

Recovery of remains of US servicemen - Expulsion of US diplomat

A joint US-Lao military team was believed to have recovered in early 1985 the remains of 13 US servicemen who died when their C-130 aircraft was shot down near the southern city of Pakse in 1972. [See page 33154 for US relations with Vietnam concerning US soldiers who had gone missing in action (MIA) during the Vietnam war, and 32637 A for unofficial US mission to rescue alleged US detainees in Laos.] President Reagan had announced on July 21, 1984, that the Lao government had agreed in principle to the investigation of the crash site, which was finally undertaken in mid-February 1985.

Col. Joe Harvey, head of the US Joint Casualty Resolution Center, who led the US team, said after the excavation that human remains had been found at the site but he was unable to discuss the findings until an analysis had been carried out.

Mr Robert C. Porter, described as a "second-ranking American diplomat", was expelled from Laos on Nov. 24, 1984, for alleged curfew violations. A Lao official explained that Mr Porter had violated a curfew which barred foreign diplomats from "any movement or activity" after 10 p.m. Mr Sythongma Thandanouong, a second secretary at the Lao embassy in Washington, was expelled from the USA on Nov. 29.—(Times - New York Times - International Herald Tribune - Far Eastern Economic Review - BBC Summary of World Broadcasts) (Prev. rep. 32637 A; Relations with Thailand 31829 A)

A. BURMA — Activities of insurgent groups - Foreign relations

Government offensive against Karen rebels (January 1984-April 1985).

Execution of North Korean assassin (April 1985).

Relations with China (October 1984-May 1985).

Maritime border agreement with India (March 1984).

Burmese forces launched a major campaign in January 1984 against the guerrilla bases of the Karen National Union (KNU) in the Dawna mountain range bordering Thailand east of Rangoon. (The Karen guerrillas' struggle for autonomy, which had continued since Burmese independence in 1948, had gained renewed international attention in late 1983 when a French couple had been abducted and later released by the rebels—see 32628 A.) Unlike earlier government offensives, the campaign was on this occasion continued by Burmese forces through the wet season in 1984 and on into 1985 in what some observers saw as an attempt by the government to inflict a final and permanent defeat on the Karen rebels. In late January 1984 the Karen rebel camp at Mae Tha Waw was overrun by government forces, who subsequently concentrated their efforts on capturing Karen camps at Wangkha, Maela, Maw Pokay and other places along the Moei river bordering Thailand. In January 1985 a senior Thai military spokesman stated that Burmese forces were currently in action against six Karen rebel bases, but Mae Tha Waw was still the only one which they had managed to capture.

Two Thai border policemen were killed on March 12, 1984, when a force of about 200 Burmese troops crossed the Moei river into Thai territory in order to launch an attack from the rear on the well fortified Karen camp at Maw Pokay. Fighting broke out when the Burmese troops encountered a small unit of Thai border police, and before Thai reinforcements arrived the Burmese withdrew without launching their raid.

Karen rebels were reported to have planted a bomb on a train bound for Rangoon in January 1985; however, the bomb exploded prematurely and a number of people were killed in the Karen-populated Rangoon suburb of Insein. In April Karen rebels raided a fishery station at Tavoy on the coast in south-eastern Burma.

Reports in 1984 suggested that the Karen rebels' economic activity was being severely curtailed by the government's military campaign. Traditionally the Karens had levied a 5 per cent tax on the illicit trade between Burma and Thailand, most of which passed border crossing points which they controlled. Not only had the government forces' seige of the border area discouraged traders from the Karen controlled areas, but the government had itself opened the border town of Myawadi to black-market traders. Apparently the Burmese authorities did this not only to damage the Karen economy but also because of concern over the consequences of the rise in prices within Burma of many of the consumer goods which had traditionally been smuggled in from Thailand.

The *Bangkok Post* reported on April 9, 1985, that on the previous day Karen rebels had fired rockets into Myawadi, killing three civilians; this was described as being the third such attack since March 1.

A small Moslem rebel group, the Kawthoolei Moslem Liberation Force (KMLF), was in early 1984 reported to be fighting alongside the Karen rebels against the government forces in eastern Burma. The KMLF, led by Mr Mohammed Zaid, was reportedly formed on Aug. 31, 1983, after anti-Moslem riots in the eastern Burmese towns of Moulmein and Martaban, and was understood to be seeking freedom of worship and freedom from persecution rather than the establishment of a separate Moslem state.

Activities of other insurgent groups

Rebels belonging to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), widely described as the most organized and effective of Burma's non-communist rebel groups, raided Hkamti, a town in the northern Sagaing district, on Feb. 28, 1984. KIA rebel sources claimed that 30 Burmese policemen and soldiers were killed in this attack and that a large supply of arms, ammunition and money was obtained; the rebels also released 124 prisoners from the town's prison. On March 1 KIA rebels blew up the main railway line at Mogaung, temporarily isolating the Kachin state capital, Myitkyina, from the rest of Burma.

A further 11 Burmese battalions were reported to have been deployed against the KIA on June 1, 1984. Unlike the Karen rebels who defended their camps, the KIA were reported to have abandoned their bases, retreated into the countryside and launched guerrilla attacks on Burmese forces and their supply lines.

Gen. Bo Mya, leader of the KNU, told the *Bangkok Post* in July 1984 that the Shan United Army (SUA), led by the so-called "opium warlord" Mr Khun Sa (also known as Mr Chang Shi-Fu), had been recruited by the Burmese authorities to suppress insurgent groups in Burma, in particular the Karens, the remnants of the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) and the Thailand Revolutionary Army (TRA), a newly formed alliance between the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) and some members of the Shan State Army (SSA). Gen. Bo Mya alleged that the SUA was receiving some supplies from Vietnam and that these were being transported to Burma through Laos.

According to reports reaching Thailand in early 1984 U Sao Hso Noom, commander of the SSA and president of the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) [see page 32629], died on Nov. 14, 1983.