



**Address:**  
**P.O. Box 201, Prasingh,**  
**Chiang Mai, Thailand 50200**

**Email:** shanhumanrights@gmail.com  
**Website:** www.shanhumanrights.org  
**Phone:** +66 (0)93- 297-7754

**September 8, 2016**

**Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation**

**Latest Burma Army attack on strategic SSPP/SSA mountain base stokes fears of major war escalation and new displacement in central Shan State**

SHRF strongly condemns the recent Burma Army attack on a strategic mountain base of the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) in Tangyan township, causing about 100 villagers to flee their homes, and stoking fears of significant war escalation and new displacement.

On August 28, 2016, the Burma Army launched an attack on the SSPP/SSA-controlled Loi Je mountain range, one of the highest vantage points in central Shan State, overlooking SSPP/SSA territories west of the Salween, the heartlands of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) to the east, and strategic river crossings in-between. Attacking this hugely important mountain stronghold, which the SSPP/SSA -- and likely the UWSA -- will use every means to defend, is therefore a deliberate provocation to war.

The attack was premeditated. The Burma Army had informed local villagers the day before that they would be advancing up the mountain. At 4.15 pm on August 28, about 75 Burmese government troops, from Tangyan-based LIB 523, Mong Gao-based IB 33 and a special combat militia, advanced uphill towards the SSPP/SSA's base. As they advanced, Burma Army troops from LIB 147, stationed at the foot of the mountain, fired about 20 mortar shells up at SSPP/SSA positions.

Although the government troops were driven back by the SSPP/SSA that night, local villagers fled in fear from the shelling. About 100 Shan and Lisu villagers, mostly elderly, women and children, from Kho Toom and nearby Wan Loi Lem fled to the town of Mong Gao. The Lisu villagers camped in the stalls next to Mong Gao market, while the Shan stayed in relatives' houses. They remained there for two days, until they were sure the fighting had died down.

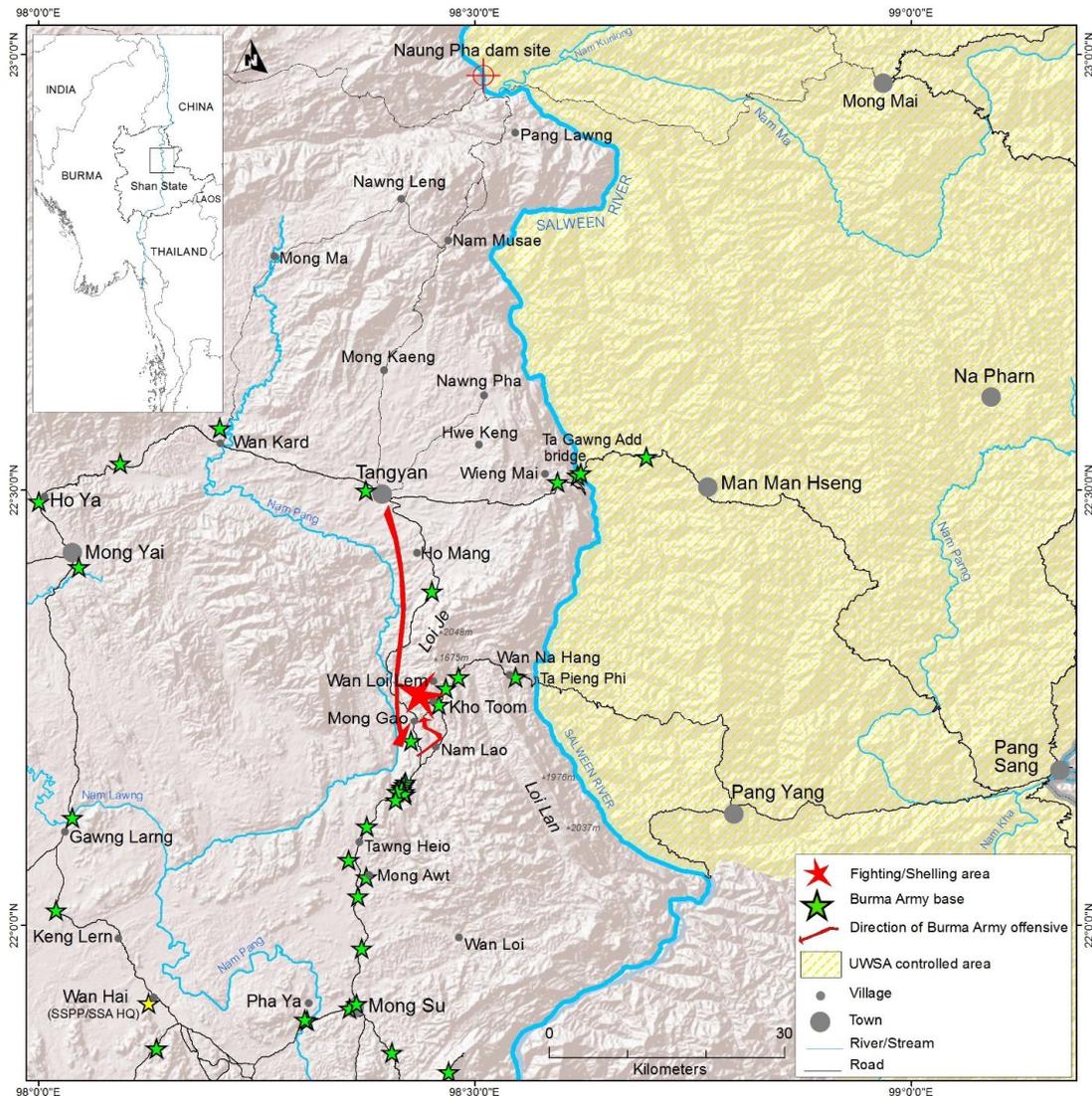
Locals are now fearful of a repeat of the Burma Army's large-scale offensive in 2013 against the SSPP/SSA in this same area. At that time, thousands of troops were deployed, committing atrocities including torture, use of villagers as human shields, and shelling of civilian targets, which caused over 2,000 Ta'ang, Shan and Wa villagers to flee to Tangyan town (see [http://www.shanhumanrights.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=171:august-2009&catid=35:2009&Itemid=77](http://www.shanhumanrights.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=171:august-2009&catid=35:2009&Itemid=77)). Since then, the Burma Army has expanded its presence in the area, deploying over 1,000 troops and setting up 15 new outposts around the foot of Loi Je, and in April this year once again ordered the SSPP/SSA to withdraw off the mountain.

This area has significant economic importance for Burma's central government. The planned Naung Pha dam on the Salween River is proceeding just north of Tangyan, despite public opposition by the main Shan armed groups and political parties, including the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), which won most parliamentary seats in the November 2015 elections in this area. The Burma Army will need to clear the SSPP/SSA from along the Salween in order for the Naung Pha dam to proceed.

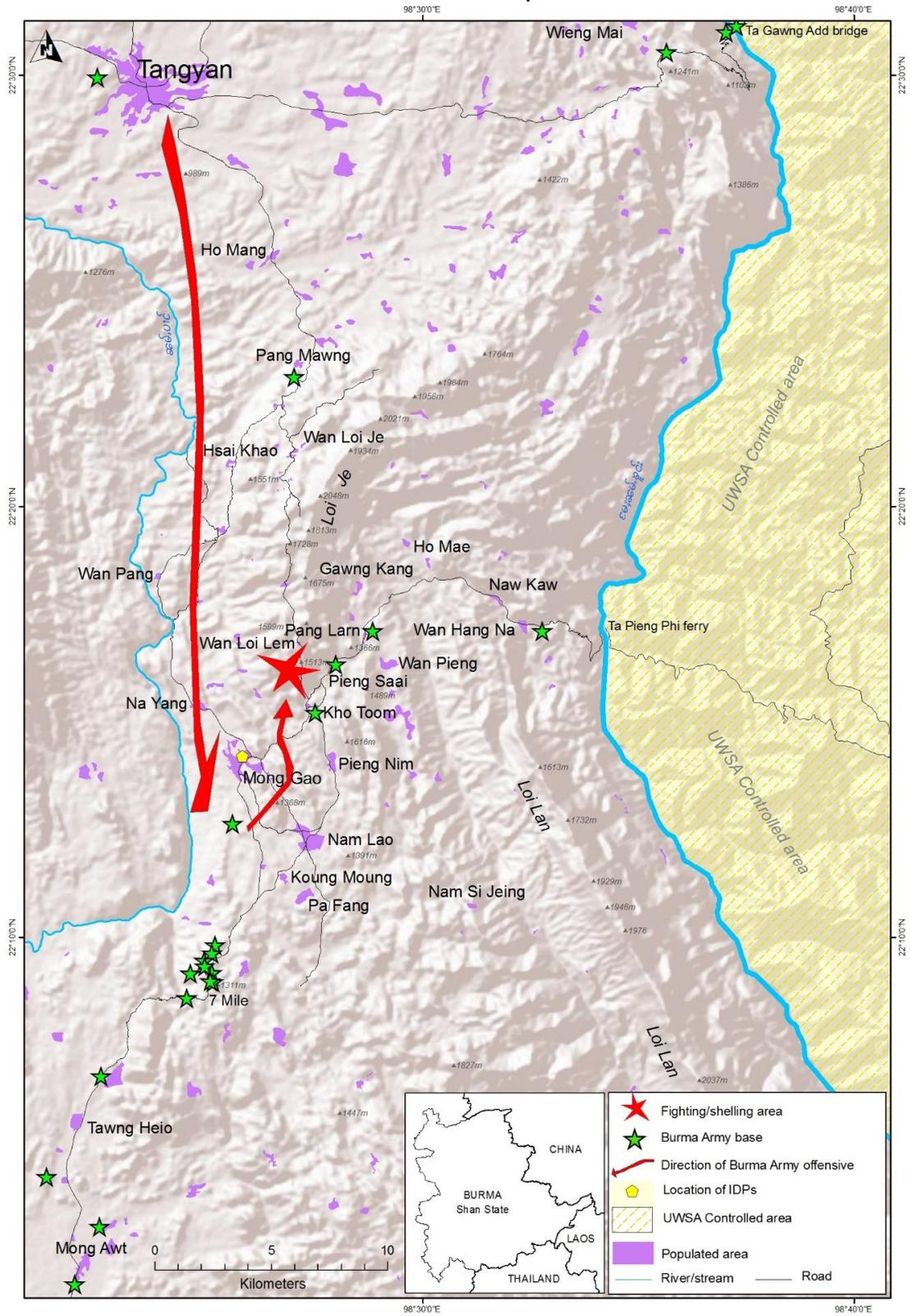
SHRF is therefore gravely concerned that this latest attack indicates the start of a new large-scale offensive by the Burma Army, which will lead to the fresh displacement of thousands and a new humanitarian crisis. If the UWSA is also drawn into war, the scale of displacement and suffering will increase exponentially.

SHRF calls urgently on State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to take action to stop the military build-up and attacks by the Burma Army, and prevent a major escalation of the war in Shan State.

Burma Army attack against SSPP/SSA's Loi Je mountain base on August 28, 2016



# Detailed map



**Contact**

Sai Hor Hseng +66: (0) 62- 941-9600 (English, Shan)

Ying Lawn Lieng +66: (0) 63-838-9029 (English, Burmese)