

# South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > MYANMAR: The war with the Kachins continues – Amidst talks of a Nationwide Ceasefire

---

## MYANMAR: The war with the Kachins continues – Amidst talks of a Nationwide Ceasefire

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Fri, 04/25/2014 - 11:11

Paper No. 5690

Dated 25-Apr-2014

By C. S. Kuppuswamy

(This paper may please be read in conjunction with the following papers of this author posted on this site earlier Paper no. 5132 dated 23 July 2012 "MYANMAR: the War with the Kachins – One year on"

Paper No. 5357 dated 11 January 2013 "MYANMAR: The war with the Kachins – An Update" <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1125> [1])

### Introduction

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) was formed in 1957 to fight for an independent Kachin state. The political wing of the KIA called the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) was formed in 1960. The KIA is the second largest armed ethnic group in Myanmar with about 8000 troops.

After a protracted struggle since 1961 the KIA gave up its demand for independence and entered into a ceasefire with the military Government in 1994 with the hope of achieving at least some limited state autonomy which has also not materialised till date.

The ceasefire collapsed in June 2011 when the Myanmar armed forces attacked the area around Momauk Township (under the control of KIA Brigade-3) presumably to protect the hydro-electric dams under construction in this area with Chinese help. Since then there have been periodical clashes between the government troops and the KIA, both putting the blame on the other party for the offensives.

Many rounds of talks between the KIO and the Myanmar peace making committee have taken place for a ceasefire. Though a tacit agreement has been entered into in October 2013, it is not being considered as a ceasefire agreement by the KIA.

The quasi-civilian government that came to power in March 2011 has entered into fresh ceasefire agreements with 16 of the 18 major armed groups between 2011 and 2012. The KIA and Ta'ang National Liberation Army are the only two major ethnic army groups that have not entered into a ceasefire with the present government.

Meanwhile the government is making a major effort to have a nationwide ceasefire by August 2014 and has formed a 18-member joint committee (with 9 from ethnic groups) which has been entrusted with the task of finalising the draft.

### **Escalation**

Between December 2012 and early January 2013 jet fighters and helicopter gun ships were used by the government forces to bombard the areas held by the Kachins and to provide close support to the ground troops. The Myanmar army was also reported to have used 105 mm howitzers and 120 mm mortars. The KIA lost some of its strategic strongholds near Lajayang and Laiza (KIA HQ).

During this war two army helicopters and possibly one aircraft were shot down by the KIA according to a recent report of IHS Jane's Defence. "According to statistics on pro-government military blog sites, between June 2011 and the beginning of the Laiza campaign in mid-December 2012, at least 5,000 Tatmadaw troops died in Kachin state. The Laiza campaign and smaller operations since then will have added several hundred fatalities to that toll," the magazine said" (The Irrawaddy- March 24, 2014).

### **Recent Clashes**

The article "Why conflict continues in Kachin State" published by the Eleven Media Group (21 April 2014) gives full details of the recent clashes.

- On April 4 a major who had strayed into the KIA controlled territory was shot dead. After the major was killed, the Myanmar Army announced that it was launching operation to gain effective control of the Manweinggyi-Kaunghmuyan route. The reason was to preserve the state resources and to protect the livelihood of villagers in those areas.
- Fighting erupted again in Kachin State between September 2013 to March 2014. The ministry of Defence said in an announcement in April 19 that the army was taking action against timber smugglers on routes between Mansi-Moemauk, Simbo-Bhamo and Simbo-Manpi.
- On April 10 Myanmar Army troops from Military Operation Command 16, Division 88 conducted multiple attacks against KIA 3rd Brigade regiments. Clashes also occurred in Nantknan in northern Shan State where KIA 4th Brigade, 9th Regiment is situated.

- On April 12, government forces seized Bankhan border gate between Manwainggyi and Nanttaung where KIA bases are located.
- After the clashes, government forces have gained control of the Mansi- Pankham – Manwainggyi route including one of the China-Myanmar border gates.
- On April 16 Monghsat Kaung Camp which is one of the main camps for KIA Brigade No 4, Regiment No 1 was captured.
- As a result (of the recent clashes) the army is now in control of the Bhamo-Moemauk-Seinlon-Lwejal route.

## **Myanmar Armed Forces**

Ye Htut, the presidential spokesman while talking to The Irrawaddy (22 April, 2014) on the fighting in Kachin areas said “The Tatmadaw only fights to defend itself, and they have been instructed not to attack first. It is important to stop the secret shooting of our troops, which was responsible for the killing of one of our majors.” He also accused the KIA of violating the ceasefire agreement during the recent surge in fighting, which has left 22 soldiers dead and 5000 people displaced.

- Despite professing that the military is involved only in defensive operations, the strategy adopted by the Tatmadaw seems to be on the following lines:
- Take control of all main lines of communications near the rebel held areas for moving of men and material to the forward posts without interruption from the rebels.
- Take control and strengthening of strategic posts close to rebel held areas to monitor the rebel movements, to surround them and to prevent them from enlarging the areas under their control.
- Keep the war alive with sporadic clashes and thereby displacing the civil population which is already disenchanted with the KIA in not arriving at an amicable settlement with the Government.
- Break the will of the KIA to fight as it is the only major group resisting to sign the ceasefire as well as to weaken them considerably before agreeing for negotiations under the terms dictated by the military.

## **The KIA/KIO**

The KIA/KIO wants a commitment from the government for a political dialogue before ceasefire while the government wants the ceasefire as a precondition for political dialogue without even indicating a time frame or framework for such a dialogue.

The KIA has also refuted the allegations that it has initiated offensive actions or involved in killing of army personnel by ambushes or by attacks. The KIA has said that mostly it has been in retaliation for Tatmadaw’s actions.

The army has also taken the pretext of getting engaged in clashes with the KIA while they are raiding illegal loggers. KIA has denied giving protection to illegal loggers. General Gun Maw of the KIA clarified in an interview that “there are people who benefit from this trade in the KIA

and the government”.

The KIA is also under pressure from China to agree to a ceasefire, as it is more interested in stability on its border, border trade and its economic interests in Myanmar. Besides the army offensives in the Kachin area results in displaced persons moving into its territory.

The KIA's keenness in signing a nationwide ceasefire is evidenced by the fact it has hosted the meeting of 17 armed ethnic groups at Laiza (The KIO HQ) from 30 October to 02 November 2013. The KIA is also a member of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team created at this meeting for further talks with the Government.

Gen Gun Maw, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the KIA visited USA in the third week of April 2014 seeking US support for the peace process. In an interview to Reuters in Washington he said "At present, we are still asking the US to be involved. Whether they will be, we don't know yet."

### **News Analysis**

The Tatmadaw could have very well launched a major offensive against the Kachins but for two restraining factors:

- It will jeopardise the ongoing peace process
- As some strongholds of the Kachins are in close proximity to the Chinese border, the effects of such an offensive will spill over to Chinese territory as it happened during the offensive in December 2012 – January 2013.

The Tatmadaw's support for and involvement in the peace process indicates that it wants to ensure its interests are looked after and its predominance (if not supremacy) is maintained.

With the nation's past history of failed ceasefires, the distrust of the KIA/KIO for the Bamar – predominant government machinery is understandable.

The government would not like US to be involved in the peace process (as suggested by KIA) as it may entail in China as well as some other nations getting involved in this process.

The distrust of the ethnic groups compounded with the aggressive posture of the armed forces is likely to further delay the peace process.

The KIA may be constrained to come to an amicable settlement with all its apprehensions as it is losing time and also undergoing a process of attrition with these regular offensives of the government forces.

**Tags:**

[KIA/KIO](#) [2]

[General Gun Maw](#) [3]

[Peace Process](#) [4]

**Category:**

[Papers](#) [5]

**Countries:**

[Myanmar](#) [6]

**Topics:**

[Political](#) [7]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1506>

**Links**

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1125>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/687>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/688>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/689>

[5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/myanmar>

[7] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>