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### Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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#### **Burma Army troops shell indiscriminately, loot property, use forced labor during large-scale operation against NCA signatory RCSS/SSA in Mong Kung**

Since February 27, 2020, about 1,500 Burma Army troops from nine battalions have carried out an operation in Mong Kung, central Shan State, to seize and occupy a mountaintop camp of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA). Indiscriminate shelling and shooting forced about 800 villagers to flee their homes, after which troops looted their property. 17 villages have been forced to provide bamboo to the Burma Army to fortify the camp seized from RCSS/SSA.

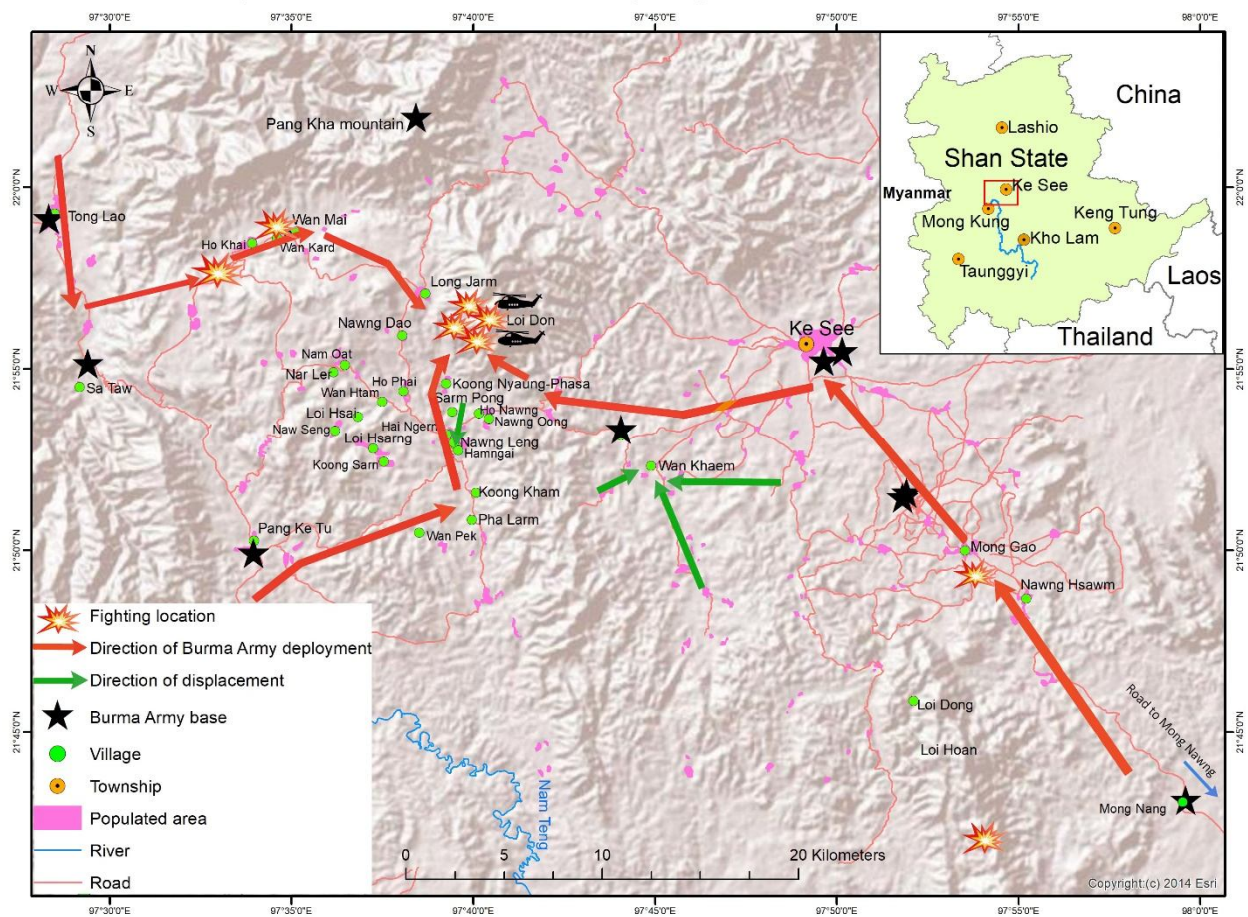
The operation was authorized at the highest level, involving nine battalions from three regional commands: Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) 520, 574, 575 from the Taunggyi-based Eastern Command; LIB 136, LIB 325, IB 22, IB 33 from the Lashio-based Northeastern Command; and LIB 246, 525 from the Kho Lam-based Eastern Central Command.

The camp seized from the RCSS/SSA lies on the strategic mountaintop of Loi Don, between Mong Kung, Ke See and Hsipaw townships. One year ago, in March 2019, the Burma Army launched a similar attack to seize the Pang Kha mountain base of the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), about 10 kilometers north of Loi Don. This is despite the fact that both Shan armies have bilateral ceasefire agreements with the government, and the RCSS/SSA has signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

The Burma Army's brazen violation of existing ceasefires, in order to expand their military infrastructure in Shan State, shows their clear insincerity towards the peace process. It also lays bare their shameless self-interest, that they are squandering the country's budget on futile military operations while resources are desperately needed to combat the nationwide threat of Covid-19.

SHRF calls urgently for the international community to stop "business as usual" with Burma. Unless stronger diplomatic and economic sanctions are imposed, the Burma Army will remain emboldened to continue its military expansion and systematic human rights violations, and peace will remain a distant goal.

## Burma Army attacks and displacement in Mong Kung and Ke See townships, Feb-Mar 2020



### Details of human rights violations by the Burma Army

#### *Indiscriminate shelling during unprovoked attack, causing displacement*

Starting on February 18, 2020, about 500 Burma Army troop reinforcements began arriving by truck in Mong Kung.

Early on February 27, Burma Army troops launched their attack on Loi Don camp. Residents of nearby villages could hear the sounds of shooting and shelling, and saw helicopters flying overhead.

Over the next three days, fighting took place not only at Loi Don, but in surrounding areas: at Loi Pha Ban; Loi Lem (south of Nang Yaw village); between Pang Kart and Pang Po villages; and near Loi Dong village, Loi Hoan.

In the morning of March 2, there was fighting between the Burma Army and RCSS/SSA between Mong Gao and Nawng Hsawm, Kesse township. Over 276 villagers from Wan Khaem village tract fled their homes to take refuge in Wan Khaem temple.



*Unexploded Burma Army mortar shell near  
Koong Nyaung-Phasa village*

In the afternoon of March 2, between 1:50 pm and 3:30 pm, Burma Army troops near Koong Nyaung-Phasa village, Hamngai village tract, Mong Kung township, fired mortar shells and machine guns in and around the villages, causing terrified villagers to run out of their homes and seek shelter in the temple. Shelling damaged some houses and the village school.

“There were no Shan troops around our village. But the Burmese soldiers just shot randomly into the houses. We could hear the sound of firing continuously. They fired about ten mortar shells. Some did not explode,” a local villager from Phasa said.

Another Phasa villager was questioned by Burmese troops when he came back from sheltering in the temple, and asked the whereabouts of the Shan troops. When he said he didn’t know, they put a knife to his neck, and said, pointing at Loi Don: “Can you guarantee they are not up on the mountain?”

Fearful of being shot, over 500 villagers from three villages -- Koong Nyaung-Phasa, Sarm Pong and Hai Ngern -- fled their homes, abandoning their livestock and crops, to take shelter in Wat Loi Jark and Wat Koong Joang temples in Hamngai.



*Local villagers sheltering at Loi Jark temple in  
Hamngai tract, Mong Kung township*

### ***Looting of property***

On March 6, when the villagers of Koong Nyaung-Phasa who had fled to Hamngai returned home, they found that their houses had been ransacked by the Burma Army troops, and their property stolen.

Residents of 51 households, as well as one school teacher (whose motorcycle was stolen from the local school), lost cash and valuables (including gold), watches, mobile phones, grass cutting machines and handsaws, livestock (chickens, ducks and pigs), rice, dried food, kitchen utensils, blankets, and three motorcycles, with a total estimated value of 13,732,000 kyats (nearly USD 10,000).



*Villager's house door broken by Burma Army*

### ***Restriction of movement***

On March 3, the Burma Army set up road blocks at the Pang Ke Tu intersection in Mong Kung, interrogating travelers and restricting them from going to the city. Burma Army troops from IB 131, based in Kesse town, and from IB 9, based in Mong Nawng, also set up road blocks along the Kesse-Mong Nawng road, and did not allow anyone to pass.



On March 3, at around 4 pm, there was gunfire at Wan Ho Phai, Hamngai village tract. After this, Burma Army troops of LIB 574 and 575 arrived at Koong Nyaung-PhaSa villages, Hamngai village tract, and set up camp there. They did not allow any villagers to go in and out of the village.

### ***Civilians shot on sight***

Late in the evening of March 3, two villagers from Koong Nyaung-Phasa, called Loong Hseng and Loong Tun Lu, who had fled fighting the day before, came back to their village to feed their pigs. Burma Army troops shot at them without asking any questions. Fortunately, they were able to run away, and the bullets did not hit them.

### ***Villagers forced to provide bamboo; vehicles requisitioned to carry military rations***

On March 7, the Burma Army troops who had moved into the former RCSS/SSA camp at Loi Don summoned the villagers of Ho Khai to go and meet them at Long Jarm village, Ho Khai village tract. The villagers were told they needed to provide bamboo poles for the Burma Army to build their new base at Loi Don.

On March 11-12, the same troops at Loi Don came down from the mountain, then continued to Long Jarm village, and ordered the villagers to provide two trucks and seven motorbikes to carry their food and supplies from the village to their base at the top of the mountain. Villagers had to drive for them without being paid, and also had to provide petrol costs themselves.

On March 13, the Burma Army troops told the Long Jarm villagers to have three trucks and seven motorbikes available at all times at the local temple, for whenever they were needed to transport military supplies.

On March 19, the Burma Army troops at Loi Don ordered villagers from 17 villages in Hamngai village tract to bring about 200 bamboo poles, using two trucks, and send them to their base. The 17 villages were as follows: Nawng Leng (10 poles), Hamngai (5 poles), Koong Kham (10 poles), Pha Larm (10 poles),



*Bamboo poles being collected for Burma Army*



*Local villagers carrying bamboo poles for Burma Army*

Wan Pek (10 poles), Ho Nawng (10 poles), Nawng Oong (15 poles), Sarm Pong (10 poles), Nawng Dao (10 poles), Ho Phai (20 poles), Nar Ler (10 poles), Nam Oat (20 poles), Loi Hsai (12 poles), Wan Htam (5 poles), Loi Hsarng (10 poles), Koong Sarn (10 poles) and Naw Seng (5 poles).

Villagers from Hai Ngern and Koong Nyaung had to send bamboo poles in trucks to Wan Long Jarm and keep the poles there.

Villagers said that as it was the summer season, it was very hard to find sufficient amounts of bamboo to meet the soldiers' demands.

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