



ငဝ်းငုခ်း ပျတီ, မွဲ, သုင်လိုင်းတံး

ရှမ်းပြည်တိုးတက်ရေးပါတီ ဗဟိုဌာနချုပ်

SHAN STATE PROGRESS PARTY, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS

E-mail: sspp.hq@gmail.com

STATEMENT BY THE SHAN STATE PROGRESS PARTY / SHAN STATE ARMY ON HPAR SAWNG INCIDENT

2014 October 10

1. Reference the battles in Ta Hpar Sawng which began on 2/10/2014 we hereby, present the genuine and true facts of the case and humbly appeal for the understanding of the incident to the sangha, our elders, kinsfolk, members of the Shan State Progress Party & Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), Civic Based Organisations, Ethnic Nationalities and comrades in the revolutionary armed groups.
 - (i) Prior to 2013-14 the Hpar Sawng village in the Wan Warb group of villages had never been a place for military deployment of the SSPP/SSA armed forces. Since the very beginning of the revolutionary Shan armed groups this had been a peacefully inhabited area. In 2011 the Burma Army intruded into SSPP/SSA territory and in the military offensive mined with explosives and burnt the bridge at Ta Hpar Sawng which we had been constructed for the development and communication convenience of the people. Following the ceasefire agreement signed on January 28, 2012 we rebuilt a new bridge. However, in June 2014 without any giving any reason, the Burma Army (Tatmadaw) ordered the withdrawal of our forces guarding the bridge. Regarding this threat, in June 2014 the Working Committee for the Establishment of Peace in the Union led by Vice Chairmen U Aung Min & U Thein Zaw, and minister U Khin Maung Soe met twice with a delegation of SSPP central committee members. Without any proof of evidence or reason they one-sidedly decided that we must remove our troops from this spot. If that was the case, we suggested that the withdrawal should be done reciprocally by both parties and with that our delegation returned to our headquarters in Wan Hai for approval. On June 26 while the representatives were still on their journey back to the GHQ, the Burma Army Eastern Central Strategic commander in Hko Lum asked our Secretary General Sao Khun Seng to drop in at Hko Lum. At the meeting the Strategic Commander demanded the withdrawal of our forces immediately. Our representatives tried to clarify and explain, but to no avail. On that day at 13.15 Infantry Battalion 247 under the direct command of the Eastern Central Command (sa-ka-hka) 2 began incessant bombardment of our camps and forces near the Hpar Sawng Bridge and attacks were followed by the infantry. We had no other alternative, but to retaliate in self-defense. In fact, it was an operation initiated by the Buregt 247, but as soon as the battle started it was reinforced by six other battalions and due to their numbers they overwhelmed villages, paddy fields, and forced the closure of the school. The rice fields

and agricultural plantation were destroyed. The villagers were forced to flee and take refuge in the Wan Warb where they are still living in hardship and dire straits.

The issue being of prime importance, was raised at the regular (29th) parliamentary session by the member of parliament of Loilem district, Southern Shan States where Hpar Sawng is located, to which the deputy minister for the Defense Ministry replied and how the SSPP/SSA viewed it have already been publicized on June 18, 2014.

- (ii) On August 25, 2014 in the talks with the President, our representatives totally supported and welcomed the President's directives "that neither side should be present in the Hpar Sawng area". On August 31, 2014 on his way back from Naypyidaw, the delegation leader, Vice Chairman Sao Khur Seng told the Eastern Central Commander that he welcomed and supported the President's calling for the withdrawal of both parties and that we will abide by the President's orders and would in no way be the first to attack the Burma Army and that we, on our part requested the Commander honour the President's orders and to withdraw with grace and pride, and asked how the commander saw it. Not only did he not answer the question, but said that it is the SSPP/SSA who should withdraw first. Without any agreement achieved, the delegation returned to Wan Hai. On 30/09/2014 the commander called our liaison officer in Hko Lum and told him; "You said that you would withdraw and why have you not done so? I want to know whether you will retreat or not". We told our liaison officer to relay the message that we (SSPP/SSA) welcomed and supported the President's orders and how the commander's opinion on it. On 1/10/2014 which was the eighth waning day of the 10th. Lunar month, the Eastern Central Commander asked our organization; "Are you going to retreat from Hpar Sawng, or not? This is the only answer I want to know. I don't want to hear anything else". This was an ultimatum, but we did not have the time to reply to it as it was a holy day when Buddhists spend their time praying at the monastery and asked our liaison officer in Hko Lum to convey the message to the commander, accordingly. But then on 2/10/2014 at 05.45 the Burma Army began shelling with their heavy artillery at Hpar Sawng and Kong Mak Harn camps, followed by infantry attacks. Similar fierce attacks took place at Pang Se, Mak Mong Lao and Kong Mai Hoong camps. That evening, an emergency SSPP Central Committee meeting was convened in Wan Hai allowing the withdrawal of our men from Hpar Sawng. A letter dated 2/10/2014 from the President arrived by e-mail calling for a truce. At dawn on 3/10/2014 we withdrew our troops from Hpar Sawng. On 4/10/2014 the Burma Army attacked the troops which are the SSPP/SSA GHQ's security forces in Loi Kar Hill, Kong Moong Mong and Kong Mai Nyaung, villages totally situated apart from Hpar Sawng, began shelling relentless barrages that supported the infantry from 05.45 in the morning till darkness fell in the evening. On 5/10/2014 at 08.30 the Eastern Central Strategic Commander telephoned SSPP/SSA headquarters saying that since the SSPP/SSA forces have withdrawn from Hpar Sawng as per the President's orders, the Burma Army would also do likewise, gradually. In

withdrawing their troops, not to lay mines on the roads nor ambush their convoys. In case the trucks have any mechanical problems SSPP/SSA should kindly assist them. As the military operation is now over, there will be no reinforcement of men & supplies, replenishing of arms & ammunition. That there would be no more fighting patrols in the jungle which have forced the occurrence of unforeseen and unwanted skirmishes and clashes with the SSPP/SSA which happened because the Burma Army soldiers had to do so in self-defense. This was the conversation that took place on the phone in contrast to the actual episode that took place on the battle fields in and places around Hpar Sawng.

- (iii) The Ta Hpar Sawng battle was not an incident which took place unexpectedly as an accident. It was a well-planned military operation by the collaboration of the North-Eastern Command and the Eastern Central Command. A combined force which were divided in two, three pronged columns with cannons and guns supporting the infantry and we have witnessed how it took place. It is as clear as an elephant in a rice field.
 - (iv) Only when the Tatmadaw attacked that we, the SSPP/SSA had no choice but to fight back to defend ourselves. Our organization signed the ceasefire agreement on January 28, 2012 with the government both at the State and Union Levels and had all along abided by the rules and will continue to do so.
 - (v) That; "the Tatmadaw would withdraw gradually" are only words of a Burmese commander, but till today there has been no such action. Does it mean that they would do likewise in the period of one month, one or ten years is a question that now arises. If the Burma really desires peace then the retreat should be done without delay.
 - (vi) The Battles of Hpar Sawng are detrimental to the signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement and trust-building in the political discussions.
2. There can be no optimistic end-results that will ensue out of utilising military might and force in solving political problems. The 60-plus years of civil war has reduced the nation to one of the poorest countries in the world. The people on the whole are ragged and poor, barely surviving in a whirling vicious cycle of trouble upon trouble. This is the reason why the SSPP/SSA has been clamouring for the achievement of peace so that the people can benefit from it. We are trying to attain peace as we have requested oft-times, but the response was that in July 2012 the Burma Army began by attacking forces in Monghsu State at Loi Sawng Htok and Mong Awt against our camps in Huay Lot, Loi Hieo and the 7th Mile and had withdrawn from these places are proof and evidence of our desire for peaceful political discussions based on equality, aim and believe that we can work together as such. We call for all groups in implementing President Thein Sein's call for a peaceful transition to a better future.

3. We request all Ethnic Nationalities and revolutionary armed groups, political parties, the Tatmadaw, parliament, statesmen work together for the immediate signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement. From there we can march on towards political discussions and build our nation from an under-developed state to a modern one. In this belief, we candidly declare for the support and understanding from the sangha, elders & kinsfolk, members of the SSPP/SSA, political parties, Ethnic Nationalities & comrades of the revolutionary armed groups and civic based organisations.

Central Department of Information

SHAN STATE PROGRESS PARTY/SHAN STATE ARMY