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TRIP REPORT

G5
18 Dec 12

From: Burma Desk Officer
To: AC/S G5

Via: Chief, Policy and International Affairs Branch

Subj: BURMA VISIT, 3-6 DEC 2012

1. Purpose. To provide a back-brief of official travel to Burma in conjunction with DCG participation in the U.S. Embassy, Rangoon Marine Corps Ball.
2. Travelers. Brigadier General R. L. Simcock II, Major R. L. Ibarra, Captain R. B. Gautier
3. Itinerary. Location visited; Rangoon, Burma.
4. Dates of travel; 3 – 6 December.
5. Key personnel contacted; Ambassador Derek J. Mitchell (U.S. Embassy, Burma), Virginia Murray (Deputy Chief of Mission U.S. Embassy, Burma), COL William Dickey, (SDO/DATT, U.S. Embassy, Burma), GySgt Patricio B. Rodriguez (Detachment Commander, Marine Security Guard Detachment, Rangoon, Burma), Major General (Army) San Oo (Regional Commander, Rangoon), and Commodore Myint New (Commandant of Naval Training Command).
6. Discussion. Objective of this visit was to participate in the Marine Corps Ball as well as meet the U.S. Embassy country team and conduct a courtesy call with Burmese officials. However, this country visit was historical in which:
 - This was the first time in which a Marine GO has participated in a Marine Corps Ball in Burma.
 - BGen Simcock was the first GO to stay for an extended period of time (3 days) in Burma.
 - This was the first time that a Marine GO has conducted any type of discussion with high ranking Burmese military officials.

The country team brief gave the DCG keen insight on daily life, culture and future opportunities for USMC engagement with Burma. Although the 2nd poorest country in Asia, Burma has seen economic activity expanding this past year as well as an increase in tourist visa requests from the U.S. Though there has been an increase in embassy staff in Rangoon with the expectation of expanded opportunities with Burma, there are still internal issues that Burma is dealing with such as human rights issues, ethnic conflicts (to include) in Kachin, Shan, and Rakhine states. The courtesy call with Major General San Oo was a breakthrough opportunity for a Marine Corps GO to have a meaningful discussion with a high ranking Burmese military officer; however, the opportunity was unfortunately not fully capitalized upon due to the language barrier. Towards the end of the office call, Commodore Myint New was able to express (without interpreter) that Burma has a capable military that can conduct

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joint operations as well as conduct cross training throughout their respective militaries. The meeting ended symbolically with Major General San Oo escorting the DCG out to his vehicle (the SDO/DATT, COL Dickey informed the DCG that Major General San Oo's gesture is very symbolic in Burmese culture). The DCG then attended the Marine Corps Ball on his last night in Rangoon at the Chatrium Hotel. The Marine Security Guard Detachment under the leadership of GySgt Rodriguez conducted themselves in highly professional manner throughout the DCG's visit.

7. Observation. This country visit was a historical step toward MARFORPAC engagement in Burma. Although Burma will have observers to Cobra Gold in 2013 and opportunities to attend APCSS in the future, the country is not ready to have robust Mil-Mil engagements in the near future. The approach must be slow and incremental with the goals of achieving Burmese and MARFORPAC goals of strengthening U.S./Burma relations.
8. Way Ahead/Recommendations. I recommend that when the next opportunity for key leader engagement presents itself, MARFORPAC emphasized a visit to the administrative capital, Nay Pyi Taw Burma. Rangoon is not actually the center of power in Burma; Nay Pyi Taw—approximately three hours from Rangoon—provides opportunities to engage decision makers in both the Burmese military and government and will facilitate increased access and insight into future U.S./Burma relations and engagements.

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