

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2011 8:43 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: UN access in Burma

----- Original Message -----

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2011 08:23 AM
To: Posner, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Mills, Cheryl D; Campbell, Kurt M; Mitchell, Derek J
Subject: RE: UN access in Burma

And ASSK party registered!

This email is UNCLASSIFIED

-----Original Message-----

From: Posner, Michael H
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2011 6:54 AM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Mills, Cheryl D; Campbell, Kurt M; Mitchell, Derek J; Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: UN access in Burma

This is a very encouraging development. It will give added protection to the most vulnerable people. (mostly women and children) in those areas.

 UN gains access to Kachin rebel territory- DVB – Dec 12, 2011 By FRANCIS WADE

UN aid groups have been granted unprecedented access to territory controlled by the rebel Kachin Independence Army (KIA), where thousands of war refugees have been struggling to access food and medicine following a blockade on international aid groups leaving government-controlled areas in the northern state.

The decision by the Burmese government to allow the UN to visit the town of Laiza, where the KIA is headquartered, is a sign that negotiations over access to those displaced by fighting since had borne fruit, said Barbara Mansi, head of the Burma operation of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

A team is currently en route, and hopes to reach there by this evening, although the conditions of the roads in Burma's isolated border regions means they may not arrive until tomorrow. A source in Laiza told DVB this afternoon however that they had already arrived, and were staying at a hotel in the town. They are bringing relief supplies, particularly pillows, mats and blankets to support the refugees during the winter months.

Mansi said negotiations would continue to allow it access to all of the estimated 40,000 Kachin refugees. "This is hopefully going to be the first of many [more trips]," she told DVB.

The blockade on international aid groups entering Kachin territory has meant that for the past five months, local entities, such as Kachin churches and small advocacy groups, had been forced to take on the burden of supporting the refugees.

The government had allowed the UN to access only around 6,000 people in the government-controlled towns of Myitkyina, Waignmaw and Bhamo. Neither side has publicly stated the reason for the blockade, but it most likely stems from perceptions in Naypyidaw that supporting the thousands who fled to KIA territory would be tantamount to support for the rebel army itself.

Reports have also circulated that China has threatened to evict the Kachin who have fled across the border from the Kachin town of Maijayang, despite signs that areas close to Maijayang could soon erupt in violence as Burmese forces gain ground.

The war in Burma's northernmost state, which began in June following the KIA's refusal to become a government-controlled Border Guard Force, has come at great human cost, with tens of thousand displaced and evidence of severe human rights abuses by Burmese troops.

The US-based Physicians for Human Rights said in a report last month that there was evidence of the use of civilians, including children, as human minesweepers, and the killing of "non-military targets" by firing "automatic weapons directly into a civilian village.

Despite several stabs at negotiations towards a ceasefire, fighting continues: a local Kachin relief worker told DVB over the weekend that intense clashes were ongoing close to Waingmaw, when around 200 Burmese troops launched an assault on Sadone and Kan Paik Ti villages.

The KIA's spokesperson, La Nan, said last week: "According to our statistics, there have been 67 clashes so far between 1 and 8 December, and those were intense clashes." Three Burmese columns had been deployed to take the KIA Bridge 3 base in Wuhtau Bum, while Brigade 4 was also defending against a volley of assaults.

La Nan added that around 600 additional Burmese troops were deployed to areas close to KIA territory in northern Shan state as the conflict shows signs of escalating further.

Additional reporting by Naw Noreen.