

It had originally been under a great amount of pressure to surrender with calls, in March 2007, for the group to accept a Burma Army presence in areas under their control.² Although the Burma Army continued to build up troops close to NDAA territory, no significant fighting was reported. In 2009, the NDAA was, like other ceasefire groups, ordered to transform itself into a Government controlled Border Guard Force. An order it, and its allies the Kokang and the UWSA, refused to accept. The NDAA had initially agreed to the BGF programme if the following could be granted:

1. To become a militia force, where there will be no junta officers to run the show
2. To conduct military trainings in Mongla territory
3. To include Hsaleu (which, according to Naypyidaw, is in Mongyan township) and Nampan (which, according to Naypyidaw, is included in Mongyang) Mongla township

The regime refused the request, and the NDAA remained defiant as further calls and deadlines for the group to agree passed.

The NDAA leadership suffered a serious blow in January 2010 with the assassination of its General Secretary Min Ein aka Lin Hongshen. There was speculation that Min Ein had been a soft-liner in relation to the SPDC calls for the group to join the Border Guard Force. The National Democratic Front, of which the NDAA is not a member, suggested that intelligence Chief Ye Myint of the Military Affairs Security (MAS) was responsible:

At the 4-monthly meeting of the SPDC leaders, the inability to transform the ethnic armed forces to BGF was discussed. After the meeting, head of the SPDC Military Affairs Security (MAS), Lt. Gen. Ye Myint, issued secret orders to all the Division and State commanders to deal amicably with the ethnic cease-fire organizations and, at the same time, to covertly assassinate their leaders.

And that:

For that reason, the assassination of General Secretary of Mongla Force, U Min Ain, is the lowdown work of the SPDC military leaders. Similarly, the SPDC military leaders are responsible for recent assassination of Gen. Sai Nounk, adviser to the Shan State Army-North. We have no doubt that head of MAS, Lt. Gen. Ye Myint is directly or indirectly involved in the assassination.³

Despite the accusations, the reason for his death and who the perpetrators were, remain unknown.

Regardless, the Government continued to call for ceasefire groups to revert to BGF units. The NDAA, on 20 August 2010, met with SPDC negotiators led by Maj-Gen Kyaw Phyo, Commander of the Golden Triangle Region Command. It was told that if they failed to convert themselves into a BGF by September 2010, it would automatically be designated as “an unlawful association or illegal organizations.” Nonetheless, both the NDAA and the UWSA had apparently agreed on a four-point strategy that they would pursue:

1. We will not surrender,
2. We will not transform into a BGF unless autonomy demands are met
3. We will not shoot first, but are ready to protect ourselves
4. We will not secede from Union

In the same month, in August 2010, in what was most likely a move to manoeuvre the ceasefire group into re-assessing their options, the Burma Army attacked the NDAA’s ally the MNDAA (Kokang). Despite the MNDAA defeat, and the replacement of its leadership, the NDAA remained defiant. The September 2010 deadline

passed and although the Burma Army had shown its military power against the MNDAA, it cautiously avoided attacking the NDAA and its UWSA ally. However, in a move to further pressure the group, the government closed the road allowing access to Mongla from Kengtung on the 23 November 2010.⁴

In April 2011, the NDAA finally complied with a Burma Army request for it to move out of its furthest southern base at Hsop Yawng on the Yawng River. In addition, they were also asked to vacate their base at Hsop Lwe north of Mong Yawng. Such a move was of some concern as it would constrict both the NDAA and the UWSA's easy access to each other and also between the SSA-South, which operates south of Mong Yawng. Concerned that the NDAA-ESS was going to lose this strategically important territory resulted in the UWSA's 418th Brigade, commanded by Li Ai-su, deploying between 1,200-1,500 troops to reinforce Mongla's positions.⁵

In September 2011, both the NDAA and the UWSA met with Government negotiators and signed a new agreement. According to an NDAA source:

The proposal looks fine, so we have signed it. Essentially, it is like the agreement we concluded in 1989,⁶

The agreement contained four points:

1. No hostilities between the two sides,
2. To reopen liaison offices on both sides;
3. To inform each other in advance if one side is entering the other side's territory carrying arms
4. To form a joint coordination committee for regional development as soon as possible.

A second, more comprehensive, meeting took place between the NDAA and the Government negotiating team on 9 October 2011 in Kengtung. At this meeting the NDAA put forward the following 14-point proposal:

1. To allow the NDAA to open liaison offices in Rangoon, Taunggyi, Tachilek, and Mandalay.
2. To issue national identification cards for people in the NDAA controlled area of Eastern Shan State.
3. To issue vehicle licenses for people in NDAA areas.
4. To open tourism areas for Thai and Chinese tourists.
5. To allow the NDAA access to mining, coal and gold exploration and production.
6. To allow outside business groups to invest in the NDAA areas.
7. To send researchers to the area to assess natural resources.
8. To allow access to teak wood trading for 10,000 tons, as well as 10,000 tons of other hardwoods.
9. To allow NDAA control of border checkpoints and to receive border checkpoint tax fees.
10. To allow NGOs and the U.N. to help improve the area.
11. NDAA is pleased to take part in government's 15 year (1999-2014) drug elimination plan.

12. To supply NDAA areas with rice, fuel oil and money.

13. The group is pleased to welcome government personnel to resume work in government offices, after a joint assessment of the area.

14. The NDAA would like government officials to come and meet regularly in order to ensure their current ceasefire continues.

Of the 14 points, Government negotiators agreed to the following seven:

1. The two groups ratify the first meeting agreement.
2. NDAA will not secede from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
3. Government officials will be sent to run government offices in NDAA areas and NDAA people will be sent to work in NDAA liaison offices in government controlled areas.
4. The two sides will cooperate to improve education, health and transportation in NDAA controlled areas.
5. Both will cooperate to improve tourism, mining, and electricity in NDAA controlled areas.
6. Both will cooperate to work towards eliminating drugs in the NDAA controlled areas.
7. The two sides will meet regularly in order to maintain peace⁷

The situation in the area has largely remained calm and no actual conflict has been reported. Consequently, the crossing points into Mongla from Mae Sai, Thailand and Daluo, China have been re-opened and the town is expected to benefit from increased tourism, trade and gambling. In an attempt to prepare its leaders for a political role in the country 102 of its leading members have been attending refresher course on politics and leadership skills.

On 20 May 2012, Yawd Serk, leader of the RCSS/SSA, visited Mongla and met with Sai Leun who had apparently told him that:

. . . the world is changing and the country is changing . . . And that we need to be in tune with the change so we will not be left behind.⁸

To further improve its image the group announced a crackdown on narcotics in areas under its control in July 2012. Mongla was declared opium free by the group in 1997 and Sai Leun had his name removed from a US blacklist in 2000. Despite this, there remain concerns in relation to its connections with the UWSA, some members of which remain involved in the drugs trade. In addition, it has been suggested that the 20 casinos in Mongla territory are used to launder money for those involved in the trade.⁹

Notes

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- ¹ 'Fighting talk - Myanmar threatens dry season offensive' Jane's Intelligence Review, 12 November 2009
 - ² <http://www.shanland.org/politics/2007/junta-demands-military-presence-in-mongla> accessed on 19/5/07
 - ³ 'NDF Statement on Assassination of Mongla Leader', NDF, 28 January 2010
 - ⁴ 'Mongla, closed to tourists since 23 November' S.H.A.N., 5 June 2012
 - ⁵ 'Junta army follows Aesopean camel's footsteps', S.H.A.N., 21 April 2011
 - ⁶ 'Wa, Mongla sign new ceasefire agreement', Hseng Khio Fah, S.H.A.N., 9 September 2011
 - ⁷ 'ndaa-and-govt-negot-terms', S.H.A.N
 - ⁸ 'Mongla prepares leaders for transition', S.H.A.N., 23 May 2012
 - ⁹ 'Mongla launches crackdown on drugs', S.H.A.N., 16 July 2012