hope to send home Burmese refugees whom we have accepted since 1984 under the UNHCR policy may fade away,” said a Thai security officer.

The battle in Burma may strain cross-border security, trade and bilateral cooperation efforts.

On Sunday, the KNU stronghold was under attack from Rangoon forces backed up by KNLA commanders—-the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council.

The Burmese junta’s forces were led by Maj-Gen Htain Maung, former 7th brigade commander, who joined the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in late February. After three days of fighting, 200 KNLA troops could not withstand the offensive and withdrew from their outpost opposite Mae Ramat district.

The number of casualties has not been confirmed, but is said to number at least 50.

KNU general secretary Padon Mahn Shah Lah Pan said: “Burma chooses to fight. It seems like the door to peace talks may be shut down.
Temporary until the tension eases.” The KNU expected the junta to continue attacking rebels throughout the summer. The refugees, under the care of the Karen Refugee Committee and the Thai-Burma Border Consortium, are staying at Mae La refugee camp in Tha Song Yang district of Tak.

Supamart Kasem
Bangkok Post
13-04-07

Myanmar seizes key rebel bases: Thai military

Pro-government forces in Myanmar have seized four key ethnic Karen rebel bases, after several days of fierce fighting near the Thai border, Thai military officials said Thursday.

Myanmar’s military and a pro-government militia seized the Karen National Union bases after nearly a week of fighting that saw mortars and other artillery being fired near the Thai border, said Colonel Kasem Tanaporn, a Thai border official. A few shells landed in Thailand during the week to escape the fighting, but most had returned, he said. Some 300 people had crossed into Thailand in recent weeks, said Phumchai Tapankaew, leader of a Thai district along the border.

Myanmar analyst Win Min said that of the bases was the headquarters of KNU’s Brigade 7, one of the most important of the rebels’ seven brigades because it controlled key border crossing points to allow forces to slip in and out of the country.

“Compared to other brigades, Brigade 7 is not the strongest, but it’s a big area for ceremonies and border crossings,” he said. The brigade’s leader, General Husin Maung, surrendered to Myanmar in February along with 300 fighters. “That’s the main reason that they lost, because he knew the area very well,” Win Min said of the military’s latest conquests. The KNU is the largest rebel group fighting the Burmese army and its proxy ethnic Karen militias appear to be positioning artillery and heavy machine guns overlooking the Mae La refugee camp. Direct attacks on civilians are a clear violation of international humanitarian law, and cross-border attacks on refugee camps by armed groups are a flagrant violation of international law.

“The Burmese government’s brutal campaign against ethnic minorities inside the country has already resulted in gross violations of human rights,” said Sophie Richardson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

“Any extension of that campaign across the border to attack refugees would show just how blatant these forces’ abuses are.” In military actions since April 8, the Burmese army and its proxy forces the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and a new breakaway Karen faction, called the Karen State Peace Council, have captured three military bases of the anti-government Karen National Union (KNU) in Burma. This has prompted more than 400 civilians living nearby to seek sanctuary across the border in Thailand.

Since April 9, DKBA and Burmese military units have positioned artillery and heavy machine guns overlooking Mae La refugee camp, which shelters more than 45,000 Burmese civilians, most of whom are ethnic Karen. The same day, the Thai government moved hundreds of Border Patrol Police to the area, suggesting that an attack into Thailand by the Burmese forces may be imminent. Many refugees in Mae La camp have prepared to flee further into Thailand if attacks occur in the coming days. “Since Thailand is now celebrating one of its most important annual festivals, the Burmese government knows that far fewer international observers than usual will be watching activity along the border,” said Richardson. “The international community needs to keep a close watch on the situation, encourage Thailand to protect the refugees, and find ways of providing assistance themselves.”

The Karen National Union (KNU), which fought the Burmese government for 60 years, signed a ceasefire arrangement with the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in December 2003. Following Burmese government violations of that agreement, the ceasefire effectively broke down last year. Early last year, SPDC forces launched a major military offensive against the KNU and Karen civilians in northern Karen State that displaced nearly 30,000 civilians and drove thousands more to the border with Thailand. And early this year, a former commander of the KNU, Brigadier Htain Maung of Brigade 7, signed an agreement with Burmese government commanders to form a pro-government militia force in central Karen State, called the Karen State Peace Council, which has received government funding for local development projects.

The DKBA and Karen State Peace Council militias work closely with the SPDC army on local security operations and business projects. Following its break from the KNU in late 1994, the DKBA has been implicated in a series of cross-border attacks on refugee camps in Thailand. Between 1995 and 1999, scores of attacks on camps resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths. In 1998, the Huay Kaloke camp was destroyed twice by DKBA and Burmese army units. Many of the refugees who lived there were subsequently moved further from the border to Mae La and Umpiem Mai camps to deter these brutal punitive raids.

In the 1990s, dozens of Thai security personnel and civilians were also killed in these raids. Thai security forces during this period frequently abandoned the camps and refused to protect refugees from Burmese military attacks on civilians, resulting in even more violent abuses and extrajudicial killings of refugees. The United States, Australia, Norway, Canada and Sweden have agreed to provide refuge for Karen civilians, many of whom have lived in refugee camps for more than two decades. Last late year, following US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s waiver of stringent “material support” provisions that had classified all Karen-based insurgents and therefore ineligible for admission to the United States, the US government
Burmese Karen group said using people as “minesweepers”

[Newsreader] State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) troops and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) are still launching offensives in the territories controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU), and hundreds of Karen people have crossed over to the Thai side as DKBA soldiers are forcing them to work as porters.

People who fled the battle zone say DKBA soldiers have also been burning down villages, farms, and plantations. Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) correspondent Ko Htet Yarzar filed this report.

[Begin recording] [DVB] DKBA units entered the areas controlled by the KNU’s 6th Brigade several days ago. Over 100 villagers from Mae Kha Nae, Hitmu Hta, and Nobo villages have fled to Thailand because DKBA troops have been forcing them to work as porters. Among these people was a woman from Mae Kha Nae who recounted her experience this way:

[Unidentified Karen woman] DKBA entered the area and took away our village chairman and forced him to work as a porter. They also rounded up the villagers. The chairman and many other villagers, about 60 of them, were taken away. The DKBA wielding arms went around the village making threats. They said that if they could not find men in the village, they would force women to work as porters. Since they also burned the rice granaries, it will be difficult to get food.

[DVB] Another villager who was also a witness to the scenes said the DKBA was not only rounding up porters but also burning farms and plantations and making the local people serve as minesweepers.

[Unidentified Karen man] They left a trail of fire along the route they travelled and also planted mines. They actually burned only a few places but the fire spread and burned down everything, including homes and rubber plantations. Two rubber plantations with more than 1,000 trees each, about 12 durian farms, and more than 20 rice granaries were destroyed in the fire set by the DKBA. A DKBA soldier would travel between a villager walking in front and another behind, and another villager would be carrying his supplies. The person in front is actually used as a minesweeper because he would be the first to step on the mines if they were present. (Three) villagers were hurt by mines and many cattle died because of them. These happened at Mae Kha Nae, Hitmu Hta, and Nobo villages.

[DVB] KNU General Secretary Phado Mahn Sha had this to say about the situation of the 7th Brigade and about DKBA entering the territory of the 6th Brigade.

[Phado Mahn Sha] The DKBA is conducting a mopping up campaign in the 6th Brigade area, which is located south of Thingyan Water Festival but fighting can resume any day now. The past several days have been quiet because of Thingyan Water Festival but fighting can resume now.

[DVB] I see. We have been told that the DKBA has been forcing people to work as porters. Have you contacted the DKBA about the matter?

[Maung Too] Yes, I did make some enquiries, and DKBA officials denied that they were forcing people to work as porters. But, they admitted that villagers were being recruited as volunteers and that these volunteers had been helping them. They confirmed that they had been using porters in the mopping-up campaign

Refugees Fear Attacks on Camps in Thailand

Increased security measures have been initiated at refugee camps near the Thailand-Burma border as tensions within rival Karen rebel groups continue to mount, according to sources along the border. Officials at the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand’s Tak Province have ordered residents to keep their lights out after dark and to stay alert following skirmishes between the Karen National Union and two splinter Karen groups, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and a second group that calls itself the KNU/KNLA Peace Council. Both splinter groups are allied with the Burmese army.

“We have to shut down all the lights at 8 p.m., including all electric generators and even candle lights,” said one Mae La resident. The order came after reports that the splinter Karen groups were planning an attack on the refugee camp, one of the largest in Thailand with an estimated population of more than 40,000. Relatives of many KNU members live in Mae La camp. The potential threat to camp refugees has caught the attention of international rights groups. “These civilians face grave threats as the...
The market area in the camp has already been closed and goods, which are normally transported from Mae Sot, are not longer allowed into the camp. The threats are likely to cause major disruption with the camps population soon to receive UN negotiated Refugee cards clearing stating thier current status - which up until now was not recognized due to Thailand’s failure to ratify the appropriate UN - as refugees.

**KHCPS**

20/4/07

**Rebels Clash Along Thai-Burma Border**

At least four skirmishes broke out on Tuesday morning between the Karen National Liberation Army, the military wing of the Karen National Union, and Karen splinter groups aligned with Burma’s ruling junta, according to KNLA sources.

"Until this afternoon, there have been four clashes near the Thai Burma border village of Thay Baw Bo," an official from the KNLA headquarters told The Irrawaddy on Tuesday. "The enemies have reinforced the area with about one hundred soldiers and more battles are expected later today," he added. No causalties have yet been reported from today’s fighting. The skirmishes occurred in KNLA controlled areas of 6th Brigade opposite Thailand’s Phop Phra district of Tak Province, where one of the junta-backed splinter groups, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, began operations against the KNU in early March with support from the Burmese army. The DKBA left the KNU and negotiated peace with Burma’s military government in 1995. Residents in Phop Phra district said that about 200 villagers have fled the area since last month in anticipation of the fighting. A medic from the Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot, Thailand, told The Irrawaddy that four DKBA soldiers from Shwe Kokko village near Myawaddy, three KNLA soldiers from 6th Brigade, two villagers and one porter have been admitted to a hospital in Mae Sot after sustaining injuries from land mines.

Refugees in Noh Poe camp, opposite 6th Brigade on the Thai side of the border, remain watchful after reports that the DKBA may target the camp. “We have to be careful since we heard that they [DKBA and Burmese Army] will come and attack the camp,” one resident of Noh Poe said. “But so far, we have seen no sign of it. Meanwhile, refugees in two other camps—Mae La, about 30 km outside Mae Sot, and Mae La Oon, opposite 7th Brigade in Thailand’s Mae Hong Son Province—have feared for several days that DKBA troops would attack the camps. Camp authorities have warned residents to keep their lights out after dark under penalty of punishment. According to one camp resident in Mae La, refugees could lose their ID card, their refugee status and even their place in the camp if they do not follow the camp leaders’ warnings.

**Shah Paung**

Irrawaddy

24/4/07

DKBA 907 Battalion poised to attack Noh Poh Refugee Camp

The DKBA’s 907 Battalion is preparing to attack Noh Poh refugee camp in Thailand’s Umphang district according to sources close to the DKBA. The 907 Battalion will be joining troops of the DKBA’s 999 Special Battalion and the KNU/KNLAPC in threats to refugee camps in Thailand.

The market area in the camp has already been closed and goods, which are normally transported from Mae Sot, are not longer allowed into the camp. The threats are likely to cause major disruption with the camps population soon to receive UN negotiated Refugee cards clearing stating thier current status - which up until now was not recognized due to Thailand’s failure to ratify the appropriate UN - as refugees.

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Karen women’s rights defender honored

Zipporah Sein, a Thailand-based Karen women’s activist will receive the Perdita Huston Human Rights Award this year. Zipporah, the executive secretary of the Thai-Burmese border-based Karen Women’s Organization, works to aid women’s struggle for freedom, democracy and equality in Burma. She has documented human rights violations committed by the military government against ethnic Karen people and run safe houses in refugee camps, providing shelter and counseling to women and children facing violence. Last year, she was nominated by an international women’s organization for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Perdita Huston Human Rights Award was established in 2002 to commemorate American journalist and women’s rights activist Perdita Huston and to honor the life and work of others who are outstanding advocates for women’s rights in the Third World. This year’s recipients also included Samar Minallah of Pakistan and Bishnu Maya Parlyar of Nepal. The award ceremony will be held in Washington D.C. in June.

Irawaddy
23/05/07

KNU outpost attacked

Karen villages torched by Burmese troops

A Karen rebel outpost came under attack yesterday afternoon by joint forces of the Burmese Army and the ceasefire group – the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

The outpost of Brigade 6 of the military wing of the Karen National Union in Kawkayek, Karen state close to the Thai-Burma border was under attack for an hour by government troops of 202 and 203 Infantry battalions backed by rival Karen troops.

“They were not able to come forward but they fired from big guns,” said Pado Man Sha, KNU spokesperson.

KNU has been fighting against successive Burmese regimes for more than five decades for self-determination rights.

The allied troops are stationed around the battle zone but heavy rain has been coming in the way of their operation.

“If they come again, we will fight back”, said Col. Nerdah Mya from KNU.

Irawaddy
23/05/07

Obituary: Major Mary Ohn

On the same day they burnt down the villages in the Lehwah area,” Baw Htoo said.

“I want to tell [the military] not to shoot us civilians, burn down our villages or our food supplies. It is more important for them to attack their target, the KNU,” he said.

The attacks follow a high number of strikes also committed by the military last month according to Saw Kyaw Bwe from the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People.

He said seven villages were fired on by Burmese troops in April and that one villager, a 61-year-old man, had been shot and killed by the Burma army. KNU general secretary Padoh Mahn Sha also told DVB that thousands of people had been forced to flee military attacks in Pha-pon district.

“They burnt down villages in Khao Oo, an area located on the edge of northern Pha-pon district. About 4200 villagers from 28 villages fled their homes,” Padoh Mahn Sha said.

DVB
24/05/07

Major Mary Ohn

Major Mary Ohn, 73, chairwomen of the Karen Refugee Committee and officer in the Karen National Liberation Army died yesterday afternoon at 2.30 pm Thai time from illness.

Major Mary was a resolute leader of strong spirit whose support and guidance helped many of the refugees through their times of trouble including the assualts on Huay Kalok refugee camp in 1997 and 1998 which saw the camp destroyed by the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

She was the subject of a 2004 documentary ‘Don’t Fence Me In: Major Mary and the Karen Refugee Committee for Internally Displaced People’. A funeral service will be held for her at Umpium Mai refugee camp tomorrow.

KHCPS
26/5/07

Major Mary Ohn being filmed by Ruth Gummit for the documentary ‘Don’t Fence Me In’
The entire Karen people must firmly uphold the aim to gain the right to decide their own destiny and strive on. We must determinedly oppose all the counter-revolutionary activities and activities using the Karen people as a stepping stone for self-seeking interest.

KNLA Statement on anti-revolution activities

KNLA Peace Council ‘Regret Child Abduction Allegations’

In a statement issued 9th June 2007, the KNU/KNLAPC has denied allegations made in a KHRC report, that it abducted 9 children and forced them to become child soldiers. The report ‘Child soldiers recruited to support expansion of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council’ can be found here. The full text of the statement is below.

Date: 09.06.2007

The KNU/KNLA Peace Council regret that the KHRC’s ‘field report’ on the 28 May 2007, “Child soldiers recruited to support expansion of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council” has come out in a way as a propaganda article rather than a true story “field report”. We do not know if the KHRC innocently believed the stories—or-deal with the SPDC has, in four months, recruited 9 children to establish a battalion or a brigade!! And it has become a fully elaborated big issue for the KHRC.

#The “field” they covered the story was in side the Mae La Refugee Camps where people dare not tell any positive of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council. We have the information of six innocent Karen have been secretly executed in the camp by Mahn Sha and Bo Johnny supporters, for such reason, very recently. #The main stream of the accusation itself is……. Gen. Htain Maung and “only15 soldiers” who “signed” a peace.

we are willing and that anyone who wanted to go back to the camp to study was free to leave. #Ba Soh Gay is not a commander but a Corporal and the close body guard of Gen. Htain Maung. # Without the approval and help of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council and the DKBA, “the children” (even the adult) would never be able to manage to escape and return home” to Mae La Camp from Hto Kaw Koo Base. They would have to pass through our various check points, military posts and old mine fields.

#Anyhow, we have to admit that 5 boys were in our base during the March and April 2007.

The true story background are here to be mentioning in a shame.

After the peace victory ceremony on the 11.02.07, the SPDC has promised the KNU/KNLA Peace Council that they would provide special food ration for each and every of our soldier, for one year.

* The soldier of the KNU/KNLA PC with family would get a house and a space of land.
* Looking for these opportunities, the Karen Men (mentioned in the KHRC report) from the refugee camp rushed to join the Council. They brought their sons, putting on the list of the KNLA without telling the true age of their children.
* After receiving a house and one year grantee food ration benefit, the fathers asked for a “leave” to the Council, for looking after their “unhealthy wives” at the Mae La camp and left the children as soldier in our base to get continuous benefit.

*We, later, learnt that their family members left behind at the camp were under the threat or pressured by some camp leaders citing that joining the council would cause a cancellation of resettlement abroad.

For that reason the fathers did not come back.

During the field trip of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council and the KST (Germany base) member, responsible for education and women affair, in April 2007, the children were found out and sent back to their parents at Mae La Refugee camps.

# In fact, the KNU/KNLA Peace Council, is not facing the problem of “to fill in the blanks” but with “those who want to fill the blanks” for the sake of personal interest and benefit.

Two people killed during Karen rebel clash

Two people were reportedly killed on Saturday when several shells landed near the Burma border town of Myawaddy during a clash between the Karen National Union and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

A young man and a three-year-old child were killed and several other people were injured at about 1pm Saturday when an unknown number of artillery shells were fired into the Sit Hmudan Haung Asu village. KNU spokesperson major Saw Hla Ngwe blamed the deaths on theDKBA troops wearing KNLAPC uniforms. Since then its attempts to recruit have proven unsuccessful in an area which is predominantly a DKBA recruiting ground. The SPDC has apparently given the go ahead for the group to recruit up to 500 troops however it is unlikely they would be able to achieve this number. Full statement below:

June 14, 2007
Statement on Anti-National Activities of Bo Htin Maung Defeatist Group

When Bo Htin Mg defeatist group surrendered to the SPDC military clique on February 11, 2007, it tricked some ignorant children and civilians to go with it and some of those children and civilians have not yet returned to their parents and homes.

As none of the KNLA unit went with the Bo Htin Mg defeatist group at the time of its surrender and all opposed its action, this group is currently trying to recruit, for its own self-interest, Karen youths by various means of trickery.

In an act of grotesquery, Bo Htin Mg defeatist group set up camp in Toekawkoe area, where the Karen martyrs had fallen, and as it confiscate the local Karen people’s land, forcibly collect money from them, supposedly for development, and use the people for forced labor work, the local Karen people are facing great difficulties.

The group’s current attempt to recruit the ignorant Karen youths into its armed units is a dreadful new step by the group. It is very important for the entire Karen people and all the youths to know this odious and retrograde new step and denounce it.

Towards the end of May, Bo Htin Mg defeatist group recruited ignorant, straying and poor Karen youths in the quarters of Insein and Taungthuayin, in Rangoon Division, and managed to get about 25 youths. As these Karen youths will be used as members of the group’s pocket army, to oppose the Karen national revolution and oppress and kill the Karen people, more heinous acts for the Karen people will ensue.

The entire Karen people must firmly uphold the aim to gain the right to decide their own destiny and strive on. We must determinedly oppose all the counter-revolutionary activities and activities using the Karen people as a stepping stone for their serving interest. For that reason, we earnestly urge all of you to be politically alert and resolutely oppose all acts of treachery.

KNU Supreme Headquarters
14/6/07

KNU, DKBA, Government Troops Clash near Border

New fighting between the Karen National Union, the government-backed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and the government troops broke out on Monday near the Thailand-Burma border, according to a KNU official. A 2-hour battle started about 6:20 a.m. and ended shortly after 8 a.m. involving the Karen National Liberation Army 103rd Battalion and the junta-backed DKBA 907th Battalion and the government Light Infantry 203rd Battalion in Kawkairekk Township in Karen State, according to Lt-Col Nay Say of the KNLA 103rd Battalion. The KNLA is the military wing of the KNU. Casualty figures were not available. An earlier clash on Friday broke out between the government troops and the KNLA 201st Battalion. Mahn Sha, general secretary of the KNU, claimed that fourteen Burmese soldiers were killed and an unknown number were wounded.

Mahn Sha said that one KNLA soldier died and one was wounded. He added that after the battle, the KNU recovered five guns and a satellite telephone. “They [the government troops] are increasing their attacks because they want to cleanup that area. They came closer and set up six new battalion camps near our KNLA 201 Battalion,” said Mahn Sha. “If they come close to us, the fighting must happen. We can’t be patient. We are very sensitive on our side.”

In the past month, more than 200 Karen refugees have fled from their homes in Taungoo District of Karen State to the Thailand-Burma border in search of safe shelter in Mae Hong Son Province-based refugee camps. They have been denied entry by the Thai authorities. Since November 2006, following attacks by the Burmese army as many as 27,000 Karen civilians have been displaced from their homes in Karen State, according to the New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Saw Yan Naing
Irrawaddy
18-6-07

Nine die in clash between rival Karen rebels, says KNU

Fighting between the Karen National Liberation Army—the military wing of the Karen National Union—and the breakaway Democratic Karen Buddhist Army on Thursday in Burma’s Myawaddy left nine DKBA soldiers dead, according to KNU officials.

A KNLA special battalion attacked a car carrying troops from the DKBA’s 907 Battalion on a road from Pa-an District to Myawaddy Township in Karen State, just opposite the Thai border town of Mae Sot. “Nine DKBA soldiers were killed, including a lieutenant.” Maj Hla Ngwe, the secretary of the Karen National Union’s information department, told The Irrawaddy on Thursday. A source close to the DKBA’s 907 Battalion who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, confirmed to The Irrawaddy that the attack took place but said only two DKBA soldiers were killed and five others injured in the fighting. “Nobody from our side [KNLA] was killed, but two soldiers were wounded,” said Mahn Sha, the general secretary of the KNU. “We also recovered seven guns from the DKBA.”

The latest fighting follows an earlier 2-hour battle on Monday in Kawkairek Township, Karen State, involving troops from KNLA 103 Battalion, DKBA 907 Battalion and soldiers of Burma’s Light Infantry Battalion 203, according to KNLA 103 Battalion’s Lt-Col Nay Say. Clashes between rival ethnic armies and Burmese government troops have increased in recent weeks. Last Friday fighting broke out between the KNLA’s 201 Battalion and government troops in Karen State’s Brigade 6. Mahn Sha claimed that 14 Burmese soldiers were killed and an unknown number were wounded.

Saw Yan Naing
Irrawaddy
21-6-07

27 killed, 11 wounded in insurgent shooting spree Terrorist insurgents attack passenger buses in Kayin (Karen) and Kayah (Karen) States

A monk was among the 10 innocent passengers killed in insurgent attack in Kayin State on 21 June morning. When the passenger bus with plate No 5/Kha 9123 arrived at Alebote, terrorist insurgents attacked the car by blowing up a bomb and shooting randomly at it. Three passengers were also wounded in the shooting spree that killed 10 others while the bus was on its way to Thinganmyinaung from Kawkairek at about 8.45 am.

In Kayah State also, terrorist insurgents brutally killed 17 passengers in another shooting spree that occurred at 6 pm on 22 June. Eight other passengers were also wounded in the insurgent attack on passenger bus bearing number plate 3Kha/5054 that was travelling from Mawhlli to Loikaw.

The wounded were rushed to Myawaddy Township People’s Hospital and Loikaw Township People’s Hospital. Officials are also providing all necessary assistance to them. Tatmadaw columns in the respective regions are in hot pursuit of the terrorist insurgents.

Terrorist insurgents are trying to undermine national stability, community peace and the rule of law just for their survival and are bullying and killing innocent people.
The second attack occurred the following day. Seventeen people were killed and eight wounded in the attack on a bus traveling from Mawchi to the Karenni capital Loikaw, in eastern Burma. An ethnic armed group, the Karenni Nationalities People’s Liberation Front. Five guns had been recovered in the attack, KNPP spokesman Raymond Htoo told The Irrawaddy on Monday.

Rimond Htoo claimed the KNPLF had commandeered a civilian bus to transport troops, a common tactic to avoid attack. Clashes between rival ethnic armies and between armed ethnic groups and Burmese government troops have increased in recent weeks. Last Saturday, fighting broke out between the KNPP’s 1st Battalion and the junta’s Light Infantry Battalion 135 in Karenni State, near the Shan State border. According to Rimond Htoo, two Burmese army soldier had died and one was wounded. Rimond Htoo said government troops had captured four KNPP soldiers in other action on June 20, near the Salween River in Karenni State.

**Karenni State, near the Shan State.**

**Myanmar Refugees**

More than 300 refugees from Myanmar have arrived in San Diego this year, fleeing from an oppressive regime. Many of them are families who were forced to leave the country decades ago and live in refugee camps on the border of Thailand. KPBS reporter Alison St John visited a young Myanmar mother who is now struggling to find her feet in San Diego.

Hilda: (In Karen) My name is Hilda, I come from Mae Ra refugee camp in Thailand. Hilda Morrow’s native tongue is Karen, but unlike most recent refugees, she speaks some English. She has spent 23 of her 29 years living in a bamboo hut in Thailand. KPBS reporter Alison St John visited a young Myanmar mother who is now struggling to find her feet in San Diego.

Hilda: For us, for our generation, it is very hard for us, but maybe next generation for our kids, our children, will be better. Hilda is one of 14,000 Myanmar refugees admitted to the United States this year, up from fewer than 2,000 in 2006. Relief agencies say they expect the numbers to continue rising.

**San Diego a Struggle**

Hilda: Most people when they arrive here have a problem they don’t understand and they worry about where we can get a job. St John: So why did you want to come?

Hilda: We want to have human rights, have an opportunity, we want to develop our life, how to say -- to get free, to have more education, yes. Hilda and her husband are both going to school and struggling to learn English. Their 8-year-old son is enrolled in Rosa Parks Elementary.

Hilda: Last month my telephone paying is almost $100. Money is not something Hilda has had to handle before. She’s no ideas how she’s going to pay the phone bill. She gets only very basic support from relief agencies and that will run out in the spring. She also gets some support from local churches.

Hilda: The first time we feel like, how did you feel? St John: So when you came here about where we can get a job. Hilda says there were 100,000 people in her camp, with more coming every year. She is part of a generation that has never had a country. Her parents were forced to flee Burma over 20 years ago to avoid persecution or death.

Hilda: I have a problem sometime when people ask me where are you from? People say, “you can’t say your from Thailand, you have to say you’re from Burma from Myanmar.” My mother always say one day she want to go back to Myanmar but for me I never stayed in Myanmar.
A Former Rebel’s Grief

A compact, formal man, Ler Wah Lo Bo is sitting on the sofa in his small basement apartment on Margueretta St., looking into distant space. He grips his hands and sometimes cracks his knuckles; his worry is intense.

He’d prepared for visitors by vacuuming the carpet. There is a mattress leaning against the wall – some friends had slept over, he explains, because they didn’t want to leave him on his own.

Lo Bo, 50, is a former freedom fighter for the Karen National Union, representing the largest ethnic minority in Burma, which have been settled across the country since then, including 200 in the GTA. (In the wake of the crackdown on September’s monk-led pro-democracy protests, Canada further tightened sanctions against Burma, also known as Myanmar.)

And still Lo Bo waited. “Whenever my family asked me, ‘When can we come?’ I could only answer, ‘I have no idea,’” he says.

Finally, he and his wife decided the most practical course for her and the children was to go to the U.S., where Pawleena’s two sisters lived. At least it was closer to Canada.

After first fleeing the Burmese army, the family lived in a crude shelter near the Thai-Burma border. Lo Bo points to a photo that shows a stripped tarp over a platform of bamboo sticks, and a few pots. “I’m going to enlarge this photo for my children and put it on the wall, to keep the memory,” he says. “If you have a better life, you don’t want to forget your former life.”

In 1997, they moved to the isolated Tham Hin refugee camp in the south of Thailand, settling in a bamboo hut under a plastic tarp. While his wife and children stayed in the camp, Lo Bo went to look for work, though he had no legal status in Thailand. “I told my wife, we have no future in the camp ... I’ll go out to get a job and I’ll support you.”

Security review.

Karen Shadd-Evelyn, a spokesperson for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, said she could not discuss the details of Lo Bo’s case, but added, “We’re looking into his dilemma and what might be possible.”

To compound the family’s tragedy, Erella, one of Pawleena’s sisters, was also killed in the car crash, along with her young son. Lo Bo’s children are being cared for by his surviving sister-in-law, a widow with four children – her husband was killed in a car accident in 2006. Lo Bo explains that since New Bern has little public transport, as a translator.

“I feel happy that I can help my people,” he says. “I help the new people who come, but sometimes I feel sick. I want my family to be among them. They were there under that plastic sheet.”

Lo Bo works in a garden centre on Hwy. 7 but has been laid off for the winter months. He is waiting for renewal of his work permit so he can apply for employment insurance. In the meantime, his lawyer, Paul Copeland, a long-time activist for Burma, has started a trust fund for the family. Lo Bo’s application for permanent residency is held up waiting for a security review, which he has repeatedly asked be accelerated. “It’s unusually slow, but not ridiculously unusual. Their inability to do the interview in a timely fashion is painful, to say the least, but their lack of knowledge about Burma is also painful.”

Copeland wrote to Diane Finley, minister of citizenship and immigration, about Lo Bo. In April he received a letter that said Lo Bo’s application for permanent residence “is expected to resume in eight to 14 months, after the background checks are completed.”

In his recent conversations with the children, Lo Bo says, they seem to be coping and are looking after each other. But, he adds, “they are in a distraught situation.
Cage, which was published this year and won Britain’s Orange Broadband Award for New Writers, is set in Burma, where she was a frequent visitor in the 1990s – until the government refused to let her back in the country.

In a way, says Connelly, she can imagine Lo Bo as a character in her fiction. As a young man he became well known for his recorded pop songs, many with political overtones. He joined the Karen National Union as an activist and teacher and, in the late ’80s, was a soldier in the Karen National Liberation Army. “But he got tired of being a soldier and became disillusioned with war and started to do human rights work,” says Connelly. “He underwent his own revolution from soldier to human rights activist. He’s one of those people who has dedicated his life to fighting the good fight.”

Another writer, Anne Bayin, who’s part of the new organization Canadian Campaign for Free Burma and the granddaughter of a Burmese politician, says Lo Bo’s situation calls to mind that of activists with the African National Congress fighting apartheid in South Africa. She notes that people like Lo Bo were protecting the Karen people against a brutal military regime. “This is the reason his claim is stalled,” contends Bayin. “Nelson Mandela would be waiting at the gate on the same grounds.”

In a bamboo thatch hut in this huge, crowded refugee camp, some of the 45,000 residents are learning skills they’re soon going to need – how to pass through airport security, how to find their seat on an airplane and how to buckle a seatbelt. This cultural orientation is one of the crucial steps on a journey that has opened up new worlds to more than 20,000 refugees from Myanmar who have left South-east Asia to restart their lives in faraway countries under the world’s largest resettlement programme.

The number of people who have been resettled in third countries from Thailand since the programme started in 2005 now stands at 20,878, the UN refugee agency said Tuesday. A further 3,471 Myanmar refugees in camps in Thailand have been approved for resettlement and are just waiting for their departure date, with people now leaving almost every day. “Many of the refugees are very excited about resettlement,” said Eldon Hager, resettlement officer in UNHCR’s Mae Sot field office, who spends much of his time in Mae La, Nu Po and Umphium camps. “They view it as very positive.”

After many years – nearly two decades in some cases – of living in camps in Thailand with no freedom of movement, “there’s optimism that there’s a way out of the camps,” added Hager. Most of the refugees fled fighting and oppression in Myanmar, and took an open-ended offer in 2005 to take refugees from the camps in Thailand – has taken the largest number, 11,737 refugees. They have gone to cities like Minneapolis, Minnesota; Fresno, California; Lansing, Michigan; Dallas, Texas and Syracuse and Buffalo in New York state. Australia has received 2,154 and Canada 2,132 during this period. Other resettlement countries for Myanmar refugees are Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

“Resettlement is an important solution for refugees for whom returning home or integrating into their countries of asylum is not possible, and we are grateful to resettlement countries for giving so many refugees the opportunity of a new life,” UNHCR spokesperson Jennifer Pagonis said Tuesday in Geneva. For refugees like those learning to use a seatbelt in Mae La, resettlement is a leap into the unknown. “It’s not easy,” says Hager. “You have to restart your life, learn a strange language, deal with a new culture, you’re expected to work in a foreign country.”

Refugees are choosing resettlement for the sake of their children, Hager adds. “Starting over in a foreign country is tough, but they say it’s worth it because their children will get a good education and will have a better future.”

Faith, history unite two communities - Church opens hearts to Karen refugees

The bride and groom approached the Frankfort Avenue church from opposite directions on a raw December morning as guitar-led minstrels serenaded them in their native Asian language of Karen. Once inside Crescent Hill Baptist Church, the organ played “Here Comes the Bride,” and the couple exchanged vows beneath Christmas banners proclaiming “peace” in English and Karen.

Moe Dai – wearing a traditional fringed shirt over his first-ever necktie – and Hay Moo Law Eh -- wearing a long maroon skirt and short-sleeved white blouse -- became the first couple to marry among the nearly 300 ethnic Karen refugees from Myanmar who have arrived in Louisville since last year. The Dec. 8 wedding, with its mix of Eastern and Western cultures, also marked a milestone in the formation of a larger bond between two distant communities joined by a common Baptist faith and history.

Up to 100 Karen, many of them families with small children, have been worshipping each Sunday with the Crescent Hill congregation, which until this year had been a mostly white and or nine. The congregation is increasingly adding Karen hymns, readings and banners to its worship.

“These people have come to live here. They’re going to be Americans just like us,” church member Darrell Adams said. “They have picked us to be their church home. That’s called us to step up.”

Peter Smith
The Courier-Journal, Louisville Kentucky
30-12-07

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Landmine death toll rises in Karen state

The number of people killed by landmines in Karen State has increased dramatically this year as tensions continue between rival

Karen rebels, according to staff at the Mae Tao clinic on the Thai-Burma border.

Saw Eh Thamwe, the coordinator of the clinic’s mine victim department, said that the clinic had treated 16 people injured by landmines in June alone and that increased tensions between the Karen National Union and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (KNLA) in Three Pagoda Pass (TPP) township areas, according to ethnic ceasefire groups in TPP. The KNLA is the military wing of the KNU.

Karen National Union (KNU) Secretary-General Phado Mahn Sha confirmed the casualties on the Burma Army side but claimed none of their soldiers were injured.

IMNA contacted the U Tin Win, Chairman of Township Peace and Development Council in TPP, to confirm the deaths. But he refused to confirm and avoided giving the contact number of the person in charge of the military in the region.

The clash occurred between the Burmese Infantry Battalion No.308 and KNLA troops No.16 under Brigade 6 control areas. The fire fight lasted half an hour between Toung-zun village and Mezali village, TPP Township.

“The manner in which they kept attacking us, proves their statements on reconciliation means nothing. And we are concerned about the people every time clashes occur in these areas,” Phado Mahn Sha said.

“Now people in the areas where battles occur are not allowed to go outside their villages,” he added.

Recently, fighting between the Burmese military and KNLA has intensified, occurring every week and every day, said Phado Mahn Sha.

The KNU, the rebel outfit, which has been fighting the military dictatorship in Burma for over five decades, the longest period of insurrection, said it has been attacked nearly 2,000 times during a span of just one year.

The KNU, citing a recent survey of deaths and clashes, said, it suffered nearly 2000 onslaughts during June 2006 to June 2007 and at least 450 Burma Army and 20 members of the Karen National Liberation Army, its armed wing, died. Another 20 were injured during the conflict.

Pado Man Sha, General Secretary of KNU, said in order to find a genuine political solution and to initiate a free and fair dialogue, all offensives must stop forthwith.

“More over they [the junta] should release all political prisoners, and should not try to control political parties. Then we can start heading towards political reconciliation. But what is happening is just the opposite. They are doing whatever they want and launching sporadic attacks. So, we can see that the junta is not changing its ways” Man Sha said.

In the latest series of attacks, last night at about 10 p.m. the 907th battalion of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), which is frequently reported to have aided the Burma Army in its offensives, attacked a village, located under the control of the KNLA Brigade 6, which is based about 10 kilometres from Myawaddy, a Thai-Burma border town.

While the DKBA's attack was targeted at the KNLA Brigade 6, Man Sha said there were no members of the KNLA brigade 6 present there.

Since February 2007 till date, the KNU faced at least 20 attacks, where at least 30 DKBA troops and three KNU soldiers died with three more KNU members wounded, Man Sha said.

Than Htike Oo Mizzima 6-7-07

Military offensive must stop for genuine political solution:

If the Burmese military junta is serious about solving the political problems which besiege the nation, the Burmese Army “should stop attacking us”, the Karen National Union said today.

KNU, the rebel outfit, which has been fighting the military dictatorship in Burma for over five decades, the longest period of insurrection, said it has been attacked nearly 2,000 times during a span of just one year.

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Than Htike Oo Mizzima 6-7-07

Editorial: Tennessarim – nuclear fuelled

A Russian survey team, accompanied by the Burmese military, has been spotted conducting a survey in Tenessarim by KNU intelligence operatives according to this month’s issue of the Irrawaddy. The article quotes unnamed Karen sources as saying that the commander of 505 Artillery Division, along with five Russian experts in radar and air defense, conducted the survey in late May near Maw Valley in the Mergui [Myeik] district of Tenassarim Division, which borders Thailand.

It is interesting to note however the coincidence between what is ostensibly identified as a location for a new air defense system and also the possible area where uranium deposits are likely to be mined. Russia’s federal atomic energy agency Rosoton recently made headlines when it confirmed it was going to build a 10 megawatt nuclear reactor in the country.

While fears have largely been due to the international communities’ concerns over the regime’s possible development of a nuclear capacity, on the ground in areas where uranium is to be mined the increase in Human rights abuses, as evidenced during the construction of the...
Karen Heritage

Yadana gas pipeline is likely to be ten-fold. Tens of thousands of villagers have already been displaced in northern Karen state during an offensive designed to further subjugate the local Karen population.

Similarly the number of attacks by the SPDC and its allies the DKBA in areas bordering Thailand on Burma’s eastern border in KNU 6th and 7th Brigade has also risen. A further spread of the offensive to include Teneassessment, KNU 4th Brigade, opposite Thailand’s Sangkhlaburi seems now even more likely as the SPDC not only seeks to further control and enslave its ethnic minorities but also develops a nuclear capability. Sadly, the peace the ethnic minorities have constantly sought seems even further away from being realized.

KHCPS
8-7-07
Karen villagers accuse DKBA of forced relocation

Karen villagers told DVB today that the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army had forced them out of their villages as a result of ongoing fighting with the Karen National Union.

Villagers near Kawkareik township, were reportedly ordered by the DKBA to leave their properties by July 9. “The DKBA said we had to start moving by the 9th. We are supposed to move to a place that is about three hours away,” one villager said.

The DKBA confirmed today that they had asked the villagers to move, saying that it was because they needed to clear the land for use against the KNU. Seven villages, comprising more than 300 people have been ordered to move.

“We are just clearing the area because there are thieves and robbers,” a DKBA officer said, adding that the villagers were not to blame for the orders to move. But villagers said they did not want to leave their land since their crops were already into the monsoon season and they would lose their livelihood if they were forced to abandon them.

The Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People said forced relocations were common across Karen State, with more than 90 villages forced to relocate last year.

DVB 11-7-07

Military builds new Karen bases with forced labour

Burma Army battalions under the second command’s headquarters have reportedly forced villagers to build more than five new military camps in Karen State’s Taung-ngu district.

Residents told DVB that Burmese troops had forced them to help build the outposts and had ordered them to act as porters during the construction.

“All the villagers were forced to collect wood for them, work on the camp construction and clear mines,” one villager, Saw Taw Oo said.

“Now, even though the construction is finished, they are still demanding ten villagers to work at the camps everyday.”

Most of the civilians recruited for the forced labour by the military were reportedly from the Tate Phu area, where six villages house about 500 people.

Saw Taw Oo also said that several villagers had been shot by the Burmese military’s light infantry battalion 30 and that four other civilians, including two seventeen-year-old girls had been kidnapped by the troops.

“They opened fire in Htantabin township and killed 60-year-old Saw Pho Thee from Kyauk Sin Taung on the spot and they injured a man who was 25,” he said.

DVB 12-7-07

Authorities restrict movement in refugee camp following assassination of KNU official

Thai authorities are restricting Burmese refugees from leaving a containment camp after a senior Karen National Union intelligence official was assassinated by an unknown armed group near the Mae Lah camp along the northern Thai-Burmese border.

According to Mae Lah residents, Thai officials have enforced restrictions on movements both exiting and entering the Mae Lah camp since Saturday. On Friday evening, Maj Tha Shee, a long-time military intelligence officer in the Karen National Union, was killed near the refugee camp. Adun Nuipakdee, a Thai district security official in Taungyang District, said a second Karen soldier who accompanied Tha Shee died of his injuries following the attack.

He said the 17th Regiment Infantry Task Force has stepped up security in the area.

Sources in the area said it’s likely that Tha Shee was assassinated by members of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, a splinter group of the KNU. However, other Karen sources said that Thai authorities suspect he may have been killed by people from his own organization. KNU sources said an investigation is underway.

Violet Cho
Irrawaddy
16-7-07

SPDC on propaganda offensive

The State Peace and Development Council has increased its propaganda war against the KNU recently in a number of articles published in Burmese in the Myanmar Alin and Kyemon. The articles which have been reprinted in English in the New Light of Myanmar from the 28th - 30th July accuse the KNU of forcing people into refugee camps in Thailand and recounts a number of old accusations dating back to the 1950s. In a spectacular piece of paranoia they also state that the US repatriation programme for Karen refugees is part of a plan similar to that of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in which anti-Castro Cubans were used to attack Cuba in the early 60’s. The articles have been extracted here for further reference (please note this is a .pdf document).

KHCPS
31st July 2007

Karen villagers move, saying that it was because they were afraid of thieves and robbers. A DKBA officer said they had told the villagers to leave their land because it was needed for use against the KNU. Seventy-five people have been ordered to move. “The DKBA said we had to start moving by the 9th. We are supposed to move to a place that is about three hours away,” one villager said.

The DKBA confirmed today that they had asked the villagers to move, saying that it was because they needed to clear the land for use against the KNU. Seven villages, comprising more than 300 people have been ordered to move. “We are just clearing the area because there are thieves and robbers,” a DKBA officer said, adding that the villagers were not to blame for the orders to move. But villagers said they did not want to leave their land since their crops were already into the monsoon season and they would lose their livelihood if they were forced to abandon them.

The Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People said forced relocations were common across Karen State, with more than 90 villages forced to relocate last year.

DVB 11-7-07

Military builds new Karen bases with forced labour

Burma Army battalions under the second command’s headquarters have reportedly forced villagers to build more than five new military camps in Karen State’s Taung-ngu district.

Residents told DVB that Burmese troops had forced them to help build the outposts and had ordered them to act as porters during the construction.

“All the villagers were forced to collect wood for them, work on the camp construction and clear mines,” one villager, Saw Taw Oo said.

“Now, even though the construction is finished, they are still demanding ten villagers to work at the camps everyday.”

Most of the civilians recruited for the forced labour by the military were reportedly from the Tate Phu area, where six villages house about 500 people.

Saw Taw Oo also said that several villagers had been shot by the Burmese military’s light infantry battalion 30 and that four other civilians, including two seventeen-year-old girls had been kidnapped by the troops.

“They opened fire in Htantabin township and killed 60-year-old Saw Pho Thee from Kyauk Sin Taung on the spot and they injured a man who was 25,” he said.

DVB 12-7-07

Authorities restrict movement in refugee camp following assassination of KNU official

Thai authorities are restricting Burmese refugees from leaving a containment camp after a senior Karen National Union intelligence official was assassinated by an unknown armed group near the Mae Lah camp along the northern Thai-Burmese border.

According to Mae Lah residents, Thai officials have enforced restrictions on movements both exiting and entering the Mae Lah camp since Saturday. On Friday evening, Maj Tha Shee, a long-time military intelligence officer in the Karen National Union, was killed near the refugee camp. Adun Nuipakdee, a Thai district security official in Taungyang District, said a second Karen soldier who accompanied Tha Shee died of his injuries following the attack.

He said the 17th Regiment Infantry Task Force has stepped up security in the area.

Sources in the area said it’s likely that Tha Shee was assassinated by members of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, a splinter group of the KNU. However, other Karen sources said that Thai authorities suspect he may have been killed by people from his own organization. KNU sources said an investigation is underway.

Violet Cho
Irrawaddy
16-7-07

SPDC on propaganda offensive

The State Peace and Development Council has increased its propaganda war against the KNU recently in a number of articles published in Burmese in the Myanmar Alin and Kyemon. The articles which have been reprinted in English in the New Light of Myanmar from the 28th - 30th July accuse the KNU of forcing people into refugee camps in Thailand and recounts a number of old accusations dating back to the 1950s. In a spectacular piece of paranoia they also state that the US repatriation programme for Karen refugees is part of a plan similar to that of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in which anti-Castro Cubans were used to attack Cuba in the early 60’s. The articles have been extracted here for further reference (please note this is a .pdf document).

KHCPS
31st July 2007
**AUGUST**

“The Burma Army has also continued the rapid expansion of its road and military camp network which it uses to partition the areas it wishes to clear, squeezing the local population into increasingly smaller pockets and facilitating further attacks.”

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**One Death in Mae La Cholera Outbreak**

An outbreak of cholera in Mae La refugee camp near the Thailand-Burma border has killed one woman, while nearly 40 others have tested positive for the disease, according to camp medical officials.

A medical staffer with the non-governmental organization Aide Médicale Internationale, which administers health services in Mae La, told The Irrawaddy on Thursday that more than 30 cases of cholera have been identified in border districts of the province in the last two months.

Shah Paung Irrawaddy 9/8/07

**KNLA deny defection**

A commander of the KNLA 6th Brigade has described the meeting between his group and the Burmese Army officials as just an attempt to reach a mutual understanding and confidence building.

Earlier, the commander Lt Col Kyi Lin is said to be preparing to surrender to the Burmese government after a few meetings with the top brass Lt General Maung Bo in Kawkareik.

He admitted that his recent meeting with the Burmese military intelligence officials was done without the knowledge of the KNU Central Executive Committee in the interview with the BBC.

**Thai EGAT team discuss dam project with KNU**

Thailand’s energy authority EGAT held talks with leaders of the Karen National Union on Thursday on a controversial proposal to build a dam on the Salween River, which has run into strong opposition by local villagers.

According to the Karen River Watch, the KNU gave EGAT permission last month to conduct a feasibility study on the proposed Hat Gyi dam. But the project has encountered heavy criticism and opposition by local authorities and villagers, who say the dam would threaten the livelihoods of more than 10 million people from 13 ethnic groups who depend on the river for their survival.

Thirty EGAT engineers and other workers began a three-month study program on July 3. Opposition to their work has held up progress.

An EGAT delegation at Thursday’s talks in the Thai border town of Mae Sot was promised a decision within two weeks, he said.

The KNU team at the two-hour meeting comprised Lt-Col Roger Khin, Col Htoo Htoo Lay, Gen Mu Tu and Col Soe Soe. The five-man EGAT team comprised mostly engineers, a KNU source said.

Naw Paw Gay Khu, a special consultant with the Karen River Watch, said: “I believe that the KNU will reach a decision based on the interests of the people. They (KNU) should listen to the people and work with them to stop these dam projects because they will have a long term impact.”

An earlier EGAT study of the Hat Gyi dam site, which began in May 2004, was interrupted when a surveyor with the authority died in a land mine incident.

Violet Cho Irrawaddy 23/8/07

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**More Than 1000 Karens Flee Their Homes**

More than 1000 people have fled Burmese military attacks in northern Karen State since the start of the month, according to fresh reports from aid groups operating in the area.

A report released today by the Free Burma Rangers, a grass-roots relief group operating in several states in Burma, said that waves of Karen villagers had fled their homes in the face of attacks by troops from the military’s division 88 infantry battalions 83 and 77.

“Two villages have been burned down during the last ten days along the border of Toungoo and Papun districts of northern Karen State . . . Burma Army Light Infantry Division 88 has remained very active in this area,” the FBR report said.

“The Burmese Army has also continued the rapid expansion
Karen Heritage

Head in the Haungthayaw River

...found with a bullet wound to the body found in river KNLA commander's 27/08/07 DVB Burmese army landmines. this month after stepping on several people had been maimed the Burmese military and that forced relocation at the hands of Kyi township faced ongoing villagers in Karen State's Kyauk

The areas it wishes to clear, squeezing the local population into increasingly smaller pockets and facilitating further attacks.” The report also said that villagers in Karen State's Kyauk Kyi township faced ongoing forced relocation at the hands of the Burmese military and that several people had been maimed this month after stepping on Burmese army landmines.

DVB 27-08-07

KNLA commander's body found in river with bullet wound to head

The body of the commander of the 18th Battalion of the Karen National Liberation Army was found with a bullet wound to the head in the Haungthayaw River in Kawkareik Township of Karen State on August 20.

The commander, Lt Col Kyi Lin, was reported missing by the Karen National Union 6th Brigade on August 16, amid speculation that he had been involved in a boat accident. His body was found entangled in fishing net. He had been shot in the head, according to a lieutenant colonel in the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army who asked to remain anonymous. He said there are suspicions the commander was killed by his own soldiers. The DKBA broke away from the KNU in 1995. Mahn Sha, the general secretary of the KNU, said the KNU has not confirmed the events surrounding Kyi Lin’s death. Pictures of the body were widely available in the Burmese community in Mae Sot, Thailand.

Anonymous sources said unconfirmed reports speculate that he was shot by business partners in the logging business or by his own soldiers over a leadership dispute. Kyi Lin was heavily engaged in the timber business, and he had also been holding meetings with officials from the Burmese State Peace and Development Council, the DKBA and other groups. Kyi Linn owned two houses in villages near Kawkareik, but he usually lived at a home in Thunzhethousu Village. Villagers in the area are reluctant to speculate about how he died. A former KNU soldier who lives in Kawkareik said Burmese army soldiers have repeatedly questioned him about the death, trying to establish the circumstances.

Kyi Linn was interviewed by The Irrawaddy on August 15. He said he had met with Lt Col Min Chit Oo of the Burmese Southeast Military Affairs Security department on August 11. He said he was not considering any plan to surrender to the Burmese military government.

Shah Paung Irrawaddy 29/8/07

Thai worker killed in bomb attack in Burma

A Thai worker for the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat) at the construction site of the Hat Gyi dam in Burma died in a grenade attack on Sunday, a security source said on Monday.

At about 7pm Sunday evening, two men on a motorcycle threw two grenades into the Egat camp where some 40 workers lived, the source said. The bomb killed Saman (family name unknown) instantly and injured others but the number of injuries remains unclear.

The Hat Gyi dam is part of a series of dams which Thailand and Burma have planned to build on the Salween River since 2005 in order to generate 10,000 megawatts of electricity. The Hat Gyi will be the first to be completed in five or six years, with a capacity of 1,200 MW. The remaining Thai workers at the construction site are reportedly on their way home due to fears for their safety.

The dam has been opposed by a number of people, notably armed groups along the border between Thailand and Burma. Sunday’s bomb was not the first. In May, a bomb exploded at the site when workers were washing up after work. Two bombs were planted but only one exploded.

The Burmese junta State Peace and Development Council accused the rebel group Karen National Union of being responsible for the explosion.

The Nation 3-9-07

SPDC accuses CIA in KNLA Commander's Assassination

...a US Army Brigadier General and a CIA officer arrived in an insurgent camp at the border and are controlling and supervising programmes to provide military aids and launch sabotage.”

New Light of Myanmar accuses the USA in involvement in armed ethnic struggle

The State Peace and Development Council have accused the CIA of the assassination of the 18th Battalion commander of the KNLA. Lt. Col. Kyi Lin’s body was discovered in the Haungthayaw River in Kawkareik Township of Karen State on the 20th August with a bullet wound to the head.

According to a recent article in the government controlled New Light of Myanmar, Kyi Lin was assassinated ‘under a CIA plot’ after returning to the 6th Brigade area after making peace negotiations with the regime. The article also claims that  ...a US Army Brigadier General and a CIA officer arrived in an insurgent camp at the border and

Villagers from the site of Saw Ka Der in Mon Township, hiding in a temporary shelter jungle after Burma Army Kawkareik Township of Karen State 29/8/07 KHCPS Archive

As the offensive continued in Karen State civil unrest came to the fore in Ranong as monk-led protests were brutally suppressed by the Junta.

The article also claims that ...a US Army Brigadier General and a CIA officer arrived in an insurgent camp at the border and
are controlling and supervising programmes to provide military aids and launch sabotage.’

According to KNLA sources the commander had agreed to remain loyal to the KNLA and the KNU, however there is speculation that he had been buying time before negotiating an agreement with the regime. Kyi Linn is the second KNLA commander to be assassinated this year. Maj. Tha Shee, a soldier attached to the GHQ/KNU Defence dept., was gunned down near Mae La refugee camp on the 14th August.

KNU attacks retreating Burmese Army, kills four

The Karen National Union, an ethnic armed rebel group, said it has killed at least four Burmese soldiers when it attacked a Burmese Army convoy, retreating from the frontline, early yesterday morning.

The KNU spokesperson, Pado Mann Sha, said a unit of Battalion 103 of the Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of KNU, ambushed the Burmese troops near the Phalu village in Karen State and killed at least four soldiers, “I don’t know where this battalion will be posted as they have been ordered to move back to base. I don’t know if they will be deployed in Rangoon to kill protesting monks and students. But it is a reinforcement. That’s why our people have attacked them,” Pado Mann Sha told Mizzima.

He added that the Burmese unit’s strength was about 40 and the half soldiers set off quietly for Moulmein in Mon State and Pa-an in Karen State on Tuesday night. Manh Sha, General Secretary of the Karen National Union, supported the claims, saying that transportation of the DKBA troops was arranged by Col Myat Htun Oo from Military Affairs Security in Mae Sot.

Saw Yan Naing Irrawaddy
27-9-07

Government troops clash with KNLA

Fights between the Burmese government army and ethnic rebels have been on the increase in Karen and Karenni states as the government tries to clear land for a road-building project.

Karen National Union spokesperson Saw Hla Ngway told DVB that fights have been reported between Burmese troops, backed by the Democratic Karen Buddhist Association, and the Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the KNU. The KNLA’s Battalion 18 under Brigade 6 has clashed with the government army as it advances into Karen rebel territory to clear land for a major road-building project to take place between Thailand and Burma.

Saw Hla Ngway said that another skirmish took place in the Ywartanshae area on Tuesday between KNU troops and about 400 soldiers from DKBA Battalions 906 and 909 [Most likely the report means 906 and 907 command Major Chit Namthaw].

“The fights are going to continue as the government is trying to clear the land by supplying the DKBA with all the weapons and facilities they need,” Saw Hla Ngway comment on 6th Brigade

Chit Htoo is the Commander], led by Major Chit Thu and Major Nakhamnwe. The number of the casualties is still unknown.

Than Htike Oo
Mizzima
30-9-07

Movement restricted by KNU

Many people interviewed by IMNA claimed that the Karen National Union (KNU) troops in their area restricted them from traveling making it difficult to cross their gate.

The KNU has limited 25 passengers in each boat and is making each traveller pay 30,000 Kyat (22 USD) as trip cost.

From Three Pagodas Pass (TPP) to Kyainseikyi Township is about 60 miles but the KNU has divided the trip into two parts at Kyungyaung village.

Passengers on each boat coming from TPP has to change to another boat to go to Kyainseikyi while passengers in the boat coming from Kyainseikyi also have to change to another boat to go to TPP.

“This way the KNU can tax twice because they tax boats arriving and leaving,” said a local politician.

The ceasefire groups, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, New Mon State Party, Karen Peace Front, and the State Peace and Development Council are taxing people in this area.
November

...the KNU and KNLA are no longer involved in the use of child soldiers and violations of child rights...we reaffirm our willingness to welcome those who want to conduct inquiry in our areas and to cooperate with the UN or other organizations working for elimination of child soldiers and protection of child rights.

KNU Statement regarding child Soldiers

Tatmadaw] will conduct military operations during the dry season as they used to do. They are trying to clean the way for the Asia highway in Karen state.

In Kawkareik Township, the Tatmadaw has reinforced its troop numbers and set up armed camps in areas where the road is due to be built, he said.

In previous years the Burmese army would launch military operations in the ethnic areas only during the dry season months (usually January to May).

Meanwhile, vice-secretary of the Karenni National Progressive Party, Khu Oo Reh, said that the Karenni army has clashed with Burmese troops an estimated six times since early October. He said that Karenni soldiers are preparing for conflict in the months ahead.

Khu Oo Reh added that two Burmese soldiers die for every one Karenni soldier killed in hand to hand combat.

Regular clashes are also occurring in the middle and western regions of Shan State, according to a spokesperson for the Shan State Army (South), Sai Lao Hseng. He added that his troops were always on the alert.

On 23—24 October, a skirmish occurred between the Karen National Liberation Army, the regular army of the KNU, and the breakaway Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, the DKBA. One soldier from the DKBA was seriously injured, said Maj Hla Ngwe of the KNU.

Then on October 27, there was a clash between the KNLA and Burmese soldiers in Kawkareik Township in Karen State. Six Burmese soldiers were killed, but no Karen soldiers died, Maj Hla Ngwe claimed.

Meanwhile, from 24 to 29 October, Burmese army troops from Division 88 and Military Operations Command, MOC 1 sacked two Karen villages—Ler Moo Plaw and Yeh Mu Plaw, in Papun District—and destroyed the villagers' rice harvest, according to a report by the Free Burma Rangers relief team.

The report stated that two villagers were killed and nine villagers were wounded, including two teenage girls. The Tatmadaw forcibly relocates villagers, chases people from their homes, disrupts their planting and harvesting, and kills anyone who resists, the report concluded.

The largest Burmese army offensive in recent years against the Karen people was in February 2006 when 30,000 Karen villagers from the northern three districts of Karen State were displaced from their homes and an estimated 370 villagers were killed. Since then, 52 new Burmese army bases have been built in the area.

Saw Yan Naing
1-11-07
Irrawaddy

Over 1000 SPDC landmines on Karen state highway

The Burmese Army has replanted over 1,000 landmines along the Kawkareik and Tingun Nyi Noun highways in Karen State, Burma, in an effort to ‘clean up’ the highway. Sources from the Karen National Union (KNU) said replanting of mines started two days ago.

“Three Burmese military groups have come together to replant landmines in the north Kot Ka Rait area, along with Khu Mu Hta and Noe Poe villages, General Hla Ngwe said.

“On the October 24 and 25 the KNU fought the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)-assisted Burma Army. Soon after the gun fight, it became clear that the SPDC planned to plant over 1000 landmines in the area between October 29 and October 31,” he added.

The plan was communicated directly from the Burma Army groups of Light Infantry Battalions (Kha Ma Ya 545, 355 and 356),” added General Hla Ngwe. “The SPDC’s army didn’t design the mines carefully and they planted them in protest against the way we came and fought them, so they didn’t cover the mines. Sometimes we hear the mines exploding in the jungle but it is difficult to discern who has set them off.”

“Whenever we hear bombs exploding in the jungle nobody dares to go and look at the situation, so it’s hard to say whether it’s villagers or wild animals stepping on the mines,” a Kawkareik village said. On October 25 and 27 the DKBA, assisted the Burmese Army Kha Ma Ya (545) and fought the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and KNU in the areas now heavily laid with landmines.

“In Karenni State in early October the Burmese Army increased the number of landmines because they thought that the revolutionary groups were coming to attack them,” the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) said. In Three Pagodas Pass on Thai-Burma border on October 27 a land mine exploded in a DKBA head-person’s home. One person was injured.

6-11-07
Kaoawo

Monk from Karen state flees to Thai border

A Buddhist monk from Karen State arrived at the Thai

Some have set up gates for taxiing. The rate of travel by people has been increasing by the year.

However, another trip from Myawaddy to Moulmein along the Myawaddy-Moulmein Asia highway is far less costly at about 6,000 kyat (4 USD) which makes it five times less than that by boat.

“The SPDC’s army has a policy not to allow travelers and the people have not benefited. People have to keep waiting," said a traveler who came back from the border.

IMNA interviewed Hla Ngwe, a spokesman of KNU who said “We don’t know of this situation. The local Colonel did not report to us.”

The IMNA also tried to contact KNU local officials responsible for TPP area over telephone but could not.

IMNA
30-10-07

Ethnic armies prepare for dry season offensive

The increase in frontline confrontations between the Burmese army and ethnic groups is an indication that the military government is planning a major offensive, according to sources from ethnic groups.

Maj Hla Ngwe, secretary of the Karen National Union’s information department, told The Irrawaddy o’n Wednesday that fighting has increased between Burmese and Karen soldiers in recent weeks, especially in Kawkareik Township in Karen State’s Brigade 6.

He said, "It is most likely that they [the Burmese army, or

...
activists, including monks, have said that he expected many more people to flee from Burma to Thailand in the near future. He continued to fight for the people as much as he could. He had been arrested and jailed for "If I had still been at the monastery an hour later, I would have been arrested and jailed for sure," he added. Ashin Sein Tita traveled to the Thai border by foot, avoiding DKBA checkpoints along the way. It took him two weeks to get to Mae Sot. He said that police and about 30 soldiers—mostly DKBA troops—have surrounded Arr Kaung monastery since he left for Thailand last month. The monk said that he would continue to fight for the people and for democratic reform in Burma as much as he could. He said that he expected many more people to flee from Burma to Thailand in the near future. Dozens of pro-democracy activists, including monks, have arrived in Mae Sot since the September crackdown on the nationwide protests in Burma. Saw Yan Naing Irrawaddy 8-11-07

Karen Political and Ceasefire Groups Issue Pro-Junta

The 48-year-old monk, Ashin Sein Tita, from Arr Kaung monastery in Kawkareik Township in Karen State, fled to the border fearing reprisals for his involvement in the pro-democracy demonstrations in August and September. Ashin Sein Tita was one of the prominent monks who led hundreds of protesters through the streets in Kawkareik Township, chanting the “Metta Sutta” (the Buddha’s words on loving kindness). “They [the Burmese authorities] came to arrest me after I twice led protests and gave interviews with Wa exile Burma media three times,” said Sayardaw Sein Tita. He said that he narrowly escaped from the monastery when authorities came to arrest him. He had been followed by the security forces for several weeks. “If I had still been at the monastery an hour later, I would have been arrested and jailed for sure,” he added.

Ashin Sein Tita traveled to the Thai border by foot, avoiding DKBA checkpoints along the way. It took him two weeks to get to Mae Sot. He said that police and about 30 soldiers—mostly DKBA troops—have surrounded Arr Kaung monastery since he left for Thailand last month. The monk said that he would continue to fight for the people and for democratic reform in Burma as much as he could. He said that he expected many more people to flee from Burma to Thailand in the near future. Dozens of pro-democracy activists, including monks, have arrived in Mae Sot since the September crackdown on the nationwide protests in Burma. Saw Yan Naing Irrawaddy 8-11-07

Karen Political and Ceasefire Groups Issue Pro-Junta

The Union Kayin League

The Union Kayin League took part in the discussions on laying down fundamental principles and detailed basic principles at the National Convention. The league supports the government’s measures taken for the emergence of the constitution based on the already-laid down fundamental principles and detailed basic principles in the National Convention. The league will continue to take part in the efforts for implementation of the remaining steps of the seven-step Road Map.

The Union Kayin League

Phayagon Special Region Peace Group Announcement

Date: 14th November 2007

The Phayagon Special Region Peace Group has abandoned the armed struggle line of KNLA and unconditionally exchanged arms for peace. Therefore, we, the Phayagon Special Region Peace Group, announce that we do not accept the act that harms the basic principles approved unanimously by delegates of eight delegate groups including national races and we will continue to fully cooperate with the government to implement the seven-step Road Map. Phayagon Special Region Peace Group

Democratic Kayin Buddhist Association (DKBA)

Burma rebel group denies child soldier claims

An ethnic rebel group waging a decades-long uprising against Burma’s military regime has denied a United Nations report saying it recruited child soldiers. The Karen National Union (KNU), which has battled the government for 57 years in one of the world’s longest-running insurgencies, said it had banned the presence of children under 18 in its ranks in 2003. “Some parts of the [UN secretary-general’s] current report, based on data collected in 2005, is no longer relevant,” a KNU statement said. “Accordingly, the KNU and KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army) are no longer involved in the use of child soldiers and violations of child rights.”

In a statement released Friday, UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon said that both the military government and rebel groups continued to violate children’s rights by recruiting underage soldiers. Citing a recent UN report, he said that the government was picking up street children or those without national identity cards and offering them the choice of arrest or joining the army. “Also of grave concern are the reliable reports of a number of incarcerated children/minors who have been convicted of desertion and sentenced to prison terms of up to five years,” Mr Ban said in the statement.

Burma’s military government officially denies using child soldiers and has passed a law to...
Burma Army troops move into Karen state, one killed in clash

Not less than 2,000 Burma Army troops marched to Karen State Kyainnseikyi Township and Three Pagoda Pass (TPP) areas where the Karen National Union has influence. A gun battle took place between the two sides at 4 pm in Thet-phyu-chung village in Kyainnseikyi Township yesterday killing one Burmese soldier and injuring two, sources from a cease-fire group in TPP said.

IMNA tried to contact a KNU leader to confirm the news but his telephone was not available.

The Burma Army troops are from Infantry Battalion (IB) No. 28, IB 403, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 338, 339, 36 and 403, 405 and 406 which are under Military Operation Management Command No. 8.

LIB No. 338, 339, IB No. 28 are active in Kyaiak-Dein area, and 403, 405, 406 are in Pha-yar-ngou-tou area in Kyainnseikyi Township.

IB No. 28 is operating in Myaing Thayar village, Three Pagoda Pass Township.

There are already four battalions in Kyainnseikyi Township and Three Pagoda Pass Township and now troops are flocking to these territories because the junta wants the army in four more places in Mon and Karen ethnic areas in Burma.

A motorcycle trader said he met the soldiers on his way to Three Pagoda Pass border town and heard from a military officer that there were about 85 military trucks transporting the soldier and rations.

The Burma Army’s offensive in Karen Nation Union territory is to clear the opposition army group because in this area a railway project is coming up in 2008 from Three Pagoda Pass to Thanphyuzayart, according to sources close to military in Three Pagoda Pass.

More over, the military regime plans to station an artillery battalion in Chung-zone village area, according to sources close to authorities in TPP.

KNU has allowed businessmen and traders the use of two roads but not TPP to Thanphyuzayart route because there are thousands of Burma Army troops using the road. They are the enemy and KNU have said they will shoot at any car, boat or people they see on this route, a person who read the letter said.

He added that KNU will take off its gate after its water trip at the end of this month and will have a meeting on December 4 to let car owners and the traders know which route they will be allowed to use.

KNU has prohibited use of the vehicular route from TPP to Thanphyuzayart because the regime armed forces marched to their area of influence to establish four more army bases in Kyainnseikyi and Three Pagoda Pass Townships.

A car owner who used to drive from the Thai-Burma border town to Thanphyuzayart said that this will affect the local people badly because the ban and restriction is not only from KNU but also from the Burma Army’s side.

IMNA
29/11/07

Junta launches fresh campaign against KNU

Sporadic guerilla warfare has once again shaken eastern Burma’s Karen State as the Burma Army has begun a fresh offensive against the ethnic Karen’s main armed resistant group, the Karen National Union (KNU), said the General Secretary of the group.

Padoh Man Sha, General Secretary of the KNU, told Mizzima that sporadic fighting has been ongoing in Kawkreik and Myawaddy Townships in eastern regions of Burma since September, as columns of the Burma Army - Light Infantry Battalions 230, 231 and 549 - push into areas controlled by the KNU's 6th Brigade.

“Fighting is continuing. Since they [Burmese army] are using human shields, we [KNU] have to utilize guerilla warfare tactics with sporadic attacks,” Man Sha said.

Khaing Mar Kyaw Zaw, a Karen journalist based on the Thai-Burma border, said the Burma Army is using the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), a Karen armed group which has a ceasefire agreement with the junta, in their campaign against the KNU.

“The current campaign is led by the DKBA, and the Burma army is joining them. Sources close to the DKBA say they have proclaimed that they will capture areas controlled by the KNU’s 6th Brigade within 3 months,” Khaing Mar Kyaw Zaw said.

She added that a source in Kawkreik Township, who is close to the DKBA, and the Burmese army is joining them. Sources close to the DKBA say they have proclaimed that they will capture areas controlled by the KNU’s 6th Brigade within 3 months,” Khaing Mar Kyaw Zaw said.

However, Man Sha said that counter offensives have killed several attacking troops, with the KNU suffering only a few casualties.

“Since they [the Burma army and DKBA] are randomly pushing their way in, they suffer more casualties. Our boys launch sporadic guerilla attacks,” Man Sha added.

However, Man Sha could not provide a casualty figure for either side.

Mizzima
30-11-07

Burmesean Army Reinforces Troops for Dry Season Military Offensives

The Burmese government has reinforced troops in Karen State in preparation for dry season military offensives against the Karen National Union, according to sources close to the Burma military regime.

The regime’s Central Command has sent about 10 Light Infantry Divisions which make up the Military Operation Command 4, with an estimated 20,000 soldiers, to southern and northern Karen State in November.

MOG 4 was sent to Mon and Kyauk Gyi in Pegu Division and Papan in northern Karen State. LID 88 with some 1,500 soldiers was sent to Kawkareik and Kyar Inn Seik Gyi in southern Karen State, according to the source.

Meanwhile, the Free Burma Rangers, a medical relief team...
Karenn Heritage

that aids internally displaced persons, said some 3,000 Burmese soldiers of Light Infantry Division 33 in northern Karen State were sent to Mon in Pegu Division on November 20, accompanied by about 20 Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) soldiers and 100 porters.

Saw Steve, a member of the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People, told The Irrawaddy on Friday, “Burmese troops started to enter Mon in Pegu Division in late November. Villagers are now on alert. After having meals, they [villagers] always keep their plates, pots and cups in a basket and they’re prepared to flee if necessary.”

Mahn Sha, the secretary-general of the Karen National Union, said the Burmese army would probably launch armed operations after it completes stockpiling rations in the area.

“We’ve heard that they [Burmese armies] intend to launch military operations, especially against the KNU. Small clashes between the KNU and Burmese army happen every day in the region of Three Pagodas Pass, Kawkareik, Kyar Inn Seik Gyi, Myawaddy, Pa-an and Toungoo District.”

He said about 150 Burmese battalions are now stationed in Karen State. The Burmese army is also destroying villagers’ paddy fields and forcing villagers to work on the construction of two new roads in Karen State bordering KAREN State, Mahn Sha said.

On November 15, some 300 people, including at least 100 children in Le Wah and Than Hue Aung villages in northern Karen state, fled an attack launched by Light Infantry Division 11, according to a FBR report. Two local villagers were killed by Light Infantry Battalion 218 and 219, the report said.

Meanwhile, on November 20 Burmese units from MOC 8 and 19 arrived in the Three Pagodas Pass border area near Mon Sate in southern Burma, according to a ceasefire group, the New Mon State Party.

Nai ong Ma-ngoe, a spokesperson of the New Mon State Party, said troops have reinforced soldiers already stationed near the NMSP area, and they are likely to launch an offensive against the KNU.

He said the NMSP is also preparing for an attack from Burmese soldiers.

Nai ong Ma-ngoe said, “It is not good because they [Burmese soldiers] increased their troops in our ethnic areas while their leaders are talking about achieving political dialogue for national reconciliation. They should withdraw their armies.”

The NMSP is worried about the Burmese reinforcements around the Three Pagodas Pass—an area controlled by the NMSP, the KNU and the DKBA. Recently, the KNU closed down a road from Three Pagodas Pass to Thanbyuzayat because it believed the Burmese army planned to use the road when operating a military offensive against the KNU and Mon and Karen villages in the area.

On November 7, a two-hour clash occurred between Burmese soldiers from Infantry Battalion 577 and the Shan State Army – South at a village in Shan state. Four Burmese soldiers were killed and four were injured. No SSA-S soldiers were injured, according to Sai Lao Hseng, a spokesperson for the SSA-S.

Tension between Burmese soldiers and the Kachin Independence Organization recently increased with both sides reinforcing troops near the China-Burma border.

Burmese soldiers have also begun disrupting KIO businesses in the region, according to a local source.

A Burmese military offensive that began in February of 2006 in northern Karen State has killed more than 370 villagers, including children, and displaced more than 30,000 people. More than 5,000 displaced persons have fled to the Thai-Burma border area.

Saw Yan Naing
Irrawaddy
30-11-07

Military offensive forces relocation of villagers

Scores of Karen’s are being forced to relocate in areas where the Burmese Army is gearing up to launch fresh offensives adding to the growing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDP).

“The injured were rushed to Toungoo Township People’s Hospital. The rest in the vehicle were provided necessary assistance. The local military columns are in hot pursuit of KNU terrorists.”

New Light of Myanmar
30/11/07

KNU terrorists shoot at passenger bus

Three KNU terrorists fired at a vehicle on its way back to Thanhaungyi Township leaving a monk wounded and killing another monk and a woman on 25 November.

Thanhaungyi Township, which is the main focus of the military offensive, are at risk.

They are going finish off the KNU, take over the area and then construct the Asia Highway, which will connect neighbouring countries. If the villages or farms are near the highway, they are going relocate all the villagers,” The KPF Colonel added.

Reports suggest that the Burma junta intends to neutralize the armed KNU in three months. The army plans to launch a major offensive in the area where the KNU operates.

Several thousand troops of the Burma Army have arrived in the region, Khine Mar Kyaw Zaw said.

“They are going finish off the KNU, take over the area and then construct the Asia Highway, which will connect neighbouring countries. If the villages or farms are near the highway, they are going relocate all the villagers,” Khine said.

At the moment, border trade has come to a halt and the Moulmein-Myawaddy highway is not in use for trading as the KNU and Burma Army gear up to fight. IMNA
03/12/07

Government troops prepare KNU

Villagers scared that the army will use them as forced labour are moving to neighbouring villages.

According to a Colonel of the Karen Peace Force (KPF) many people in Mae Ka Sa village near Three Pagodas Pass on the Thai-Burma have been moving to Three Pagodas Pass and other villages.

“There is on announcement in an official letter for Mae Ka Sa villagers to relocate but some who are apprehensive of being used as forced labour to carry military supplies have left the village while some are still there,” The KPF Colonel added.

They are going finish off the KNU, take over the area and then construct the Asia Highway, which will connect neighbouring countries. If the villages or farms are near the highway, they are going relocate all the villagers.”

Khine Mar Kyaw Zaw, Editor KPF.

They are going finish off the KNU, take over the area and then construct the Asia Highway, which will connect neighbouring countries. If the villages or farms are near the highway, they are going relocate all the villagers.”

Khine Mar Kyaw Zaw, Editor KPF.
offensive

Twelve regiments of the ruling State Peace and Development Council army are heading for Karen National Union territory to launch an offensive, according to a KNU official.

Major Saw Hla Ngwe, secretary of the KNU information committee, told DVB that more than 1,000 soldiers were involved in the offensive into territory held by the KNU’s 6th brigade in Kawkareik district, Karen state.

The KNU secretary said that the 1st, 2nd and 3rd KNU brigades were also being targeted.

Three regiments each from the 12th Military Operations Command, 8th Military Operations Command and the 22nd Light Infantry Division are taking part in the offensive, along with troops from the SPDC-backed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

Major Saw Hla Ngwe said sporadic clashes had already taken place and claimed that the SPDC and the DKBA had taken casualties.

On 25 November, a DKBA unit lobbed 10 shells into Lan Pha village, where around 50 DKBA men later took up positions. Further clashes took place in the same area on 26 November when DKBA troops burnt down the rice storage facilities located in the villages north of Lan Pha village. One DKBA soldier was killed and two were seriously wounded in the ensuing battles.

Also on 26 November, KNU troops clashed with the 231st Regiment under the 12th Military Operations Command when the soldiers entered the Dawbla Chedi Hill area. One government soldier was killed and another wounded.

On 27 November, government forces led by DKBA troops and backed up by SPDC units with artillery fire advanced on Nan Shwe Mon village, resulting in one DKBA soldier being killed and another wounded when KNU troops returned fire. Attempts to contact the DKBA for comment were unsuccessful.

Maj Saw Hla Ngwe said the KNU would make all efforts to counter the SPDC offensive.

“They intruded into our region first, so we had to prepare whatever we can in order to stop them from whatever they intend to do inside our territory, and to have an impact on them so that they will leave the territory in a hurry,” he said.

“We have been resorting to all means, including military, to disrupt their road building and supply routes as well as to defend the territory when they come to clear it. For this reason, the casualty rate between them and us is nine to one."

Local residents said that the offensive has forced some Karen villagers along the Thai border to flee into Thailand.

Saw Kanyaw DVB
04/12/07

Myanmar stepping up attacks on insurgents: rebel group

Military-ruled Myanmar has stepped up its offensive against ethnic Karen rebels following a crackdown on pro-democracy protests in September, one of the main insurgent groups said Monday.

The Karen National Union (KNU) said that Myanmar’s military began the offensive about one year ago, but that the attacks have intensified since October.

The KNU accused the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) of waging a “genocidal war” against ethnic Karen villagers, saying thousands of people have had to flee their homes to escape the fighting.

“In the offensives, the SPDC army troops ... perpetrate the heinous crimes of arresting and killing innocent Karen civilians, plunder, destruction, forced relocation, forced labor and extortion of money,” the KNU said in a statement.

“The current military campaign is in fact a genocidal war and it is diametrically opposed to the process of resolving the political problems by political means,” it said.

The KNU is the largest rebel group fighting Myanmar’s armed forces and one of the few remaining ethnic insurgent groups yet to sign a peace deal with the junta.

Myanmar, under military rule since 1962, has signed ceasefires with 17 other ethnic armed groups.

The latest military onslaught began after soldiers and police violently suppressed pro-democracy protests in the main city of Yangon and other towns across the country.

The protests, led by Buddhist monks, were the biggest threat to military rule in nearly 20 years. A UN report said Friday that at least 31 were killed and 74 missing after the crackdown, with more than 600 dissidents still in detention.

Military Offensive Targeting Villagers’ Food Supplies

The Burmese military government is destroying paddy fields and food stores in a dry season offensive against a Karen armed group and villagers living in Karen State and Pegu Division, according to Karen sources.

The Karen Human Rights Group field coordinator, Poe Shan, said that government troops have been destroying villagers’ farms and paddy fields in a bid to cut off the villagers’ food supplies and to force villagers to move into government-designated relocation sites.

“The military authorities want to put these villagers into designated sites to make it easier to control them,” he said. “But villagers are refusing to move because they believe the government will use them as forced labor and they will not have time to work for the benefit of their families.”

Dry season is the time when Karen villagers collect their paddy and store it until the following year. However it coincides with the reinforcement of Burmese troops for the military’s annual ground offensive against the Karen National Union.

Some villagers sneak off to the jungle and grow paddy and stock food in secret locations; however, if the soldiers find the food stores they destroy them, prevent the villagers from buying food and pressure them to move into the designated sites.

“Now it is very difficult for the villagers to find food—some of them must resort to asking for handouts from each other,” Poe Shan added.

The Free Burma Rangers relief team reported on November 22 that since the army commenced operations to relocate villagers in 2006 the Burmese troops had killed more than 370 villagers, including women and children. Over 30,000 people have been displaced, most of whom are hiding in the jungle.

Maw Law, the spokesperson for the Karen Office for Relief and Development, said that more than 1,300 villagers sought refuge in Ei Tu Hta camp on the Burmese side of the Salween River from January to November 2007. These displaced persons came from northern Karen State and Pegu Division.

Forced proters and Burmese troops (FBR)

Forced relocation site near Ler Doh town,  July 00 (FBR)
Roads for Tatmadaw Offensive

Burmese troops are forcing villagers in northern Karen state to repair and clear roads that will be used to transport arms and supplies for the dry season offensive against Karen National Union forces, according to the Karen Human Rights Group. KHRG field coordinator Poe Shan told The Irrawaddy: “The Burmese military regime is systematically using the rural people as a tool for their military operation against [the] Karen National Union. Because of the forced labor most of the villagers are trying to live in hiding places in the jungle rather than living under the control of [the] military government.”

A KHRG report, released on Thursday, said that in early November people in Pupun District, Pegu Division, had been forced by the military to carry out road works, including cutting down and delivering bamboo poles, constructing fences and cutting back roadside forest growth. Old people, women and children had not been spared the forced labor, the report said. A villager from Bu Tho township, northern Karen state, said local people were also called on to secure roads around the clock while government forces transported their supplies. Another villager said: “We had to work for them [government troops] without any payment. We have to cut bamboo poles and send thatch shingles three or four times a year, and we have to clear the sides of the road twice a year.” Much of the road work ceases during the rainy season, but the onset of the dry season in November marks a return to various forced labor projects in support of military operations. A recent KNU statement said the Burmese junta had deployed 83 new battalions in KNU-controlled areas, bringing Burmese army strength there to a total of 187 battalions. A KNU official said the deployment had necessitated the construction of more roads. In the past year, Burmese troops have attacked KNU brigades 1, 2, 3 and 5 in northern Karen State and Pegu Division, killing more than 300 people and displacing more than 30,000, many of whom are still hiding in the jungle. The KNU and the Burmese military government reached a ceasefire known as the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” in December 2003 at a meeting between a Karen delegation led by the late KNU leader, Gen Bo Mya, and deposed Burmese Prime Minister Gen Khin Nyunt. Following Khin Nyunt’s downfall in October 2004 and the defection to the Burmese army of the former head of KNU Brigade 7, Maj-Gen Htain Maung, in early 2007, the KNU ended all communications with the junta.

Violet Cho
Irrawaddy
December 13, 2007

KNU insurgents committing all destructive acts

Mine and attack passenger bus, killing 8 and wounding 6

KNU insurgents are constantly committing all destructive acts such as undermining stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity and prevalence of law and order, killing and bullying innocent people, detonating bombs, armed robberies, collecting extortion money, and burning public property. At 7.45 am yesterday, about seven KNU insurgents detonated a mine and fired small arms at a passenger bus on its way to Myawady from Kawkareik, at a place between Aukbote and Yedagunlay. In the incident, Ma Zin Mar Hwe, 30, of Bilin Township, and her baby, Maung Nay Win, 20, and Maung Sein Tun Naing, 19, of Kyaukkyi Township, Ma San San Htwe, 25, of Kyaikto Township, Daw Mi Nanda, 5, of Hpa-an Township and Saw Myo of DKBA, totalling 6 were wounded. Officials confirmed the wounded to Kawkareik People’s Hospital and provided necessary assistance for them. Tatmadaw columns were in hot pursuit of the insurgents.

NLM 20-12-07

Karen rebels kill 8 in Burma bus attack

Karen rebels have attacked a passenger bus in eastern Burma, killing eight people and injuring another six, state media reports claimed Thursday. On Tuesday members of the Karen National Union (KNU) detonated a mine under the passenger bus as it drove from Kawkareik to Myawady in the Karen State and then fired on passengers, said The New Light of Myanmar, a government mouthpiece. The state-run newspaper blasted the KNU for “constantly committing all destructive acts such as undermining stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity and prevalence of law and order, killing and bullying innocent people, detonating bombs, armed robberies, collecting extortion money, and burning public property.” The KNU is one of Burma’s oldest, longest-lasting insurgencies. It has been fighting for the autonomy of the Karen State since 1949, the year after Burma won its independence from Great Britain. While Burma’s state-controlled media occasionally reports about the petty acts of sabotage committed the KNU, it steadfastly ignores the atrocities committed by the Burmese military against Karen villagers including rape, forced labour and an offensive in their state that has been described as genocidal by outside observers.

DPA
20-12-07

Ethnic Rebels Kill 8, Wound 6 in Burma Highway Attack

Ethnic rebels attacked a passenger bus carrying soldiers from the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army heading toward the Thai-Burmese...
Ten people were wounded on Tuesday, including another DKBA member, a Burmese soldier and seven civilians. The body of a DKBA vehicle, probably containing a landmine, killed a civilian and passengers with him for unexplained reasons, according to an interview with the KNU, who said the vehicle was loaded with people from Kayah state. The KNU said the attack was probably revenge on the soldiers of KNU Battalion 18 who launched the attack.

Irrawaddy and AP

20-12-07

Doctor honored for her work with Myanmar refugee

Cynthia Maung, a Karen physician from Myanmar and founder of Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot, Thailand, was honored at the 2007 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award ceremony in Taipei Dec. 13, for recognition of her long-term commitment to refugees fleeing from troubled Myanmar.

At the ceremony, President Chen Shui-bian and Chairman of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy Wang Jin-pyng presented Maung with an award and a grant for US$100,000. Chen praised Maung for her determination in assisting her fellow countrymen. “On behalf of a democratic and free Taiwan, I would like to pay our highest regards to Maung,” he said. Addressing an audience of over 100 invited guests from around the world, Maung first expressed appreciation to the TFD, which initiated the award in 2006, for choosing her as the recipient of this year’s honor, saying, “We [the people of Myanmar] strongly believe that the accomplishment of Taiwan’s peaceful transition into a democracy is a landmark event in the worldwide spread of democracy.”

The Myanmar doctor then described the worsening humanitarian conditions in her country, including the destruction of villages, displacement of people, forced labor, conscription of children and systematic rape. “The military junta is the source of all the problems in Myanmar,” Maung said.

Nevertheless, the people’s hope for a peaceful and stable country has never left their hearts, she noted. “I call on the international community and our Taiwanese friends to support the long-term struggle for peace and democratic development in Myanmar,” she concluded.

Taiwan’s president mourned that in light of the great trials faced by the people of Myanmar in their quest for democracy, Maung’s award takes on a far deeper significance. “The military regime’s cruelty and indifference look even more contemptible when placed next to her selfless love,” he added.

The purpose of the ADHRA is to support democratic development and promote human rights throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The TFD confers an award every year on an Asian institution or individual that demonstrates outstanding leadership in advancing the cause of democracy and human rights through peaceful means, the foundation stated.

The TFD announced Nov. 19 that the 48-year-old Maung had eventually been selected by a panel of the TFD titled “Human Rights in Myanmar” to receive the award, which included the TFD President Lin Wen-cheng, members of the panel included Maung, Michael Hsiao, executive director of the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies of Academia Sinica, and heads of local non-governmental organizations. Speaking at the event, Maung said that the work of displaced people on the Thailand-Myanmar border is estimated to be between 500,000 and 600,000, being mostly people forced to leave their towns and farms because of oppressive campaigns launched by the military junta. According to a Dec. 13 report by Taiwan’s Central News Agency, it is very difficult for refugees in Myanmar to gain access to such things as health care, education, clean water and decent accommodation, she added. In addition, the displaced people have to face the danger of drug addiction, which is a growing problem among disconsolate refugees. Taken together, the issues in Myanmar are simply too serious to be overlooked, Maung said.

Hsiao echoed the doctor’s concern, describing the situation as “a living hell,” in which many civilians have even been deprived of the right to stay in their hometowns. “As matter of fact, Taiwan might not be able to do much to improve the situation in Myanmar. But Taiwanese people can offer simple support by focusing more attention on the problem, as well as providing direct humanitarian aid to Myanmar,” he said.

Edwin Hsiao
Taiwan Journal
21-12-07

Myanmar warns against more mine attacks by anti-gov’t armed group

The Myanmar authorities warned on Monday that the Kayin National Union (KNU), the largest anti-government ethnic armed group in the country, may launch more mine attacks to undermine the stability of the state following the Dec. 18 incident, urging people to exercise constant vigilance against any possibility.

The authorities also charged the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), an anti-government group in exile, with financing the KNU’s two mine attacks during this year. The KNU also received cash assistance from Major Robert John Still of the U.S. Air Force on Dec. 6 for purchasing arms and ammunition, a report of the official newspaper New Light of Myanmar said.

On Dec. 18, about seven members of the KNU detonated a mine and killed small arms at a passenger bus which was on its way to Myawaddy from Kawkareik in the border area in northeastern Kayin state with Thailand, killing eight people and wounding six others, according to the paper’s earlier report.

The authorities charged the KNU with constantly committing all destructive acts such as undermining the stability of the state, community peace and tranquillity and prevalence of law and order. More earlier reports said that on Dec. 2, a mine, planted in bushes in a village of Loikaw, eastern Myanmar’s Kayah state, also exploded, killing eight villagers while they were clearing the bushes near the base of a tower.

Again in June this year, a total of 27 people were killed and 11 others wounded in two shooting sprees on passenger buses by unidentified insurgent groups in Myanmar’s Kayin and Kayah states in two consecutive days, while in October, three villagers were killed and four others injured as they stepped on mines allegedly planted by insurgents in Ye township in southeastern Mon state and Kayaku township in the Kayin state.

Cornell team seeks to protect Myanmar’s ethnic Karen culture, language

Cornell University’s Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) has launched a programme to protect and preserve the Karen culture and language of Myanmar.

There are an estimated 50 Karen refugees now resettled in Ithaca

| Page 74 | Page 75 |
Karen students wait to perform traditional Don Dancing at Shwe Koako, Karen State (Mu Chaung Ko - KHPCPS Archive)

Karen Heritage Yearbook 2007 on [from] the Thai-Burma border. Working with local teachers and refugee sponsors, Cornell is creating programs and resources to better serve the Karen and other refugees from Burma and to share their culture with the wider community. In October 2007, SEAP held a two-day workshop, “Burma, Border Zones and the Karen People,” with more than 60 attendees, including teachers, refugee sponsors, members of the Karen community and Cornell students and faculty. The conference covered background information on Burma and the Karen, including history, current events, culture, ethnic diversity and conflict. “The turnout was amazing,” according to Thamora Fishel (pictured), SEAP outreach coordinator, who organized the workshop. The Karen are an ethnic minority group native to south-eastern Burma and western Thailand. Political violence, instability and persecution by Burmese authorities have driven many Karen into refugee camps on the Thai border. Approximately seven million Karen live in Burma and 400,000 in Thailand. The state department only recently allowed Karen refugees into the country. Nearly 14,000 refugees arrived in the in 2007; more are expected. Many have settled in Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo as well as in Utica, New York, which now has one of the largest Karen and Burmese communities in the country with 1,000 refugees. The Karen prefers to call their home Burma, which was renamed Myanmar in 1989 after the democracy movement was crushed. Future workshops are being planned for Syracuse and Utica, further extending the positive impact of Cornell’s Southeast Asia expertise and outreach.

4 KNLA troops surrender to Burmese Military

In a recent article (30-12-07) in the state controlled New Light of Myanmar the SPDC has reported that over 27 members of anti-government armed groups have surrendered, of these the article quotes that:

‘In the area of South-East Command, Private Ye Naing of KNU Armed Group Brigade-7’s 101 Battalion, bringing in with one pistol, one magazine, seven rounds of ammunition and one family member…[and that also] In the area of Southern Command, Saw Win Bo with the rank of Cpl of KNU Armed Group Brigade-3’s Battalion-

ANID 25-12-07

Refugees in Thailand December 2007

5, Private Htaung Ke of KNU Brigade-3’s Battalion-8 together with a dependent, hard-core Saw Yi, bringing in with one rifle and one magazine; exchanged arms for peace.’

Saw Yi, bringing in with one rifle and one magazine; exchanged arms for peace.

ANID 25-12-07

Battle Summary

Source: Karen Information Centre

Locations of KNLA Bdes: Bde-1, Thaton District; Bde-2, Toungoo District; Bde-3, Nyaunglaybyin District; Bde-4, Mergau-Tavoy District; Bde-5, Papun district; Bde-6, Kawkareik district; Bde-7, Pa-an District; and GHQ Battalions, Kawkareik and Pa-an Districts.
Karen Heritage
Yearbook 2007

Karen History and Culture Preservation Society. Yearbooks contain articles gathered from a number of international sources that relate to the ethnic Karen people of Burma. They are published to aid research and promote a greater understanding of the Karen situation.