

Tension Mounts between Wa and Burmese Army

Tuesday 10 February 2009, by [Saw Yan Naing](#) (Date first published: 10 February 2009).

Rising tension between the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Burmese government forces is reported by sources in Shan State and along the Sino-Burmese border.

Saeng Juen, assistant editor of the Thailand-based Shan Herald Agency for News, said the Burmese army had deployed an estimated 2,000 reinforcements since the middle of January in Mong Ping, Mong Hsnu, Tang Yan and Kunlong.

The reinforcements included troops under Military Operation Command 16, he said.

The sound of weapons fire was reported from around Hopang and Panlong, regions close to the Sino-Burmese border where the tension between Burmese army and Wa troops is mounting. Border-based analyst Aung Kyaw Zaw said a Wa unit based in Hopang had tested its weapons two days ago.

Aung Kyaw Zaw said that although the Burmese army was on the alert there was no military activity involving government forces or Wa troops at the moment.

Saeng Juen said Burmese authorities had halted the construction of a bridge on the upper Salween River in Shan State after the UWSA prohibited further work.

Aung Kyaw Zaw said tension between the UWSA and Burmese forces had been increasing for several reasons, including a Wa announcement in January describing Wa-controlled areas as a special autonomous region known as the "Government of Wa State, Special Autonomous Region, Union of Myanmar."

Tensions also reportedly rose after the Wa ignored a Burmese government demand for drug dealer Aik Hawk to be handed over.

In a recent raid in Rangoon, a Burmese special drugs force arrested several associates of Aik Hawk, also known as Hsiao Haw, following the seizure of a quantity of heroin. Aik Hawk is the son-in-law of UWSA chairman Bao Youxiang.

The Burmese government believes Aik Hawk is being protected by Wa forces in Panghsang, headquarters of the UWSA, which is heavily involved in the drugs trade.

Another cause of rising tension was an incident on January 19, when a 30-member Burmese delegation led by Lt-Gen Ye Myint, chief of Military Affairs Security, was forced to disarm during a visit to Wa-held territory in Shan State.

An estimated force of 20,000 UWSA soldiers is currently deployed along Burma's borders with Thailand and China, while an estimated 60,000 to 120,000 Wa villagers inhabit areas of lower Shan State.

P.S.

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