

Thais evacuated as KNU attacked by Burmese army

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TAK : More than 100 Thais were evacuated from Phop Phra district bordering Burma yesterday after Burmese troops sealed off and attacked a Karen stronghold. A resident of Ban Padi said he heard gunfire from 5am. The battleground was opposite the village, just across Padi stream, he said.

Thai soldiers and rangers provided safety for the evacuees and stood by to prevent any intrusion by foreign troops.

A ranger said about 100 Burmese soldiers from the 409th Light Infantry Regiment joined the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army's (DKBA) 907th Battalion. The joint force sealed off and attacked the Karen National Union (KNU) at Valeki, opposite Ban Padi.

The source said the KNU's 102nd Battalion were out-gunned by the joint force, which had more manpower and weapons. One KNU soldier died and two others were injured, he said. Burmese casualties were not known.

Later in the day, Col Nerda Mya led KNU forces in a counter-strike against the joint force from behind, hoping to reclaim their stronghold.

Meanwhile, 23 Burmese petitioned staff of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in the province, claiming they had not been registered as refugees and received no food or aid in the two years since the UNHCR's Bangkok office sent them to Mae La refugee camp in Tha Song Yang district.

Thet Oo, 25, said: "Our group of 100 Burmese stay in a refugee camp but have not received any food or basic necessities because we have not been registered as refugees. We have made a living as hired labourers."

An official in Tak said the group were illegal immigrants travelling to Thailand to work as illegal workers in Bangkok and other provinces.

The government wants Burmese who were given UNHCR registration slips and People of Concern status to stay in a refugee camp, pending the provincial administration board's decision on whether to grant them "asylum seeker" status.

http://www.bangkokpost.com/010708_News/01Jul2008_news09.php

Karen military clash forces evacuation of Thai village

By SAW YAN NAING AND SAI SILP

Fighting broke out on Monday between troops of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and its breakaway group, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), forcing the evacuation of a Thai border village.

One KNLA soldier was reportedly killed when DKBA forces backed by Burmese army units overran a KNLA base.

Maj Shee Lay of KNLA Battalion 201 told The Irrawaddy: 'The DKBA took over one of our Battalion 201 bases. One of our soldiers was killed, one injured and one was arrested. They seized some of our weapons.'

The fighting continued through Monday as the KNLA, military wing of the Karen National Union, attempted to retake the base.

Across the nearby border, in the Pob Phra district of Thailand's Tak Province, the village of Phadee was evacuated and a Thai army group was sent to the area to investigate.

Monton Sawangnaphalai, chairman of Tak Province's Roumtaipattana sub-district office, responsible for Phadee village, told The Irrawaddy that children and elderly people were being given priority in the evacuation. Phadee has a population of more than 300.

The fighting in neighboring Karen State broke out before dawn on Monday. Maj Shee Lay said his KNLA battalion was regrouping for an attempt to retake the base, occupied by about 30 DKBA soldiers of Battalion 907.

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/VDUX-7G4N4S?OpenDocument>