

**Radio Free Asia**

Fresh Cross-Border Bombs Reported in China-Myanmar Border War

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Tail and parachute from bomb that landed on Chinese territory near Myanmar, March 21, 2015.

Photo courtesy of a volunteer.

Authorities in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan are investigating a group of unexploded bombs that fell on the mountainous and rugged border with Myanmar, where fighting between government troops and Kokang rebels has intensified in the past week.

As the conflict in Shan State passed the 40-day mark On Myanmar's side of the border relief volunteers said unidentified attackers had thrown five grenades in an attack on the refugee camp, where unarmed civilians are sheltering from the conflict. There were no injuries.

Photos from the Chinese side of the border showed white, unexploded bombs--or parts of bombs--with fins, some with parachutes still attached.

Local residents said they were dropped by a Myanmar government plane at around 4.00 p.m. local time outside Mengdui township near Yunnan's Lincang city.

"We are still confirming what happened, and we have no conclusion at this stage," an official who answered the phone at the Mengdui township government offices said on Saturday.

"We are acting on the basis of tip-offs from the local people."

Bombs located

He said the position of the bombs had already been established, however.

"We determined the exact position [on Friday] but the details aren't clear yet," the official said.

"They will inform the command center and the county government leaders, who will be able to answer your questions," he said.

He said local officials are "still confirming" whether or not there were casualties. "We still don't know," he said.

However, one local resident told RFA that the bombs hadn't exploded.

Myanmar's military resumed air strikes against ethnic Kokang rebels in the country's remote Shan state on Friday, a week after a bomb killed five Chinese nationals across the border, further straining ties between the two Asian neighbors.

After a few days' pause after the bombing incident, the army on Thursday resumed its offensive against the MNDAA, which is trying to retake the Kokang self-administered zone it had controlled until 2009, supported by its aircraft.

Further incursions, this time involving artillery bombardment, were reported by a volunteer at the Maidihe refugee camp, which straddles the border.

"The Myanmar army fired two shells over here [on Friday]," a volunteer surnamed Li at the nearby Maidihe refugee camp told RFA on Saturday.

"They came down two kilometers inside the Chinese side of the border, in the jungle," he said. "[Chinese officials] went to inspect the site today."

He said that no deaths or injuries had so far been reported in connection with the shelling.

Five grenades

On the Myanmar side, a volunteer at a refugee camp near the No. 125 border marker described the attack on a camp sheltering thousands of refugees.

"They lobbed five grenades in the attack, and one exploded [in the camp]," a missionary surnamed Ke told RFA. "Nobody was hurt, and we didn't catch them, so we don't know who did this."

One grenade fell at the door of the camp offices, but didn't explode, although the pin had been pulled, aid workers said. The second exploded near some makeshift tents set up by civilians as temporary homes in the camp, sending shrapnel into their homes.

"If the grenade thrown at the offices had detonated, it would have been terrible," Ke said. The attackers ran away before they could be identified.

Twenty meters away in the jungle, aid workers found two more unexploded grenades, while the location of a fifth grenade explosion had yet to be pinpointed in the jungle.

Evacuation considered

Ke said camp authorities are considering dispersing the refugees in the wake of the attack.

"There are 4,000 people here, so we will have to think about how to evacuate them all," Ke said.

"We don't want the responsibility of deaths on our hands if there is a second attack."

He said nobody understood what could have motivated the attack.

"Nobody thought they would start attacking refugees," Ke said. "It's bewildering."

A second volunteer at the same camp said he was "extremely angry" and strongly condemned the attack.

The No. 125 Border Marker camp is run by charitable organizations based in Kokang for humanitarian purposes, with the aim of helping civilians in the war-torn region meet their daily needs, the aid worker said.

For many who haven't enough money or papers to get across the border into China, it is the last option they have to find shelter and protection, he said.

"It is extremely chilling to think that people could be so shameless as to launch a grenade attack on refugees and the aid workers who are helping them," the volunteer said.

Fighting began on Feb. 9 in Laukkai between Myanmar government troops and the MNDAA, which is allied with other armed groups in the region.

The MNDAA is allied with three other ethnic minority armies: the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and part of the Shan State Army (SSA), although the KIA has remained in the region it controls, rather than fighting alongside MNDAA troops.

Reported by Qiao Long for RFA's Mandarin Service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.