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Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Burma Army rape attempt near base in Mong Ton highlights ongoing climate of impunity

On July 24, 2020, a Burma Army soldier attempted to rape a local woman working on her farm, only about 200 meters from his military base, 10 miles south of Mong Ton, eastern Shan State.

The soldier was from the Burma Army base near Mae Gaen village, Mong Ton township. About 15 soldiers from Infantry Battalions 277 and 133 were stationed there, on the main road from Mong Ton to the Thai border.

At 9 am on July 24, the soldier, called Hsan Lin Aung, was coming down from the base to the Mae Gaen River, when he came across “Nang Hseng” (not her real name), aged 32, from Mai Mawk Pao Hom village, who was harvesting sesame at her farm.

Hsan Lin Aung sneaked up to her, pulled her into a bush, and attempted to rape her. Nang Hseng screamed out in fear, alerting her husband’s brother, who was working in a nearby field. He rushed to help her, and found her struggling to break free from the soldier, who was lying on top of her, one hand squeezing her neck. When the soldier saw the other man coming, he quickly got up and went back in the direction of his base.

When Nang Hseng and her brother in law returned home, they reported the incident to the quarter headman of Mai Mawk Pao Hom, who then went with Nang Hseng, her husband and other village elders to the base to complain to the commander.

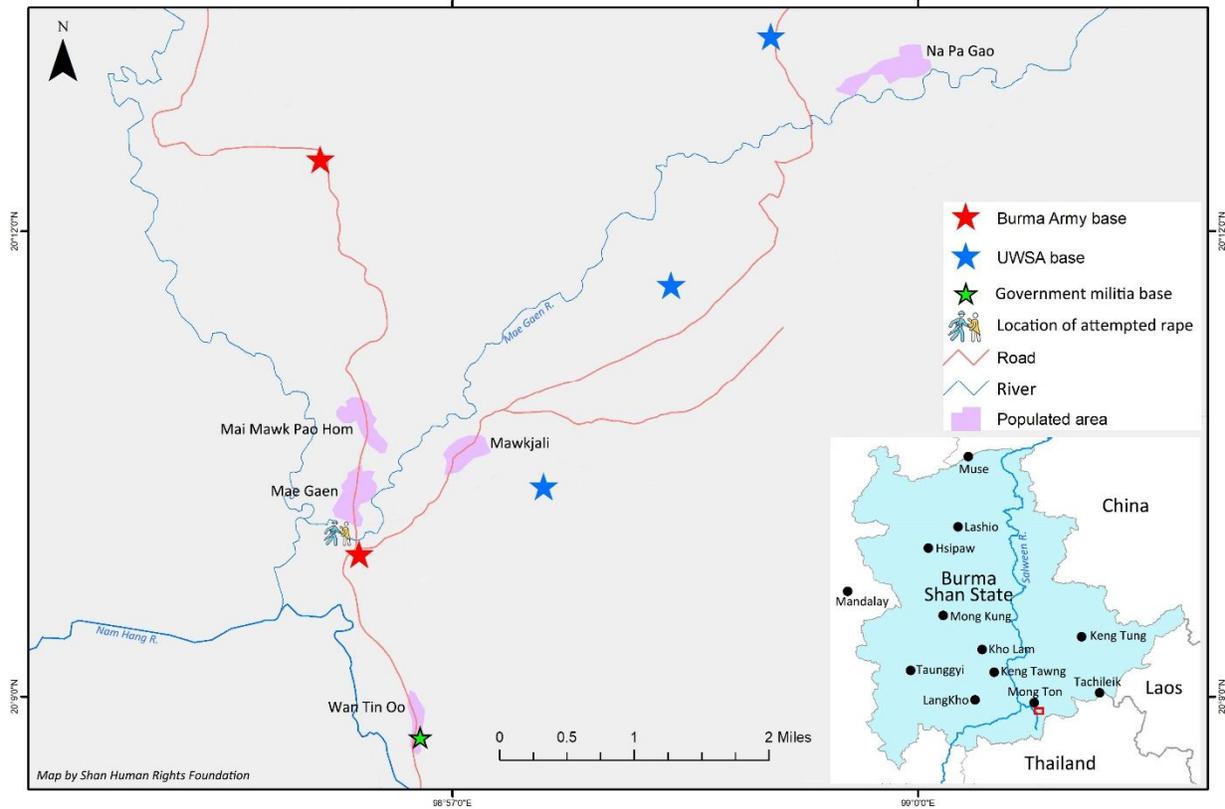
They described the soldier to the commander, who then checked his troops, and called the culprit to the house of a local Lahu pro-government militia leader at Mae Gaen at 10 am.

An officer from the Burma Army Tactical Command in Mong Ton, Captain Aung Htaik, arrived at Mae Gaen, and said he would punish the culprit. He took Hsan Lin Aung away, saying he would be imprisoned at their base in Mong Ton. No support or compensation was offered to Nang Hseng.

Nang Hseng and her family have no way of knowing whether the culprit was actually punished, and are not satisfied with the way the incident was dealt with. They and other villagers living

near the Mae Gaen base feel very unsafe, as this attempted rape – committed brazenly so close to a military camp -- shows that locally stationed troops feel they can commit abuses against civilians with impunity.

Location of rape attempt by Burma Army soldier in Mong Ton, July 24, 2020



Nang Hseng is originally from Mong Harg in Mong Ton. She is married with two children. She and her husband are farmers.

On July 28, the troops stationed near Mae Gaen were suddenly rotated, and replaced by about 30 troops from Light Infantry Battalion 553, based in Mong Toom, Mong Hsat township. The Mae Gaen base was set up about three years ago. Usually, troop rotation is every ten months.

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