



KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

MARCH, 2007

Karen Refugee Committee
Monthly Report
March, 2007 – Newsletter

March 27th is “Tatmadaw” or “Army Day” in Burma.

The Tatmadaw was formed just prior to World War (II), from a core of the “Thirty Comrades”, Led by Student Leader Aung San. The measure was to initiate Resistance to British Rule, with the Ultimate aim of fighting for Independence for Burma.

The Tatmadaw was formed with help-support from the Japanese Military. At the outbreak of WW (II), the Japanese Army, together with the Tatmadaw, based on the Thai Border, made assaults into British Burma. The British Burma Army was completely routed, retreating and then making a stand at the Burma – India Border. That was the first attempt by the Tatmadaw to drive away a Foreign Enemy. The fighting was on native soil although the Enemy can be called Foreign.

When the Allied Troops launched the big offensive into Burma near the end of WW (II), the Tatmadaw took the opportunity to turn sides and fought on the side of the Allied Troops. That was on the 27th of March 1947. The Japanese became enemies. The fight was on native soil and the enemies are Foreigners. March 27th was designated, first as “Resistance Day”, but later changed to “Army (or) Tatmadaw Day”.

In January 1948, Burma achieved Independence from Britain. One big factor for Independence was the Effort of the Tatmadaw and the People of Burma in joining forces and helping with the Rout of the Japanese Army. But the man who led the fight for Independence for Burma did not see the Day of Independence. He was assassinated just a few months before Burma gained Independence. It was ominous. The True Leadership Capacity of General Aung San was not tested to the full.

Burma, after Independence in 1948, had a spell of Comparative Good-living and Equality. But restlessness, especially from the Ethnic Regions was manifested. Ethnic Leaders see more of Centralized Features than Equal Union Benefit. Some Groups called for secession from the Union as agreed to, when Burma’s People asked for Independence from Britain.

On March 2, 1962, the Tatmadaw, headed by General Ne Win took over power from the Elected Government of Prime Minister U Nu.

Thus, began a New Chapter in Burma’s history, where the Military came to be in control of the country’s destiny.

General Ne Win stated that the Tatmadaw took over power, solely for the purpose of saving the Union. In fact, he was the “Tatmadaw”. He tried to save the Union in his own way. After 26 years, it was clear that “his way” was not doing any good for the country as a

whole. There were calls for change. There were moves for change, which were met with severe repressive measures. In 1988, there was the changing of the Guards. General Ne Win stepped aside to hand over “State Control” to his disciples, after saying “when the army shoot, it shoot straight”. The army did shoot straight. Up to this day, no one can say for sure how many died during the 4 – Eights Movement. Ne win’s disciples had shown, that they are as strong, and can be as brutal, as their Master.

Today, the disciples are still in control. They are still strong and Brutal. The “way of the General” is still on going and the People suffer. The Country suffer.

There is complete “Subjugation”. There is Total Authoritative Restriction and Restraints on all walks of living. There is restraint, restrictions on your physical and works activities and movements. (Your unreported visit to a friend in another village can be anti-state activity). There is restraint, restrictions on your speech, your writing, you expressions, even your reasoning and thinking. You can be severely punished with prolonged incarceration, for thinking out aloud. And there are “Ears” and “Eyes” set up everywhere. The USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association) is one such group, set up from among young people, with incentives. The common people are using the Malapropism “Chant Phoot” to describe these People.

Meantime, the “Tatmadaw” today is a “Half-Million Men” Modern Army with all the best weaponry that can be had for Money or for suspect Friendship. All the weaponry is targeted inside. For the “Tatmadaw” is not shooting outside. It is shooting inside into Homes. It is destroying Homes and Families. It has no enemy outside of the Borders. The enemy is inside, which call for the need of all these Modern Weapons and the Big Modern “Tatmadaw”.

All things considered, the “Tatmadaw” can only be seen as a “Tool”. General Aung San used it as a Tool to achieve Independence. Good. General Ne Win achieved Power through the Tatmadaw. His stated intent was to use that Power to save the UNION. He used his own way, “The Burmese way to socialism”. “The End Justify the Mean!”. After 27 years of “His Way”, the End didn’t justify the Mean. Many are saying it seemed more like a misnomer. It would be more appropriate to call “His Way” – “The Way to Separatism”.

For with that same, “Way”, on going, with the same features, what we are seeing is that many, many people have already gone; many are going away, many more will be going away. For many, Home doesn’t seem like home anymore. People love to have a Home. People will surely find a Home. “Home Sweet Home” – Home and Family Bondage is the strength of Humanity that can never be broken, that can never be shattered. If Home is not there, then, somewhere, some place.

Brigadier Kyaw Zaw, one last remaining Comrade of the Original Thirty, recently said that the Tatmadaw owe an apology to the People. It may be far fetched, but he is the one person who is in a very good position to know.

K.R.C – Camps – Activities – Report.

March – 2007

✧ 2.3.2007 - Child Protection work shop in Mae La Camp Work Shop Activities, facilitated by the child Protection Committee, and where all Camp's Administrative Groups and CBO groups participated.

✧ 2.3.2007 - Mae La Camp. Meeting on Camp Education where matters related to Mae La Camp's 2007 – 2008 Academic year Education were widely discussed.

✧ 5.3.2007 - Um Phiem Camp. K.R.C and Camp Committee meet with PAB Slip Holders who go out of Camp and demonstrated for their grievances. The matter was discussed and there was agreement from those who participated in the “Demonstrations” that there will no more of such activities as they contradict the regulations imposed by the Authorities on Refugee Camps.

✧ 12.3.2007 - U.N.H.C.R, - I.L.O livelihood Program Visit to Camps / Refugees. The Program to be set up by UNHCR in Refugee Camps after Permission from the M.O.I, I.L.O to facilitate the Program, to help with the livelihood Income Generation through works Incentives for the Refugees.

✧ 13.3.2007 - K.R.C Executive met with Regional NSC Authorities in Mae La Camp. The Matter of “Voluntary Returnees” from among the New Arrivals in Camp was discussed About 250 New Arrivals in Mae La Camp are involved with in the matter discussed.

✧ 14.3.2007 - K.R.C Executive Committee, Members, Staff Workers have a monthly Meeting. It was for the Purpose of improving; with Responsibility, Transparency, and improved work Performances.

Camps Management Program in Camps is progressing smoothly although there seem to be the need to improve with timely reporting. Travel / works seen to be not easy with Refugee Camps in the North and South, which are quite distant.

✧ 15 - 16.3.2007 – Mae La Camp - T.P.C and F.S.P schools year end Celebrations which was attended by Responsible Education Personnel and Students.

✧ 21.3.2007 - K.R.C and I.C.S Director Mr. Somnuk visited Um Phiem Camp. There was discussion with the Camp's School Heads and Education Coordinator on provision, distribution of School / Education Material.

☆ 21.3.2007 - E.C Donors, U.N.H.C.R visit Camps, and Camps Committees, C.B.O work Groups, Distribution Centers, offices, Sections and Households. The Group show Great concern and commitment to help with problems and improvement.

☆ 22.3.2007 - T.B.B.C, K.R.C and C.M.P. Joint visit to Noh Poe Camp. There was visiting / observations in Camp sections and Quarters and Tater, discussions with Camps leaders. The Camp Management Program is seen to be going well. There was a friendly soccer Game between the Camp's leadership on one side and the T.B.B.C, K.R.C and Right to Play players on the other.

☆ 30.3.2007 - U.S Mission – Donors Fact Finding visit to Mae La. The visit was by one Donor Group from the United States Church World service. There was wide ranging discussions with K.R.C (Also with Camps Committees) on, living Conditions, Support, Administration, Management, Protection Issues, Problems, Problems Addressing. Resettlement Program, whether it is going well, whether any Problems related to it, how to improve, how to work in participation to make it better and proper. The mission Group show real concern and Good will.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS MARCH, 2007.

MAE SOT AREA	CAMP	No. of families	Over - 12 Yrs		6 - 12 Yrs		Under 5 Yrs		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
	Mae La	9,672	16,892	16,263	5,318	4,865	3,529	3,443	50,310
	Um Pheim Mai	3,722	7,261	6,963	1,911	1,760	1,408	1,204	20,507
	Total	13,394	24,153	23,226	7,229	6,625	4,937	4,647	70,817
NORTH	Mae Ra Moe	2,774	5,470	5,183	1,665	1,449	1,089	1,126	15,982
	Mae La Oo	2,722	5,561	5,042	1,680	1,557	971	888	15,699
	Total	5,496	11,031	10,225	3,345	3,006	2,060	2,014	31,681
SOUTH	Noh Poe	4,570	5,700	5,176	1,616	1,633	944	981	16,050
	Ban Dong Yang	971	1,519	1,583	440	376	357	352	4,627
	Htam Him	1,515	2,451	2,519	851	867	559	465	7,712
	Total	7,056	9,670	9,278	2,907	2,876	1,860	1,798	28,389
	Grand Total	25,946	44,854	42,729	13,481	12,507	8,857	8,459	130,887

We shall always be grateful to the Thai people and Government for their sympathy and understanding in allowing us safe refuge.

We are also indebted to the NGOs for their Supports and Services.

TBBC – Support in Food and Shelter Material. TBBC is also supporting with warm clothing for all the camps.

MSF – Support in Medical and Health facilities.

AMI – Support in Medical and Health facilities.

ARC – Support in Medical and Health facilities.

M. I (Malteser International) formerly MHD – Support in Medical and Health facilities.

ZOA (ABW aid) – Support in Educational facilities Teachers' Training.

World Education / Consortium – Support in World Educational facilities, Teachers' Training and Education for Deaf / Mute / Blinds.

TOPS – Support in Educational facilities.

ICS – Asia – Support in Educational facilities and school buildings.

COERR – Rice and Educational support. **EVI** – To be involved with Extremely Vulnerable people.

H.I – Support for Refugee Handicaps with Prosthesis and rehabilitation and also year – end sporting events for Handicaps.

NCA – (Norway Church Aid) has been providing **KRC** with administrative & organizational Support.

It has also supported with remuneration for **KRC** members and workers.

UNHCR – For Registration Process Protection and Ultimate Safe Repatriation.

SMRU – Support with Malaria Control, Prevention and Treatment.

SVA – To support with Libraries in the camps.

PPAT – Parenthood Planning Association Thailand – Supporting with Family Planning and Preventive/ Education in Refugee Camps.

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