

time, however, the production of methamphetamines has soared, particularly in the area controlled by the Wa ethnic group. According to some estimates, as many as 400 million to 800 million methamphetamine tablets may be produced in Burma each year, although these estimates are difficult to verify. Burma has joined with China, Thailand, and India in attempting to curb this traffic; as yet, however, there are few signs that this regional effort is succeeding.

U.S. policy goals in Burma include a return to constitutional democracy, restoration of human rights, including fundamental civil and political rights, national reconciliation, implementation of the rule of law, a more effective counternarcotics effort, HIV/AIDS mitigation, combating trafficking in persons, accounting for missing servicemen from World War II, counterterrorism efforts, and regional stability. We continue to encourage talks between Aung San Suu Kyi and the regime in the hope that the regime will live up to its stated commitment to political transition, leading to meaningful democratic change. We also consult regularly, at senior levels, with countries with major interests in Burma and/or major concerns regarding Burma's current deplorable human rights practices.

In coordination with the European Union and other states, the United States has maintained sanctions on Burma. These include an arms embargo, ban on new investment, and other measures. Our goal in applying these sanctions is to encourage a transition to democratic rule and greater respect for human rights. Should there be significant progress towards those goals as a result of dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the military government, then the United States would look seriously at measures to support this process of constructive change. Continued absence of positive change would force the U.S. to look at the possibility of increased sanctions in conjunction with the international community.

Measuring Progress toward Democratization

Efforts to foster peaceful democratic change in Burma have once again ground to a halt over the past six months. While there have been some positive developments, the regime has become more confrontational in its exchanges with the NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and has offered few signs of progress toward their stated commitment to a political transition to democracy.

UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail continued his mission, visiting Burma for the eighth time in November 2002. On the positive side, the NLD also continued to rebuild itself as a national party, opening up offices throughout Burma. Altogether, the NLD has now reopened about one-quarter of its township and divisional offices (92 offices out of approximately 360). In addition, the Committee to Represent the People's Parliament (CRPP), a group of parties elected to Parliament in 1990, expanded to a total of 18 elected Members of Parliament (MP). In 1998, the opposition's decision to establish the CRPP led to the arrest of many of the MPs by the regime.

Finally, the NLD's General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi continued her travels, visiting Shan and Rakhine States and opening NLD offices in both states. In Shan State, this travel went relatively smoothly; in Rakhine State in December, however, efforts by the United Solidarity Development Association (a "mass organization" affiliated with the regime) to discourage any large turnout of crowds for Aung San Suu Kyi, turned ugly. In the town of Mrauk Oo Aung San Suu Kyi intervened with local authorities by climbing atop a fire truck to prevent them from dispersing a crowd of 20,000 supporters with water hoses.

Political prisoner releases stopped as of late November, despite continued appeals from the international community (UN Special Envoy Razali and UN Special Rapporteur Pinheiro, as well as the EU, U.S., and others) for the unconditional release of all political prisoners. Approximately 550 political prisoners have been released since October 2000, including 380 NLD