

NO EXIT STRATEGY: BURMA'S ENDLESS CRISIS AND AMERICA'S LIMITED OPTIONS

JOINT HEARING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

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NO EXIT STRATEGY: BURMA'S ENDLESS CRISIS AND AMERICA'S LIMITED OPTIONS

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Young Kim (chair of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mrs. KIM of California. The Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific and the Subcommittee on South and Central Asia will come to order.

This joint hearing will assess the current situation in Burma, including the upcoming sham elections, the dire humanitarian situation facing the Rohingya community, and ways to address the proliferation of scam centers and fentanyl hurting the lives of everyday Americans. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG KIM

Welcome to today's joint East Asia and the Pacific and South and Central Asia Subcommittee hearing on the ongoing military and humanitarian crisis in Burma, titled No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options.

This hearing aims to illuminate a prominent source of regional instability and a significant foreign policy opportunity for the United States. Burma is a failed State rapidly becoming the world's center of organized crime, with more than half of its population living in poverty, nearly 3.6 million people internally displaced, and millions more having fled to neighboring countries.

Although resistance forces have achieved notable successes over the past year and a half, the junta remains resilient, still controlling about 20 percent of the country's land while opposition forces control roughly twice that amount.

Since Burma's military coup in 2021, the junta has only worked to further legitimize itself, despite some claims that it is in decline. The Tatmadaw, Burma's military junta, is slated to hold sham elections in December 2025, where the results are predetermined, in a bid to disguise authoritarian control as democratic process.

These elections are designed to create an illusion of legitimacy while allowing the junta to continue serving as a proxy for China and Russia. Both powers have aided the Tatmadaw's numerous

war crimes by propping up the regime with weapons and surveillance technology.

The United States has a moral obligation to call out and act against both human rights abuses and autocratic transgression. While cuts to foreign assistance have reduced our ability to assist in disasters and in the conflict writ large, the conflict presents an opportunity for the United States to strengthen its regional interests in regard to supply chain security, economic partnerships, and critical mineral initiatives.

This hearing also addresses the direct and immediate consequences of Burma's conflict on the American people. Make no mistake: America's interests in this conflict are not humanitarian alone. Junta-affiliated scamming networks operating within Burma have targeted Americans, stealing billions of dollars a year from American taxpayers. These funds not only benefit transnational criminal networks but continue to line the pockets of the military junta. Congress must act immediately to protect our citizens' hard-earned savings.

Burma's humanitarian catastrophe, its strategic importance in Southeast Asia, and the ongoing war's harmful effects on everyday Americans all demand a thorough reevaluation of the United States policy. Indeed, when we consider both the domestic and foreign policy implications of the crisis in Burma, greater American attention to the conflict and its outcome truly puts America first.

To address these challenges, the committee has gathered an excellent panel of witnesses who will help us further unpack the many dimensions of Burma's conflict. So I look forward to engaging with them on this critical issue. Thank you.

I now recognize Ranking Member Ami Bera to make his 5 minutes' opening remarks.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER AMI BERA

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Chairwoman Kim and Chairman Huizenga and Ranking Member Kamlager-Dove, for hosting a hearing on this important topic.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. We are grateful for your expertise, and I look forward to your testimony.

I won't reiterate everything that the chairwoman said, but I agree with everything that you did say in terms of the complexity of this conflict, and the ongoing is—you know, there is no easy solution here.

You pointed out the importance of calling out the sham elections that are coming up. These are not legitimate, free, and fair elections. These are elections where the junta is trying to legitimize themselves. We have to make sure we call out the elections for what they are.

Also, you talked about the scam centers that are preying upon U.S. citizens but also are funding the military junta. That is a real challenge, as well, and it is something that not just the United States—but it is impacting Southeast Asia and other ASEAN nations. This is an area where we should be working closely together to try to disrupt these organized crime networks and scam centers.

The other thing that I would like to touch on also is what we see in terms of the PRC supporting some of the junta, providing mili-

tary aid and others. This is an area where we should use the full power of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, to continue to put pressure on the Chinese and others, including bringing in the Indians who also are seeing the cross-border refugee crisis to work together to try to find an end.

And last, from the beginning of the conflict in 2021, we have worked closely with the ASEAN nations, the Southeast Asia nations. You know, I recently met with the Indonesian ambassador, welcoming the new Ambassador here. We did talk about next steps and how we can support ASEAN to find a resolution to this. And it is not just a resolution. We have seen the resilience of the Burmese people in terms of fighting for their liberty and freedom and a path forward. It has been remarkable that they have been able to sustain this for this long.

This is an opportunity to try to facilitate real change where we can empower the people of Burma to find their path forward. It will not be easy. It will take partnership with the other Southeast Asian nations. It will take ASEAN leadership and then the other partner neighboring nations that have a real stake here, Bangladesh, India, and others.

So, again, thank you for this timely hearing. I think it is important. This is an incredibly complicated and complex challenge. But this is also an opportunity. If we work together with like-valued allies, with the ASEAN nations, hopefully we can effect a more positive outcome down the road and in the future.

So thank you, Chairwoman Kim. And I yield back.

Mrs. KIM of California. Thank you.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from South and Central Asia Subcommittee, the gentleman from Michigan, Representative Huizenga, for your opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BILL HUIZENGA

Mr. HUIZENGA. Well, thanks, Chair Kim. And I am thrilled to be able to do this hearing with you and to pull in the folks from South Central Asia Committee, as well as your vital committee.

And interestingly enough, yesterday I met with the new Ambassador from Bangladesh. And my goal with that meeting was to, first and foremost, say thank you for what Bangladesh is doing in Cox's Bazar. And the number is now, he informs me, 1.3 million Rohingya that are there. They have about 35,000 births per year and still approximately 100,000 refugees coming across per year.

And so there is certainly a strain on Bangladesh and, as my friend Ami Bera had mentioned, India as well, and others in that region, who are helping.

And, Madam Chair, I have mentioned many times before in this committee, our Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as the Financial Services Committee where I am vice chair, that the Burma issues are near and dear to my heart as well as the heart of my constituency, especially those constituents at the Battle Creek Burma Center in Southwest Michigan.

That is what prompted me to really take a much more focused look at what is going on. And year after year, I have heard their stories and a desire for an end to the violence perpetuated by the junta, and they want to promote an open and inclusive democratic

system and return to a safe and stable and secure Burma. And I know that is the goal of a few of our guests that are here in the audience with us today.

And without objection, Madam Chair, I would like to submit for the record a letter addressed to this committee from more than 90 civil society organizations regarding the situation in Burma.

[The information referred to can be found in the appendix:]

Mr. HUIZENG. They write in their letter quote, "Burma's military has always been and remains today the single greatest source of instability and economic destruction in the country," close quote.

Sadly, I think those words ring very true. And unfortunately, since February 2021, when a military coup replaced the democratically elected government in Burma, these desires for a new Burma are a long way from being fully realized. Protests and general strikes from pro-democracy advocates led the military regime's indiscriminate crackdown, including the killing of protesters and previously elected leaders and air strikes against schools, IDP camps, and civilian infrastructure, all of which manifests into human rights violations perpetuated by the oppressive and illegitimate military regime.

The civil war between the military junta and the ethnic resistance organizations rages on, wreaking havoc across the country. And thanks to unfettered arms supply line from Russia and China, the military regime controls the airspace. And just last week, the military junta took delivery of Russian helicopters and Chinese military aircraft, which will ultimately be used to fight resistance forces and civilians in the mountainous regions of the country.

The junta's grasp on its territory has become so desperate, the junta activated mandatory conscription last year, forcibly recruiting Rohingya Muslims to fight on the regime's behalf or to use them as human shields, even as the regime has long persecuted the Rohingya themselves.

In the junta's latest ploy to build legitimacy around their illegitimate regime, a first-of-its-kind election has been called for December 28 of this year, 2025. As co-chair of the congressional Burma Caucus, I have significant concerns about the lack of electoral rules and structures in this deeply flawed process.

Additionally, the enactment of a recent July 2025 election protection law targets anyone who speaks out or protests against the election and threatens years of imprisonment or even death for those that are convicted. This move only further chills the democratic process in Burma. To say that these elections are shaping up to be free or fair is delusional.

Moving forward, the United States' strong voice and stalwart leadership could have a lasting impact on the region. I have frankly been encouraged by the Trump administration's interest in the region, including multiple rounds of sanctions designated from Treasury targeting Burmese armed groups with links to scam compounds and a Burmese arms procurement network linked to North Korea.

Additionally, since October, this administration has pledged over 130 million for the Rohingya refugee crisis and pushed 11 countries to increase their aid response to the Rohingya by more than 10 percent. In terms of assistance, the United States has provided more

than a third of all aid to the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan in 2025, more than double that of any nation.

I see my time is running out, but I just want to add again I am encouraged to see the July 2025 Quad Summit Joint Statement on bringing much-needed international attention to the Burma crisis. More can and should be done by this administration and our global partners to stop the bleeding in Burma. So I look forward to our conversation today.

And with that, I yield back.

Mrs. KIM of California. Thank you.

I now recognize the ranking member of South and Central Asia Subcommittee, my dear friend from California, Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SYDNEY KAMLAGER-DOVE

Mrs. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Well, thank you, Madam and Mr. Chair, for bringing us together for this joint bipartisan hearing so we can speak with one voice on this important topic.

The conflict in Burma reverberates far beyond its borders, and I want to focus especially on the instability it creates in Southeast Asia. The largest refugee encampment in the world is in Bangladesh, home to a forgotten crisis, the 1.5 million Rohingya refugees who fled ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Burmese military junta and what the United States determined to be a genocide in 1922.

For the Rohingya, Rakhine State in Burma is their motherland and their home. But for decades, they have been treated as outsiders in their own land, targeted by the military, maligned by other Burmese ethnic minorities, and stripped of their citizenship. The Rohingya are now the world's largest stateless population, a status passed down from one generation to the next.

Years after renewed ethnic cleansing and the outbreak of civil war, the Rohingya in Burma are still the target of brutal genocidal violence. The Arakan Army, an ethnic armed organization that resumed fighting the military junta in late 1923, has massacred the Rohingya and territory under its control. This has forced an additional 150,000 Rohingya to seek safety in Bangladesh in the past 18 months alone.

In Cox's Bazar, however, the Rohingya confront another harrowing set of challenges. Bangladesh, which faces major strains on its State capacity, has demonstrated incredible generosity in hosting the Rohingya refugees, a responsibility that must be shouldered by the entire international community. And while we all share the same goal for the Rohingya to live safely as equal citizens in their home country, policies to ensure that the refugee camps remain a temporary solution have in many ways had the opposite effect.

Instead, it has deprived the Rohingya of their agency to build a life for themselves and end their reliance on government and international support. The Rohingya do not have the right to work or the freedom of movement to leave the camps. They have limited access to any livelihood or educational opportunities, depriving them of the right to human development. They are not permitted to build

permanent structures, resulting in vulnerability to flooding, landslides, and fires and constant costly rebuilding.

Insecurity in the camps has exploded as armed groups battle for dominance and traffic young Rohingya into prostitution, slavery, or conscription in the Burmese military. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted, as always, with an uptick in gender-based violence and child marriages as conditions deteriorate.

The Rohingya crisis requires sustained U.S. leadership to support the Bangladesh Government, ensure robust assistance and improvements to the humanitarian response, and define permanent solutions for many of the Rohingya. Alleviating the pressure on Bangladesh's limited State capacity is essential to promoting stability in the country as the interim government works to rebuilt from past authoritarian rule and manage its political transition ahead of elections next year.

While I was glad to see the administration announce new funding pledges to support Rohingya refugees, the \$168 million the administration provided in Fiscal Year 2025 is less than half of the 354.5 million the United States provided in 1924, even as humanitarian needs arise. Such a significant funding cut will directly impact the lives of Rohingya, whose food rations amount to about \$12 a month.

The U.S. must also work with the Bangladesh Government and our partners in the region to improve conditions for the Rohingya, both within the camps and to find sustainable solutions outside the camps. This, first and foremost, requires a cohesive regional strategy that goes beyond a singular focus on tariffing our partners or pursuing a Nobel Peace Prize.

Resettling Rohingya refugees to safe third countries is an essential part of this effort. If the State Department is engaging other countries to accept U.S. deportation flights, they should also be working with partners to resettle stranded refugees into a long-term solution.

With newly confirmed leadership in the South and Central Asia Bureau, I hope to see sustained diplomatic engagement and resource prioritization for the Rohingya refugee crisis. And I am ready to work with the administration on a bipartisan basis to push for sustained solutions for the Rohingya, especially as Bangladesh elects a new government early next year.

I look forward to today's robust discussion in how we can work together to address the Rohingya crisis and the conflict in Burma that is driving it.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mrs. KIM of California. Thank you.

And I would like to note that other members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

And we are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this very important topic.

The honorable Kelley Currie, nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Indo-Pacific Security Initiative, thanks for being with us.

Steve Ross is a senior fellow from the Stimson Center.

Thank you for being with us.

Lucky Karim, the executive director of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice, appreciate you joining us today.

This committee recognizes the importance of the issues before us, and we are grateful to have you here to speak with us today. Your full statements will be made part of the record, and I will ask each of you to keep your spoken remarks to 5 minutes in order to allow time for member questions.

I now recognize Ambassador Currie for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF KELLEY CURRIE

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman, and ranking members and other members of the committee, for hosting and convening this important hearing at a time when the world is largely ignoring what is happening in Burma.

I have worked on Burma for three decades. This is both the most depressing and most hopeful I have been about Burma. And I think you can read my full statement to understand a little bit of why.

I must first clarify that my remarks solely represent my personal views and not any of the many organizations with which I am affiliated. And I do refer you to my full statement for my entire remarks. I am going to focus on a few recommendations.

I think that one of the things that is really key to understanding what is going on in Burma right now is that you have these trends that all of the committee leadership spoke about in terms of the scam centers. They did not mention rare earth mining, but that is another big issue for Burma.

There are just a number of intersecting conflict economies that are fueling this war. And the main beneficiary of these conflict economies and the war itself is not even the Burmese junta at this point; it is the People's Republic of China.

I think that it is important to understand that China wants to see Burma weak, divided, and dependent. That is their objective. That is what they are trying to accomplish through their proxies, whether it is the United Wa State Army or their occasional intervention to support and backstop the military regime, the continuous flow of weapons that they provide the military regime.

They want to see the junta successfully pull off these elections and bring a level of stability that allows them to continue to do business and pull resources out of Burma without the cost that they are having to deal with right now, the annoying problems of the conflict that Beijing has to bear.

At the same time, when it comes to the scam centers and the rare earth mining, Beijing is rapacious in the way that they deal with these things. The scam centers could not exist without the support that the regime in Beijing provides to them. These scam centers are largely the guts, the backbone, behind them. And this is a 35 billion-dollar-a-year global industry—I want to be clear about that—and growing quickly.

They are using technology in a way that is astounding, AI. They were just rated and had hundreds of Starlink units powering their internet. They are at the center of a web of some of the worst human trafficking I have ever seen in 30 years working on human rights, and most abusive human-trafficking system.

And they are deeply connected—and this is one thing I think we don't really understand very well or talk about. These scam centers started out as a way to launder money, including drug money from the Mexican cartels. They have become a line of business on their own, but at heart, they are really a massive money-laundering organization that benefits the very cartels that are killing Americans with fentanyl.

And there is an increasing link between the cartels and the fentanyl production in the western hemisphere and the drug production and these transnational Chinese criminal organizations that are underlying this entire web of global illicit activities. And Burma is at the center of it.

And it is a strange place to be at the center of a global network of criminality. But because of the disaggregated sovereignty in parts of Burma and the lawlessness, it has become the perfect breeding ground for these activities.

So this is a national security threat to the United States, as the leadership mentioned. We do have tools we can use, whether it is with our ally Thailand or our adversary Beijing, to ratchet down pressure on these activities. We need to stop removing sanctions on Burma's arms dealers. We need to make clear that we will not recognize their illicit and illegal election.

But at the end of the day, much of the source of the problem for what we're dealing with in Burma derives from across the border in the People's Republic of China. And we need to understand that as we start to think about the solutions that this committee and the administration put forward.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Currie follows:]

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs**

“No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options”

November 19, 2025

Testimony of Kelley E. Currie

Thank you Chairwoman Kim, Chairman Huizenga, Ranking Members Bera and Kamlager-Dove, and other members of the Committee, for convening this hearing at a time when the world largely ignores Burma's spiraling poly-crisis. As someone who has worked in support of democracy and human rights in Burma for three decades, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My remarks solely represent my personal views and not those of any of the institutions with which I am affiliated.

Since Min Aung Hlaing and the Burma army launched their illegal coup in February 2021, the country has descended into state failure, economic collapse, widespread criminality, and unspeakable violence. Burma's neighbors have either profited off this disaster or hidden their heads in the sand, even when their citizens bear the negative consequences of the junta's misrule. As the regime moves ahead with sham elections in a bid to institutionalize its illegitimate rule, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues to stand by inertly. Russia and China keep the junta flush with weapons at a cost that includes mortgaging the country's resources and its future. India has attempted to follow China's strategy of playing all sides but lacks the leverage and moral flexibility to do it effectively. Bangladesh and other Muslim-majority countries in the region push the UN and international community to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis with unrealistic solutions, even as they ratchet up pressure on refugees within their borders.

Since the coup, U.S. policy on Burma has also been adrift. The Biden administration largely deferred to ASEAN's failed “Five Point Consensus” while refusing to implement the Burma Act passed by Congress in 2022. The Trump administration has been “reviewing” Burma policy since coming into office. This ‘review’ seems to have consisted primarily of loose talk about Burma's critical minerals, some half-measures to address the scam center epidemic, and dramatically cutting funding to programs for civil society, media, and vulnerable communities. Recent pledges to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are welcome but do not replace the failure of leadership overall. That humanitarian assistance is also undercut by termination of support for and engagement with the Independent Investigative Mission on Myanmar (IIMM) and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, despite strong support for these efforts during the previous Trump administration.

Despite this international apathy and predation, Burma's “Spring Revolution” has continued its unprecedented fight against the military regime. The revolutionary forces have been scrappy and largely self-sufficient. The flexible tactics of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) keep frustrating the junta's ability to retain effective control of the country, and likely will play a major role in disrupting the planned sham elections. While the People's Defense Forces (PDFs)

and ethnic revolutionary forces have lost ground recently as China expands its role as the regime's decisive enabler, these under-resourced forces continue to innovate and build their own capacity. Despite decades of mistrust and broken promises—and continued use of divide and rule tactics by the military regime—the Bamar majority and ethnic nationalities continue fighting together on the frontlines while working to protect civilians and develop grassroots federalism in areas liberated from military rule. They struggle with the downstream consequences of genocide and geopolitics, framed by decades of military-dominated misrule, chauvinism, and autarky. None of it is easy but they keep working at it. Their DIY revolution keeps going.

As this conflict shows no sign of abating, the Burmese people continue to suffer. Meanwhile, from the scam centers of Myawaddy to the dirty rare earths mines of Chipwe to the drug dens of Tachilek to the refugee camps of Kutapalong—Burma's extractive neighbor keeps finding a way to prosper from its crises. I will leave the last of these issues to my co-panelists and focus on the other three.

1. Scam centers: The scam centers that operate out of Burma are a major node in an estimated \$35 billion a year business enterprise. Chinese transnational criminal organizations provide the backbone for this network, working with the junta and allied ethnic border guard forces. In addition to defrauding innocent victims of their life savings, these scam centers are a major source of an extremely abusive form of human trafficking and facilitate global money laundering networks used by Mexican drug cartels and other bad actors. These scam centers rely on energy and telecommunications resources that are vulnerable to cut offs by Thai authorities, and the operators continue to use Thai and Singaporean banking services.
2. Critical minerals: China sources nearly all of the terbium and dysprosium it processes from mines in Kachin state, in upper Burma. The extraction at these sites is carried out in the most environmentally damaging way possible, destroying fragile ecosystems and poisoning waterways that communities depend on for their survival. Since the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) seized control of key mining areas earlier this year, they have attempted to end some of the most destructive practices and bring the largely unregulated Chinese mining under control, with limited success. In return, the Chinese government has increased its pressure on the KIA, cutting them and Kachin state off from fuel, food and other critical supplies, and expanding support to the regime's efforts to retake territory the KIA had controlled together with People's Defense Forces, especially in the Bhamo area.
3. Methamphetamines: As documented in an exhaustively reported story in the *Washington Post* last week, the drug trade out of Burma has exploded since the coup, fueled by a massive influx of cheap Chinese industrial chemicals. These precursor chemicals are used to produce to make highly addictive methamphetamine compounds that are sold across Asia. The United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest and most well-armed non-state military in Burma, is the primary manufacturer and trafficker of these illicit drugs. The UWSA grew out of the Chinese-backed wing of the old Burmese Communist Party, and its leaders maintain close ties to the CCP. These ties have facilitated their connections to the web of Chinese chemical manufacturers and exporters—some of whom are state

owned enterprises—that are driving the crystal meth epidemic in Asia. Many of these same chemical companies provide precursors to Mexican cartels that produce synthetic opiates such as fentanyl, and the Post reports growing signs of cooperation and learning across these criminal syndicates.

The Chinese leadership has made it clear that they do not wish to see a victory by the democratic forces in Burma. At key moments over the past two years, Beijing has put its thumb on the scale to ensure its interests are served by events inside Burma. Whether providing diplomatic and economic lifelines to the junta, or cutting off resources for key ethnic armed groups, Beijing has set itself up as the decisive enabler of the junta's war on its own people, much as it serves the same purpose in Russia's war on Ukraine. But because of the complicated and obscure nature of what is happening in Burma, and the fecklessness and apathy of other countries, China has paid little cost for its complicity in the junta's ruinous coup and subsequent war on the Burmese people or its enablement of the ecosystem of harmful illicit activities that support that war.

It is not too late for the United States to have a positive impact on the situation in Burma, but it would require a degree of subtlety and willingness to confront vested interests in the region that has not been evident up to now. Because Burma is a “seam” issue that cuts across not only two regional bureaus at the State Department, but also involves a complex matrix of technical, law enforcement, and financial issues, it is ripe for the appointment of a presidential special envoy who is equipped to understand these challenges and empowered to act on them. The BRAVE Act recognizes the need for a higher-level coordination function, and recommends the creation of such a position.

In addition, the US and its allies should:

- Designate terbium, dysprosium, and other minerals mined by the junta and its proxies as conflict minerals and enforce sanctions on exporters and processors until a more transparent and accountable system of developing these resources is in place. This was done with cobalt mining in Congo, and there are models from other regions where resource extraction has exacerbated conflict and/or severely harmed local communities. Any proceeds from subsequent mining should be placed into a trust fund to remediate the impacts of past destructive mining practices and support communities that have suffered harm.
- Expand cooperation and co-investigation with Thailand and Singapore to more quickly identify and prosecute (1) scam center operators and beneficiaries; (2) groups and individuals involved with human trafficking, the transport of precursor chemicals into Burma, and the drug traffic in the region; and (3) money laundering networks related to these crimes. Restore U.S. funding to projects that track financial networks connected to the junta, its proxy armed groups, and external actors in order to provide actionable financial intelligence to the Treasury Department and allied governments.
- Work with partners to cut off scam centers' access to banking services, Starlink, and other critical operational systems.
- Refuse to recognize any elections organized by the illegal military junta, and block *agreement* for any new junta-appointed diplomats. Expel and declare *persona non grata* Burmese military attaches who are acting as junta enforcers within embassies and

committing transnational repression, including those operating out of the Burmese embassy in Washington and the permanent mission to the UN in New York.

- Work bilaterally and through UN agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) to expand parallel mechanisms for humanitarian assistance to conflict affected communities inside Burma, including by working with civil society, existing ethnic nationalities systems, and other cross-border pathways.
- Consider placing frozen Burmese foreign exchange funds into a managed account and using the interest to support humanitarian and governance assistance. Require countries that receive humanitarian assistance for Burmese refugees to permit them to be registered with UNHCR, have minimum legal protections to deter exploitation, and be given opportunities to work, access education and other services.

Burma is again at a crossroads. Its people are fighting hard for a peaceful, prosperous and democratic future, while the regime is fighting to protect its self-declared prerogative to continue its brutal and extractive rule. The United States has remained largely aloof from this fight, while our adversaries in Beijing have become major beneficiaries of the chaos and instability it has generated. There are relatively low-cost ways the United States can engage that will improve our own security, while also backstopping our partners in the region who are suffering the downstream consequences of Burma's lawlessness and state failure. Burma may not be a frontline state for the United States, but we cannot afford to let it become a Chinese cat's paw in a critical region. Beijing has already weaponized Burma's chaos against Thailand, our oldest treaty ally in the region and the pillar of U.S. security infrastructure in southeast Asia. The path out of this current morass will not be found in a race to the bottom with Beijing, but rather in working with partners to bring about a sovereign, stable and democratic Burma that is at peace with itself and contributing positively to its neighborhood. Stability and prosperity are the best bulwarks against a Chinese takeover of Burma, but they will not be achieved under a military dominated regime forced on an unwilling populace. We should help Burma to realize a different future, and with consistent, smart policy we can do this in ways that make sense against the broader backdrop of our national security priorities in the region.

I look forward to your questions and am again grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing.

+++++END+++++

Mrs. KIM of California. Thank you very much. That is a very, very powerful statement, and we are taking a lot of notes. And I really look forward to engaging you in questions afterwards. Thank you.

I now recognize Ms. Karim for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF LUCKY KARIM

Mrs. KARIM. Thank you, Madam and Mr. Chairman.

My name is Lucky Karim. I am a member of the Rohingya community from Burma. I would like to start by thanking members of the committee for holding this hearing and for passing the Burma Genocide Accountability Protection Act, or Burma GAP Act, out of committee.

I was forced to flee my home at the age of 14 in August 2017, when the Burmese military raised a genocidal attack against the Rohingya people in Rakhine State. As a child, I lived in the world's largest refugee center, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, for 6 years.

The Burmese military regime has been persecuting the Rohingya in Myanmar for decades. Since the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis in the country has only grown more dire for the Rohingya as well as other ethnic minorities in Burma.

There are many members of the Rohingya community in Rakhine State that died from hunger. Internally displaced people have zero access to humanitarian aid, and the genocidal violence continues even to this day. As a result, tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes since 2023, bringing the total population of people languishing in the Cox's Bazar camps to more than 1.3 million.

I only have 5 minutes for this testimony, but I could spend the entire day listing the abuses suffered by the other ethnic and religious groups in Burma. Not only Rohingya Muslim but also Shan, Korai (phonetic), Kachin, Mon, Karenni, Rakhine, Chin, Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu, all across our diverse nation, have endured years of persecution, war crimes, and indiscriminate violence by the Burmese military. All minorities have suffered, and all need to be part of the democratization process.

Despite the reality on the ground, Burmese military regime is planning a sham election next month. This election will never be free or fair. It is only the way for the military regime to seek international legitimacy. Our risky journeys out of Myanmar in pursuit of a better life did not start when the genocidal attacks against us peaked in 2017. People have been fleeing persecution since at least the 1970's, forced to be refugees in neighboring countries like Bangladesh or elsewhere.

I traveled back to Bangladesh refugee camps two times this year. When I was there in February, The World Food Program was preparing to announce cost of food ration for refugees to go down from \$12 to just \$6 per month for each individual. This is a cut that would have had devastating consequences.

Thankfully, the United States has stepped up to continue funding. But that funding will only last a few more months. Meanwhile, the closing of USAID and broader aid cuts have caused health clinics, learning centers and other programs to close. People in Cox's

Bazar camps are fully dependent on the food ration that they receive once a month because the majority of them have zero earnings. There are no livelihood opportunities for families in the camps.

The Government of Bangladesh, long and generous host to Rohingya refugees, has done much for my community. But expanding access to livelihood and education would do perhaps more than any other policy to ensure a safe and sustainable future for the Rohingya community.

In our homeland, most urgently, too many of our people continue to die due to violence and hunger. The international community and the U.S. Government must act now to pressure the Myanmar military to stop its attacks and to allow aid into Rakhine and other areas across the country facing high levels of food insecurity as we consider the future for my community.

Repatriation to our ancestral homeland is the ultimate solution. It has been said before by myself and many other Rohingya but bears repeating. We, the Rohingya community, want to go back to our homeland in Rakhine State when it is safe to do so.

Here is what the U.S. Government can do more to help us. Congress should pass the Burma Genocide Accountability and Protection Act, or the Burma GAP Act, which lists out a comprehensive policy for addressing many of the crises affecting our county. It would support refugees and internally displaced people. It would address the need for accountability for genocide and crimes against humanity by the Burmese military. It would also promote long-term solution for the Rohingya, such as citizenship rights, safe and voluntary return to Burma, and inclusion in a future Federal democratic system.

The bill also authorized the creation of the U.S. Special Representative for Burma and calls on the administration to refuse to recognize the Burmese military as the country's legitimate government. This is so important ahead of the sham elections scheduled for next month.

Congress should also call for the immediate restoration of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. I am one of the few who have benefited from the kindness of the American people and America's rich history of resettling refugees. It has given me and many others the opportunity to speak up on the world stage in support of my community.

And the United States should continue to engage the Bangladesh Government toward providing education and livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees.

I would like to end here with a question for you. What will it take for my people to be able to live freely and securely in our home in Burma? And when the future generation of Rohingya look back, will they still be asking the same question, or will they be home at last, asking simply what took so long? Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Karim follows:]

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Joint EAP/SCA Subcommittee

Hearing on Burma
Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Option.

November 19, 2025
2170 Rayburn House Office Building

Statement by Lucky Karim
Executive Director of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice (RWPJ)

My name is Lucky Karim, I am a member of the Rohingya community from Burma. I would like to start by thanking the committee for holding this Hearing and for passing the Burma Genocide Accoutanatiliby and Protection Act (or Burma GAP Act) out of committee.

I was forced to flee my home at the age of 14 in August 2017 when the Burmese military waged a genocidal attack against the Rohingya people in Rakhine State. As a child, I lived in the world's largest refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar Bangladesh for six years. The Burmese military regime has been persecuting the Rohingya in Myanmar for decades. Since the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis in the country has only grown more dire for the Rohingya as well as other ethnic minorities in Burma. The remaining members of the Rohingya community in Rakhine State are dying from hunger. Internally displaced people have zero access to humanitarian aid, and the genocidal violence continues even to this day. As a result, tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes since 2023, bringing the total population of people languishing in the Cox's Bazar camps to more than 1.3 million.

Dictatorship is a notorious problem in many countries. Dictators take away the freedom of the people in the name of their own power. They attack people's hopes and dreams. Despite the reality on the ground, Burma's military regime is planning a sham election next month. This election will never be free or fair. It is only a way for the military regime to seek international legitimacy. Our risky journeys out of Myanmar in pursuit of better lives did not start when the genocide against us peaked in 2017. People have been fleeing persecution since at least the 1970s, forced to be refugees in neighboring countries like Bangladesh or elsewhere. The people of the Rohingya community live vulnerable and stateless in many countries all over the world. Families have been separated for decades, and many live with no identity documents in the countries where they reside.

I traveled back to the Bangladesh refugee camps two times this year. When I was there in February, the World Food Program was preparing to announce cuts to food rations for refugees to go down from \$12 to just \$6 per month for each individual, a cut that would have had devastating consequences. Thankfully, the United States has stepped up to continue funding. But that funding will only last a few more months. Meanwhile, the closing of USAID and broader cuts have forced health clinics, learning centers, and other programs to close. People in the Cox's Bazar camps are fully dependent on the food ration that they receive once a month because the majority of them have zero earnings. There are no livelihood opportunities for families in the camps. These circumstances have pushed many vulnerable Rohingya women and children to embark on dangerous boat journeys in search of a better future to nearby countries, including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Those who reach those countries often face a lack of basic rights, arbitrary detention, and even forced return back to Burma.

The future of the Rohingya starts with our youth. The majority of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are below the age of eighteen. If there is to be a bright future for the Rohingya, it begins with access to quality education. It also means building self reliance. That will require access to training and livelihood opportunities. The government of Bangladesh – long a generous host to Rohingya refugees – has done much for my community. But expanding access to livelihoods and education would do perhaps more than any other policy to ensure a safe and sustainable future for the Rohingya back in our homeland.

Most urgently, there can be no bright future for the Rohingya without Rohingya. Too many of our people continue to die due to violence and hunger. The international community and the U.S government must act now to pressure the Myanmar military to stop its attacks and to allow aid into Rakhine and other areas around the country facing high levels of food insecurity. As we consider the future of my community, there are more questions than the simple answer. But within the answers lies the future of the Rohingya. Repatriation to our ancestral homeland is the ultimate solution. It has been said before by myself and so many Rohingya, but bears repeating: we the Rohingya community want to go back to our homeland in Rakhine State when it is safe to do so.

With abuses against the Rohingya by the military junta and Arakan Army, it is not currently safe for returns. Much would need to happen to create safe conditions, but there is a path. First, Rohingya displaced inside Rakhine State should be allowed to return to their original homes and villages. The Rohingya community must be part of any dialogue on returns. Some kind of international monitoring mechanism must be involved to provide some level of guaranteed safety. And there must be accountability for those who have committed atrocities against the Rohingya people.

We ask the United States to continue working on these issues, and to help advance the betterment of the Rohingya refugees.

Here is what the U.S. Government can do:

In March of 2022, the U.S. made a determination that “members of the Burmese military committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Rohingya.” But three and a half years have passed since the determination, and the U.S. has failed to reveal a comprehensive strategy or policy to address the genocide. The complete lack of policy action could send a signal of impunity to perpetrators of atrocity crimes, not only in Burma but across the world.

A comprehensive plan is needed to ensure accountability for those responsible for the genocide and crimes against humanity, and to address the immediate and long-term needs of Rohingya. Until the junta is held accountable, all civilians throughout Burma will continue to suffer, not only Rohingya but all marginalized and persecuted communities.

I am grateful to the members of this Committee who introduced the Burma Genocide Accountability and Protection Act, or the Burma GAP Act, in June of this year and passed it out of Committee with strong bipartisan support in July. The Burma GAP Act finally lays out a comprehensive policy for addressing the many crises affecting our country. It would support refugees and internally displaced people, support increased humanitarian aid and protection, and promote accountability for the military’s crimes. It would also promote long-term solutions for the Rohingya such as citizenship rights, safe and voluntary return, and inclusion in a future federal democratic system.

The bill also authorizes the creation of a U.S. Special Representative for Burma and calls on the administration to refuse to recognize the Burmese military as the country’s legitimate government. This is important ahead of the sham elections scheduled for next month.

Congress should pass the bill because it does what both this and the past administrations have not yet done: create a holistic strategy to address the impunity of the junta, which it has enjoyed for far too long. This is critical as conflict continues and millions of people in Burma face displacement, insecurity, and denial of their basic rights.

Congress should also call for the immediate restoration of the U.S. refugee resettlement program. I am one of a few who have benefitted from the kindness of the American people and America’s rich history of resettling refugees. It has given me and many others the opportunity to speak on the world stage in support of my community.

And the United States should continue to engage the Bangladesh government towards providing education and livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees.

I would like to end here with a question for you: What will it take for my people to be able to live freely and securely in our home in Burma? And when future generations of Rohingya look back, will they still be asking the same questions? Or will they be home at last, asking simply: what took so long?

Mrs. KIM of California. Thank you, Ms. Karim, for those questions, and we hope to address those. That is the whole purpose of this hearing because we wanted to make sure that the suffering and the suffering of the Rohingya population are not forgotten, and we wanted to make sure that we are paying attention. So I hope those who are watching and listening know how committed we are. Thank you.

I didn't mean to skip over you. As I was talking to my colleague over here, ladies first. So let me now recognize Mr. Ross for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF STEVE ROSS

Mr. ROSS. Chairwoman Kim, Chairman Huizenga, Ranking Members Bera and Kamlager-Dove, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continued attention to Myanmar.

In summarizing my written statement, I will emphasize three key points. First, the Myanmar military is a primary driver of instability within Myanmar and has been so for decades. Second, planned elections are an attempt to consolidate and entrench the military's control in Myanmar. And third, the regime that emerges from elections will continue to pose a threat to stability in Myanmar, the region, and U.S. interests in both the Indo-Pacific and at home.

Nearly 5 years ago, a military coup in Myanmar prevented a democratically elected parliament from taking office. After the military opened fire on peaceful protesters, armed resistance grew and Myanmar's civil war expanded to most of the country.

In response, the Myanmar military has waged a brutal counter-insurgency campaign with devastating and intentional impacts on civilians. The Myanmar military has killed thousands of civilians, many victims of indiscriminate air strikes and torture, jailed 20,000 political prisoners, torched 120,000 homes, displaced three and a half million people, blocked humanitarian aid and access to communications, and implemented a system of State surveillance.

Despite this, resistance forces have made remarkable gains against the military. Operation 1027, a key 2023 offensive, yielded unprecedented territorial victories and demonstrated unprecedented collaboration among ethnic and Burmese armed groups. Territorial gains have allowed resistance actors to establish or consolidate bottom-up governance structures providing social services and humanitarian assistance.

Significant support from China, the forced conscription of 80,000, and an escalation of air attacks has enabled the Myanmar military to shift some of the momentum on the battlefield over the past year. But it has only managed to regain a fraction of the territory it has lost.

It is in this context that the Myanmar military now plans to hold elections beginning December 28. The results are foreordained. A 2023 law effectively dissolved political parties, including the National League for Democracy, which won 86 percent of the 498 seats elected to the parliament in 2020. In contrast, the 57 parties contesting this year won only 11 percent of seats, and only one party, the military proxy USDP, won more than five seats.

The regime also changed the electoral system to include proportional representation to give the impression that elections are taking place in a wider swath of territory than will be the case. Stifling dissent, the military has arrested 200 people under a new law that punishes criticism of or disruption to the elections.

These so-called elections will not be free, fair, or inclusive. They do not represent the will of the Myanmar people, and they do not present a path either toward democracy or a peaceful and sustainable solution to Myanmar's conflict. Rather, they are intended to garner international recognition for the regime in the hopes that this will translate into political, financial, and military support that enables it to consolidate control. If it succeeds, the Myanmar military will continue to pose a threat to regional instability and U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific and at home.

China wields unparalleled and growing sway in Myanmar, throwing its weight around to advance its geostrategic interests through major infrastructure projects, trade routes, and access to Myanmar's rare earths. China also seeks to maintain leverage over all stakeholders in Myanmar and ensure Myanmar remains within its sphere of influence and the West stays out. Though it may be tempting to engage the Myanmar military to contain China, doing so would undermine U.S. interests.

Scam centers have proliferated since the coup, with Chinese crime syndicates, the Myanmar military, and military-aligned militias all profiting from the \$10 billion Americans lost to scams last year. A recent crackdown on KK Park is purely performative. Scam leaders were allowed to escape, evidence was destroyed, and dozens of scam centers with over 100,000 people, many trafficking victims, continue to operate with impunity.

Myanmar is also the world's largest producer of opium and the production of methamphetamines and synthetic drugs has surged since the coup. Moreover, Myanmar is the world's sixth leading source of refugees and, with the collapse in immunizations and treatment for infectious disease, risks becoming a hot spot for global health crises.

Given the threat that the Myanmar military poses to the U.S. interests, Congress and the U.S. administration should: Reject the military planned elections and the regime that emerges while encouraging partners and allies in the region to do the same; Engage and support the spectrum of democratic and resistance actors who offer a better prospect for securing a peaceful Myanmar that advances U.S. interests; Provide continued life-saving humanitarian support to populations in Myanmar and refugees in neighboring countries while ensuring aid is not channeled through the military; Seek to counterbalance Chinese influence while managing expectations for the U.S. role. And building upon recent efforts, address transnational crime through additional targeted sanctions, enhance enforcement and coordination, and improve investigative capacity.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ross follows:]

**No Exit Strategy:
Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options**

Testimony by Steve Ross
Senior Fellow, Stimson Center

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
November 19, 2025

Chairwoman Kim, Chairman Huizenga, Ranking Member Bera, Ranking Member Kamlager-Dove, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continued leadership on Myanmar; I hope this is an issue that continues to receive bipartisan attention and support.

Nearly five years after a military coup prevented a democratically elected parliament from taking office, Myanmar is at a critical inflection point. In just six weeks, the military will begin phased elections which it hopes will rehabilitate its image, legitimize its reign, and ultimately enable it to consolidate control over the territory it has lost since the coup.¹ But these so-called **elections will not be free, fair, or inclusive**; they do not represent the will of the Myanmar people and they do not present a path either towards democracy or a peaceful and sustainable solution to Myanmar's decades-long conflict.

While there is a strong normative rationale for concern about developments in Myanmar, the **conflict reverberates well beyond its borders and poses a threat to U.S. security and prosperity in both the Indo-Pacific and at home**. Since the coup, the Myanmar military regime has deepened its ties with China and Russia while **the military and its allies are at the root of regional instability and transnational crime**, including through the proliferation of drug trafficking and scam centers that have cost Americans billions.

Given that the Myanmar military cannot credibly be viewed as a conduit for advancing U.S. interests, Congress and the U.S. Administration should:

- **Reject military-planned elections** and the regime that emerges from them, while encouraging partners and allies in the region to do the same;
- **Engage and support the spectrum of democratic and resistance actors** who offer a better prospect for securing a peaceful and prosperous Myanmar that protects and advances U.S. interests, including by appropriating assistance to support parallel and emerging governing structures;
- **Provide continued lifesaving humanitarian support** to populations in Myanmar and refugees in neighboring countries, including to treat infectious disease, ensuring assistance reaches frontline actors and is not channeled via the military;

¹ See Figure 1 on page 8, which depicts approximate changes in territorial control in Myanmar from one year after the coup (February 2021) to four years after the coup (February 2025) to the present (November 2025).

- Seek to **counterbalance Chinese influence** while managing expectations for the U.S. role in Myanmar and recognizing that key governance actors in Myanmar will need to develop constructive relations with China to viably govern; and
- Building upon recent efforts, including several rounds of sanctions and the establishment of the Scam Center Strike Force, **address transnational crime** through additional targeted sanctions, enhanced enforcement and inter-agency coordination, and improved investigative capacity to track financial flows to those benefiting from transnational criminal activity.

The 2021 Military Coup and its Impact

On February 1, 2021, the day Myanmar's new parliament was set to be seated following elections in November 2020, the Myanmar military launched a coup, detaining civilian leaders – including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint – and declaring a state of emergency under the false pretense of widespread electoral fraud.

Opposition to the coup began with peaceful mass protests and a Civil Disobedience Movement that garnered the support of some 400,000 striking civil servants, including many health workers. After the military opened fire on protesters, however, armed self-defense and armed resistance grew. Since then, the civil war, previously confined to Myanmar's periphery, has expanded to nearly the entire country.

In response, the Myanmar military has waged a brutal counterinsurgency campaign based on what it calls the "four cuts," which seeks to deprive insurgents of food, funds, information, and recruits. Through the "four cuts," the military imposes collective punishment in the areas where insurgents operate, with a devastating and intentional impact on civilian populations. An estimated 85,000 people have been killed in conflict since the coup, including thousands of civilians, many the victims of indiscriminate military airstrikes. Arbitrary detention and torture are widespread, with over 20,000 political prisoners still in jail and some 2,000 people estimated to have died in military custody.²

The military's indiscriminate violence, blockades on humanitarian assistance, and the torching of some 120,000 homes have fueled mass displacement, with more than 3.5 million people internally displaced; at least 275,000 have fled the country, joining 1.3 million refugees, mostly Rohingya who fled what the U.S. determined was genocide perpetrated by the military in 2017.³ As it has lost territory, the military has enforced

² Agence France Presse. "Myanmar air strikes force youth into bunker schools". 10 October 2025. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20251010-myanmar-air-strikes-force-youth-into-bunker-schools>. See also "Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup." Assistance Association for Political Prisoners 13 November 2025. <https://aappb.org/?p=35054>.

³ "Myanmar Situation Operational Data Portal". The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Accessed 14 November 2025. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar>. See also, "Documenting the Monthly Impact of Arson Attacks on Civilian Homes". Data for Myanmar. January 2025. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SPGm8b3H1gSZwU1tmetC1koYbYAKFnZM/view>. Blinken, Antony J.

conscription for the first time in Myanmar's history, pressing some 80,000 recruits into service with only minimal training, and relied more heavily on drones as well as airstrikes, which have increased every year since the coup. And the regime has greatly enhanced its surveillance capabilities with assistance from China while simultaneously enforcing communication restrictions across much of the country.⁴

On-going conflict combined with the regime's economic mismanagement have also had a devastating impact on Myanmar's economy. The economy is nearly 20% smaller than before the coup and annual inflation is over 30%, leading to a doubling of the poverty rate and a nearly eight-fold increase in food insecurity; according to the UN, nearly 1/3 of the population – almost 20 million people – are in need of humanitarian assistance.⁵

As ethnic armed groups and resistance forces expanded their territorial control, a patchwork of parallel governance systems has emerged. Some of these systems, as in Kachin and Karen States, have been in place for decades, while others, particularly in Burmese-majority areas, are newer. These governance structures have sought to establish schools and health systems, public safety and dispute resolution mechanisms, and to collect taxes and provide humanitarian support. These structures have faced significant challenges from military airstrikes, weak accountability, and corruption, but reflect the desires of many in Myanmar for greater autonomy and systems that are more bottom-up than top-down.

Operation 1027: A Watershed for the Resistance and for China's Role in Myanmar

Operation 1027, a joint offensive launched by several ethnic armed groups and allied resistance actors in October 2023, was a watershed moment in the conflict, pushing key ethnic armed groups and China decisively off the fence. The operation initially had tacit support from China, which was increasingly frustrated with the proliferation of scam centers along the China-Myanmar border and the Myanmar military's unwillingness to do anything about them. Moreover, prior to Operation 1027, many of the most powerful ethnic armed groups had limited their involvement to providing training, weapons, and safe haven to other resistance actors, but had not directly entered the fight themselves. Their entry led to both unprecedented military collaboration among ethnic armed groups and other resistance actors, including Burmese-led groups, and unprecedented military and

"Secretary Antony J. Blinken on the Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity in Burma." U.S. Department of State. 21 March 2022. <https://2021-2025.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-the-united-states-holocaust-memorial-museum/>.

⁴ See, for example, "Silk Road of Surveillance: The role of China's Geedje Networks and Myanmar telecommunications operators in the junta's digital terror campaign." Justice for Myanmar. September 2025. <https://jfm-files.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/public/Silk+Road+of+Surveillance+EN.pdf>.

⁵ "Economic Aftershocks." The World Bank. Myanmar Economic Monitor. June 2025. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099061125205014652/pdf/P507203-cbcf81b5-0107-4517-8ad7-82b588a6328f.pdf>. See also, "Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. December 2024. https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/nutrition_cluster/Myanmar_2025_HNRP_-_English_version.pdf.

territorial gains across significant swathes of the country, including in northern Shan State along the China-Myanmar border and in Rakhine State in western Myanmar.⁶

Though a Chinese-brokered ceasefire led to a temporary halt to conflict in Shan State, the Arakan Army continued to make territorial gains in Rakhine, the Kachin Independence Army launched new offensives in Kachin along the China-Myanmar border, and the ceasefire in northern Shan ultimately broke down in mid-2024. During this second phase of Operation 1027, the Myanmar military lost control of a regional command for the first time since Myanmar's independence (it would lose a second regional command to the Arakan Army in December 2024) as well as key border crossings and trade routes with China; the Kachin Independence Army also gained control of the sites of hundreds of rare earth mines last October. Moreover, greater operational collaboration between ethnic armed groups and resistance forces enabled territorial gains in several predominantly Burmese regions, including Sagaing and Mandalay, posing a threat to Myanmar's second city of Mandalay and, more broadly, to the Bamar heartland for the first time.

This was a bridge too far for China, which, by August 2024, had come to fear that resistance military gains combined with nascent inter-ethnic alliances posed an existential threat to the military regime; the regime's collapse, China worried, would usher in either a power vacuum and state failure or a new government, potentially led by the National Unity Government, that would be irredeemably pro-U.S. and pro-Western. Its interests⁷ perceived to be at risk, China shifted from what had been a nominally neutral position to much more forcefully supporting the military regime while imposing significant pressure on the ethnic armed groups operating along the China-Myanmar border.

Chinese pressure on ethnic armed groups manifested in several ways: It closed off borders and trade; cut internet and electricity; detained the leader of one of the groups (it claimed he was receiving medical treatment); pressured ethnic armed groups not to ally with Burmese resistance forces; compelled the United Wa State Army, a powerful armed group close to China, not to provide support to other armed actors; and pressed armed groups into negotiations with the Myanmar military. In parallel, China ramped up its military, financial, and diplomatic support to the Myanmar regime: In August 2024, China's Foreign Minister held his first meeting since the coup with Min Aung Hlaing, the coup-leader and military commander-in-chief; Min Aung Hlaing subsequently traveled to China twice,

⁶ See Figure 1 on page 8, which depicts approximate changes in territorial control in Myanmar from one year after the coup (February 2021) to four years after the coup (February 2025) to the present (November 2025).

⁷ China has three core interests in Myanmar: 1) advancing its geostrategic interests, including through China-Myanmar Economic Corridor projects (pipelines, ports, roads, rail, special economic zones, trade, etc.); 2) maintaining leverage over all key stakeholders in Myanmar to enable enough stability, particularly on the China-Myanmar border, to advance its geostrategic interests, but not so much stability that it does not have the ability to play one side off the other; and 3) ensuring Myanmar remains part of its sphere of influence, using the language of "sovereignty" and "non-interference" to keep the West out, but not viewing itself as subject to the same constraints.

making his first post-coup visit in November 2024 and returning again in September 2025 to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Chinese support to the regime – combined with the military's forced conscription of tens of thousands as well as its better integration of forces and better use of new technology – has enabled the Myanmar military to shift some of the momentum on the battlefield. After several rounds of Chinese-facilitated negotiations and under immense Chinese pressure, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army agreed to a bilateral ceasefire with the military in January, returning the regional command it captured six months prior in the process. The ceasefire with the MNDAA enabled the Myanmar military to launch a counteroffensive against another armed group in northern Shan, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, which lost several towns to the military before last month agreeing to a bilateral ceasefire itself (in which it agreed to cede two further towns).

Though the areas it has recaptured are strategically significant, particularly with respect to trading routes with China, and the military has also launched somewhat successful counteroffensives in Mandalay, southern Shan, and Karenni, it has only managed to regain a fraction of the territory it lost since the launch of Operation 1027.⁸

The Myanmar Military's Electoral Plans

It is in this context – having lost significant territory, amidst a brutal counterinsurgency campaign, and with very little support from the public – that the Myanmar military will attempt to hold elections. Elections are set to begin with a first phase in 102 townships on December 28, a second phase in 100 townships on January 11, and a third phase in an unclear number of townships on January 25, though elections have already been canceled in 56 (of 330) townships and are likely to be limited in scope in dozens of other constituencies. Amidst on-going conflict and with changes to electoral rules and structures, there is no chance the elections will be free, fair, or inclusive. **The regime's electoral intent is not to gain domestic legitimacy or support, but to garner international recognition that it hopes will translate into political, financial, and military support that enables it to consolidate control.**

Though elections are only now coming to pass, Min Aung Hlaing and the Myanmar military were already foreshadowing “a free and fair multiparty democracy election” just weeks after the coup and the concept was later enshrined in the regime's Five Point Roadmap.⁹ But in maneuvers that were dubious even by the military's loose interpretation of the 2008

⁸ See, for example, “Regime Regains 11 Percent of Lost Ground in Northern Shan.” Institute for Strategy and Policy – Myanmar. 13 November 2025. https://ispmyanmar.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/SB2025_05_ENG.pdf

⁹ “Five future programmes of State Administration Council.” State Administration Council Ministry of Information. 24 February 2021. <https://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/news/2838>. See also, “Five-Point Roadmap of State Administration Council.” State Administration Council Ministry of Information. 27 May 2021. <https://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/news/3631>.

Constitution it drafted, states of emergency were renewed eight times under the pretext that the military still needed to establish “peace and stability” across the country.

Even without this requisite peace and stability, the regime has pressed ahead with electoral preparations over the past year, beginning with a deeply flawed national census last October. Because of the military’s limited territorial control, however, only 145 of Myanmar’s 330 townships were fully counted. Moreover, census enumerators collected sensitive personal information, including biometrics, fueling concerns that the elections were being used as cover to expand Myanmar’s surveillance capabilities.

In parallel to the census, the military regime amended existing laws and introduced new ones to expand its electoral edge. A new Political Parties Registration Law¹⁰ in 2023 led to the dissolution of political parties, most importantly the National League for Democracy, which collectively won 86% of the 498 seats elected to the national parliament in the 2020 elections. In contrast, the 57 parties contesting in 2025 won only 11% of the seats in 2020; only nine won any seats at all, and none won more than five seats besides the military-proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party. The regime also changed the electoral system to include proportional representation for some seats, giving itself a further advantage while also allowing it to depict elections as taking place in more constituencies than they will actually be held (for example, by combining a military-controlled constituency with constituencies it does not control and where voting will not take place). The military has also sought to stifle dissent by enacting a law earlier this year that imposes harsh penalties for criticism of or disruption to the elections; at least 120 people have been arrested under the new law so far.¹¹

What Happens in Myanmar Matters to U.S. Interests

The trajectory of events in Myanmar impacts U.S. interests both in the Indo-Pacific and at home in the United States.

At the nexus of South and Southeast Asia, Myanmar is a hub for geopolitical competition in Asia. China has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure in Myanmar through the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, including dual oil and gas pipelines that run from Myanmar’s coast to southern China, circumventing the Straits of Malacca; India, too, has invested in infrastructure in Myanmar while Russia has emerged as a key military partner and plans to build a nuclear plant. Fueling competition further, Myanmar is the world’s second largest producer of raw rare earth materials, with China the sole beneficiary. Though there are significant political, logistical, and legal barriers that inhibit U.S. access to these critical minerals, unregulated mining in Myanmar is already having a significant and adverse

¹⁰ “Political Parties Registration Law.” State Administration Council Ministry of Information. 27 January 2023. <https://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/laws/9320>

¹¹ “At least 25 more Myanmar citizens charged under new ‘Election Protection Law’”. Democratic Voice of Burma. 11 November 2025. <https://english.dvb.no/at-least-25-more-myanmar-citizens-charged-under-new-election-protection-law/>.

environmental impact in the region, potentially affecting seafood and agricultural products that flow into U.S. markets.¹²

It may be tempting to look to engagement with the Myanmar military and the military-backed regime that emerges from the elections to counter Chinese influence. But such an approach will undermine U.S. interests in the region and at home. The Myanmar military is at the root of transnational crime and regional instability emanating from Myanmar and will remain so following elections. Scam centers have proliferated since the coup with Chinese crime syndicates, the Myanmar military, and military-aligned militias all profiting from the scam industry, which bilked Americans out of \$10 billion last year.¹³ A crackdown over the past month on KK Park, a notorious scam center, is purely performative: Scam leaders were allowed to escape, evidence was destroyed, and dozens of scam centers with over 100,000 people, many trafficked into Myanmar from around the world, continue to operate with impunity.

Myanmar has also become a key source of narcotics under the military and its allies: Myanmar is now the world largest producer of opium, and the production of methamphetamines and synthetic drugs has surged since the coup, emblematic of the Myanmar military's inability or unwillingness to combat drug trafficking.¹⁴ Beyond drugs, Myanmar is the sixth leading source of refugees around the world and, with the collapse in immunizations and treatment for infectious diseases, Myanmar risks becoming a hotspot for a global health crisis, with major increases in cases of drug-resistant malaria and tuberculosis since the coup.¹⁵

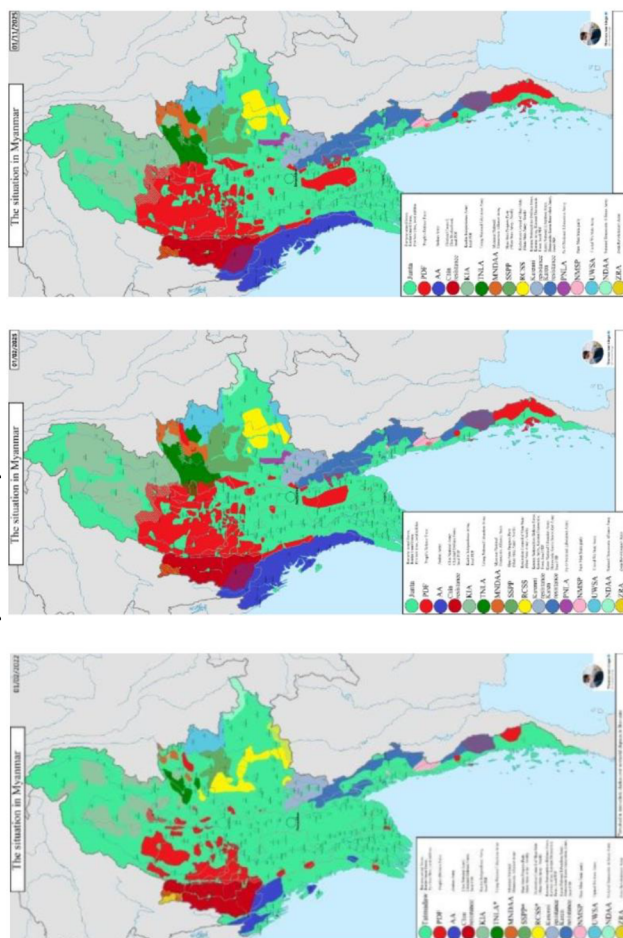
¹² Thiha, Amara. "Four Reasons Why Proposals to Source Rare Earth Minerals from Myanmar Will Not Succeed." Stimson Center. 1 August 2025. <https://www.stimson.org/2025/four-reasons-why-proposals-to-source-rare-earth-minerals-from-myanmar-will-not-succeed/>. See also Eyler, Brian and Regan Kwan. "Toxic Rare Earth Mining is Ruining Mekong Tributaries in the Golden Triangle." Stimson Center. 22 September 2025. <https://www.stimson.org/2025/toxic-rare-earth-mining-is-ruining-mekong-tributaries-in-the-golden-triangle/>.

¹³ "Treasury Sanctions Burma Armed Group and Companies Linked to Organized Crime Targeting Americans." U.S. Department of the Treasury. 12 November 2025. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0312>.

¹⁴ "Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest developments and challenges." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2025.

https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2025/Synthetic_Drugs_in_East_and_Southeast_Asia_2025.pdf. See also Tan, Rebecca. "China's chemical exports are behind a 'tsunami' of meth flooding Asia." The Washington Post. 8 November 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/11/08/china-chemical-exports-drugs-meth-crisis/>.

¹⁵ Lay, Maw and Khin. "In Myanmar, healthcare and disease prevention are neglected casualties of war." The New Humanitarian. 15 January 2025. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2025/01/15/myanmar-healthcare-and-disease-prevention-are-neglected-casualties-war>



¹⁶ @ThomasVLinge. "[#Myanmar](https://x.com/ThomasVLinge/status/1488498148125421570) MAP: The situation in Myanmar on 01/02/2022, exactly one year after the military launched a coup." X, 1 February 2022. <https://x.com/ThomasVLinge/status/1488498148125421570>. See also, @ThomasVLinge. "[#Myanmar](https://x.com/ThomasVLinge/status/1488498148125421570) MAP UPDATE: the situation in Myanmar as of 01/02/2025. X, 1 February 2025. <https://x.com/ThomasVLinge/status/1895705132538492372>. @ThomasVLinge. "Myanmar MAP UPDATE: The situation in Myanmar as of 01/11/2025." X, 1 November 2025. <https://x.com/ThomasVLinge/status/1984644014356783532>.

Mrs. KIM of California. Thank you very much for all of your wonderful testimoneys.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning. So we have all heard from you, and you know there is going to be an election that is taking place soon, next month. But under the current situation, political prisoners are still detained, and opposition parties are excluded. And the military controls the elections.

So we know the election will be predetermined, as we mentioned. So, under these conditions, can any legitimate electoral outcome occur, and how should the United States respond to that? And do we categorically just reject those elections, or is there any value in limited engagement?

I would like to ask Ambassador Currie and Mr. Ross to respond.

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you for the question, Madam Chairwoman. I think that we must refuse to recognize the elections. They will be uncategorically—I mean, there is no way they could represent a genuine expression of the will of the Burmese people for all the reasons that have been laid out already.

I think that the other important thing to do is to recognize the decisive enabler role that China, again, is playing with the elections. They are not only publicly backing the elections and the regime in this role, but they are putting pressure on other ASEAN countries to have ASEAN recognized and participate in these elections.

So far ASEAN has resisted that pressure. It is important regionally that we backstop ASEAN and make sure that they understand that we will not recognize the elections and encourage them also not to agree to recognize those elections.

I think also that we need to be very clear about—typically we have legislation in place that is global, that allows us to put sanctions on individuals who are involved in tearing down Democratic institutions, and we can use those authorities. I would encourage that we do that.

I think we also need to make it very clear by getting rid of regime appointed diplomats who are in the United States, especially those who are involved in terrorizing Myanmar citizens who are here in the United States. And that includes the militaryés at the Embassy here and at their permanent mission in New York who are involved in transnational oppression. Those individuals are likely to be used to force people and coerce them to participate in this election. And we want to make sure that they are not doing that on U.S. soil.

Thank you.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. Mr. Ross.

Mr. ROSS. Thank you. I agree with Ambassador Currie and would add that I don't think that the elections can be viewed as legitimate and that they should be rejected by the U.S.

What the military is hoping out of these elections is that there will be a slippery slope of recognition and support from within the region that flows to beyond it. And that will translate into the political, financial, and military support that will enable it to consolidate control in Myanmar.

And as I have stated in my opening statement and in my written statement, I think that is counter to U.S. interest.

Thank you.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you very much.

I know both of you had talked about China's influence and about how they control so much of what is going on right now and including, of course, and I pay a lot of attention to the importance of critical Myanmar supply chain. But this is also an issue. But we wanted to focus much of today's hearing on sham elections and scam centers and the implications of Beijing backing the junta to victory through these militia admitted elections.

So can you quickly talk about what leverage we have? You talked about using sanctions and all. But are there any ways that we can really come down on what is happening and what kind of leverage can the United States have to mitigate the consequences of China-backed military regime?

Ms. CURRIE. I think we do still have headroom on our sanctions regimes to ensure that we are not facilitating the financial resources that allow the regime to conduct the election and then continue to operate before, during, and after.

We have been very effective in terms of cutting off arms access and financial pathways for the regime. But there is still more that we can do there. And, again, the purpose of sanctions is to keep these illicit transactions out of the U.S. financial system. So we have a vested interest in keeping these bad actors out.

So I think we do need to think more creatively and aggressively. And we need to stop taking sanctions off of people like the arms dealer that we just removed sanctions for no apparent reason on one of the regime's biggest arms dealers. So we need to stop doing things like that.

And we need to support the opposition, find more creative ways to assist the Democratic opposition through the kinds of means that Chairman Huizenga has put forward in the Burma BRAVE Act and in the Burma Act that has already passed Congress and has been signed by the President and has a lot of tools available.

Sorry for going over time.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you very much. I am sorry.

My time is up so I am going to recognize Ranking Member Cindy Kamlager-Dove for questions.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Karim, I wanted to expand on something that you had mentioned in your opening testimony about the restrictions placed on the Rohingya's ability to leave the camps or earn a living.

Can you speak to the impact that funding cuts to the humanitarian response have on the refugee's quality of life?

Ms. KARIM. Thank you. I think we have seen two kinds of aid cuts in the past. One time it went down from \$12 to \$10. The other time it went down from \$12 to \$8 for Russian food from welfare program that the refugees receive every month.

And we have seen hundreds of women and children have taken weeks on a China boat traveling to neighboring countries. They intended to Malaysia but they end up in Indonesia or Thailand and even Myanmar border and be jailed for 5 years on a possible case or so.

I have seen those results happen when the aid cuts. Two times happening in the past. And then as I mentioned in my opening

statement but also in the written statement, it was then asked—and then I was preparing already in February. And if that happened, then we would assume the people might even return back to Burma and be killed because that is the only option refugees would then have. Because we have seen refugees when they arrive in those neighboring countries, they are not being welcomed. They are recognized as refugee and are not being allowed to work, and they are being called the illegal immigrant in those countries and even being detained for years and years.

So those are the recent impacts of the aid cuts we have seen. But there are many. The programs for women and children in the camps for GBB, for example, protections and other programs have completely closed in the camps, including the learning centers for children that used to be run by UNICEF and other agencies in the camps have completely been closed.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. So thank you for that. Also I know that the Trump Administration terminated U.S. support for the

Asian University for women in Bangladesh, which allows disadvantaged women to get higher education via U.S.-funded scholarships.

So could you speak to, and maybe you, too, Ambassador Currie, speak to the impact of that program for Rohingya girls and the need for education for children in the camps?

Ms. KARIM. Yes, I was one of the first Rohingya girl to begin with and to go to the University back in 2019. And we now have, I think, a hundred students or already at the campus.

For generations and generations in Burma, Rohingya have been denied access to education after just high schools. And so this was the first time in many generations that women had—a larger group of women had access to higher education at the university and that allows women to be part of the decisionmaking processes to speak of—again, there are logistics—and to be able to do the works in the camps freely and to serve the community and their families. And I am one of the examples of that, getting access to the education from the university and being able to deliver the message of my community today.

So that will allow the Rohingya women to prevent from gender violence, from sexual violence, from even human traffickers to get access to education. So I would encourage you to continue funding the programs and to allow Rohingya children in the campus and especially girls in particular at the university to continue studying.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you. And I don't know, Ambassador Currie, if you want to add?

Ms. CURRIE. I think you can see from Lucky that she is one of the success stories of that program and that initiative. There was also an initiative to fund slots at that same university for Afghan women and girls that has also been, as far as I know, is also gone.

This is, again, a very small program. It was a really—but very high impact. We were able to leverage small amounts of funding, give the scholarships through the Asian University for Women. And they were—it created a network of women within the camps who were able to advocate for their own rights, the rights of their family, the rights of their camp bloc to deal with situations of gender-based violence, of criminal gangs operating in the camps. These

women were really, and have been, and still are one of the main protective elements in the camps where there aren't very many protective elements.

And you have to imagine a city of 1.3 million people that is basically run by criminal gangs and that is mostly comprised of women and children. And you can only, you know, let your mind wander to where that ends up.

It is a really dangerous and deprived place, the camps in Kutupalong. And so these women really are incredible in the work that they do inside the camps and to protect the communities and their families.

Thank you.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. I now recognize Chairman Huizenga for your 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I want to first start by actually submitting for the record the letter signed by the 90 groups.

Mrs. KIM. Yes, without objection.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Thank you. And I want to say thank you to each of you for being here and helping shed some light on this. And Ambassador Currie, I am going to start with you.

In June 2024, the U.N. Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews produced a report called, Banking on the Death Trade. And he found that the junta is increasingly reliant on Thai companies and banks to facilitate the importation of weapons and other material, making Thailand the leading source of Burmese military supplies purchased through the International Banking System.

Additionally, with the sanctioning of the MFTB and the MICB, the junta has moved its financial services to the MEB. And my bill, which you had mentioned, the BRAVE Burma Act, calls for mandatory sanctions on MEB. And the impact would allow U.S. and allied sanctions on MEB to disrupt the junta's ability to wage war. And I might add that there are a few other initiatives, the Burma GAP Act and the Dismantle Foreign Scam Syndicates Act offered by Ranking Member Meeks and our colleague from Indiana, Mr. Shreve, respectively, and I believe they should be considered necessary steps to cripple the junta as well.

But could you illuminate us a little bit on what that would mean to disrupt the military, the junta's ability to wage war against these ethnic resistance organizations?

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. I think that what we should do first of all is thank the Thais for following up on that report and debanking the entities that were involved.

Unfortunately, as you know, the Myanmar Economic Bank, the MEB, has set up another pathway. So we do need to put full sanctions on the MEB.

There was an argument at one point that there would be humanitarian effects on this and that it would create problems for the people in Burma. But I think it is important to understand that most people in Burma do not use the formal banking system. They do everything they can to avoid any engagement with the formal economy, with the government, because it is so predatory, and they know that the government treats the MEB or the junta—I

shouldn't call it the government. The junta treats the MEB a piggy bank to fund the war effort.

So they are very well aware of this. And so they avoid those official systems, and it is believed that the effect will be minimal.

But we do need to—we do know the MEB is sanctioning—is still moving forward. And sanctioning MEB would interrupt some of the flows from Russia and China that allow them to purchase weapons. Because Russia and China want to be paid in dollars. They do not want Jot.

Let's be very clear. They are setting up some alternative mechanisms to pay in renminbi. But the Russians want cash on the barrelhead. They need hard currency. And so they need the money.

So sanctioning MEB and UAB, which is another path that they use, another bank, would be very important.

Thank you.

Mr. HUIZENG. So, I am hearing keep the pressure up in Thailand. Thank them for what they have done, but let's continue that conversation.

Sorry. I am going to be trying to go quickly to both Ms. Karim and possibly Mr. Ross here.

Until this really resolves, I am curious what influence does the U.S. have with host countries like Bangladesh to prevent harmful repatriation of the refugees to the Rakhine State so. And Karim, if you would like.

Ms. KARIM. Thank you. As I clearly mentioned in the written statement, I think it is just not safe for us to—for refugees in Cox's Bazar to return back to Myanmar. There has to be much more to get done to create a condition that would allow Rohingya to return back to Myanmar.

And the U.S. could definitely support creating some international monetary inside the country to make sure the conditions and situations are getting improved.

And there are parts, though it sounds like impossible to send back these refugees at this time given the ground reality, but there are parts—allowing internally displaced people to return back to their homes without any conditions and restrictions and allowing the humanitarian actors, organizations, and donors to operate legally and freely within the Rakhine State to improve condition and provide humanitarian help for those who remain in the country.

Mr. HUIZENG. Okay. Mr. Ross, 10 seconds.

Mr. ROSS. Yes, I would just add that there are several countries in the region that have forcibly repatriated Myanmar nationals not only Rohingya into Myanmar despite the risks that they have faced in doing so. And there is a role that the U.S. can play in engaging with these countries, encouraging them not to undertake this practice, and ensuring that non-refoulement is not an option that they pursue. Thanks.

Mr. HUIZENG. I yield back. Thank you.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. I now recognize the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Amo, Representative Amo.

Mr. AMO. Thank you, Chairwoman Kim and Chairman Huizenga for hosting this joint hearing. And thank you to the ranking members and thank you to our witnesses for being here.

You know, on May 21, Secretary Rubio testified in front of our committee and told me directly in my questioning that no children are dying on our watch because of the Trump Administration's cuts to foreign aid. "No children are dying on our watch." That was untrue then and it is untrue today. Children were dying on his watch and sadly, they still are.

Recent reportings found that President Trump and Secretary Rubio's cuts to our foreign assistance program and the illegal dismantling of USAID led to the deaths of over 600,000 people, including 400,000 children worldwide.

To put that in perspective, Chair Kim, that is more than the entire population of Anaheim, 346,000, and Orange, 139,000, your district or more than twice the population of Grand Rapids, 200,000 or Kalamazoo, 73,000, the Michigan Chair Huizenga.

More than half a million people are dead because of this administration's callousness. And few countries have been hit as hard as Burma.

Look, civilians are dying at the hands of Burmese military junta, but also from malnutrition and lack of medical care. The United Nations estimates over 6 million children in Burma need humanitarian assistance.

Now before Trump's literal incineration of our foreign aid, the United States was the largest supporter of aid to Burma and Burmese refugees in surrounding countries.

Congress had specifically authorized funds in a bipartisan effort to help the people of Burma. While the President has made new commitments focused on refugees, these cuts already decimated aid programs in Burma. Health care centers were shuttered and the World Food Program was forced to cut back on food aid to over 1 million people.

A Rohingya resident of a Burmese internment camp, Mohammed Tahir, said "I lost my son because of the funding cuts. And it is not only me. Many more children in other camps have also died helplessly from hunger, malnutrition, and no medical treatment." Mohammed shared this story 2 weeks before Secretary Rubio was here in our committee claiming that no children were dying under his watch.

To be very clear, people have needlessly died because of this administration's decisions. And they are still dying. We could restart many of these aid programs tomorrow. The funds that Congress appropriated to save lives and support American jobs is available. We could bolster the production of ready-to-use therapeutic foods like Plumpy'Nut made by Edesia Nutrition in Rhode Island.

Plumpy'Nut, as you might know, is a miracle product that can save a child from severe acute malnutrition in as little as 6 weeks using U.S. grown food products that support American workers and families.

Ms. Karim, could you please describe the role of American-funded emergency food products, things like Plumpy'Nut and the role that they play in Burma and for the Burmese refugee populations and surrounding countries? And how are the cuts to American-funded food programs threatening the lives of children that had previously been served?

Ms. CURRIE. I am not sure I can do that in 70 seconds, but what I can say is that——

Mr. AMO. I am sorry. That was for Ms. Karim.

Ms. CURRIE. I am sorry. I thought you said——

Mr. AMO. That is Okay.

Ms. KARIM. Thank you. Thank you for the question. I think largely, U.S.—United States has been one of the largest donors to Rohingya refugees from day one. We are very grateful for that. And U.S.'s funding is not only serving the people in the camps, feeding the people, but it is also an encouragement to other donor countries to step up or to step back from funding their programs in the camps.

After the USAID cuts, we have seen UK, Germany, and other largest donors to Rohingya refugee are also stepping away from funding. And we are grateful for the recent \$60 million funds for lifesaving assistance programs, and it comes by the United States in September.

The USAID cuts largely and more directly and personally have impacted the community members in the camps. And especially for children, including nutritions and learning centers, as I said, and other programs that used to provide protections and other programs that have completely been eliminated after the USAID cuts. And that puts children, as a group as a whole, at huge risk, including being trafficked and kidnapped in many countries, even within the camps, and even being forcibly recruited by the armed actors in the camps to be sent back to Myanmar for fighting with the military.

And we have seen hundreds of people were also sent back to Myanmar by the actors because they have nothing to do in the camps simply. They are not going to schools. They don't have anything to do. They are just in their tiny shelters all day and all night.

So the USAID cuts at large have directly and more personally impacted the lives of refugees, but in particular the women and children.

Mr. AMO. Thank you for sharing that. And I know my time is expiring, but it is very clear, lives harmed irreparably and also these foreign aid cuts are devastating our credibility in the region.

And with that, I yield back.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. I now recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Representative Perry, for your questions.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks for our witnesses for being here. It distresses me that we start out the conversation by blaming the United States of America's taxpayers and citizens for the problems in Burma. And I remind my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that this has been going on for a long time.

They might not have been here, but I have been here. And the United States, in many cases and certainly under other administrations, have sent humanitarian assistance, which we all want to do. We all want to help.

But I sat in this very room and complained that while we all were complaining about the plight of the Rohingya, by the time we

got to doing something real about it, there weren't going to be any Rohingya left.

So it distresses me that that is where we are going to start the conversation. So let's move on to something where we can actually try and find some tangible results, some success here.

I guess I am going to turn to Mr. Ross and Ms. Currie about what we can do as the United States of America that doesn't encumber our taxpayers anymore, because we are \$38 trillion in debt, right? But what can we do that is actually going to have a tangible result impacting negatively the junta in Burma, right?

What about the STAR, the Stolen Asset Recovery System? What about access to SWIFT? What are things that we can do to hobble them and empower the people of Burma and the Rohingya? Go ahead, any one of you.

Mr. ROSS. Sure, I will start. Thank you for the question. I think there are several things that the U.S. can and should be doing that do not require financial resources.

It does not require resources for us to reject the elections, to engage partners and allies in the region to do the same. What the Myanmar military craves is legitimacy and denying them that will have follow-on impacts for their ability to wage war against the Myanmar people.

In addition to that, I think the sanctions regime that has been imposed has been a good starting point. I would go beyond the imposition of sanctions itself and look at coordination, both inter-agency within the U.S. on sanctions enforcement and coordination with allies and partners outside of the U.S. to ensure that it is not just U.S. sanctions that are having an impact.

I will stop there.

Mr. PERRY. And to date, from either, from any administration, those things haven't really been imposed or refined to the furthest extent that they could be. Is that about right?

Mr. ROSS. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. PERRY. Okay.

Mr. ROSS. I think there has been a strong imposition of sanctions in an incremental manner. But the enforcement has not been nearly as strong as it could be.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. Ma'am.

Ms. CURRIE. Yes, sir. I would agree that there are ways. The first thing that I think we should do is consider placing frozen Burmese assets. There is about \$1.5 billion in frozen Burmese funds, foreign exchange funds, that are sitting in an account right now, just frozen.

We can put those into a managed account and use the interest to provide for some of the humanitarian needs, use the growth or whatever interest on those accounts much as we are doing with Ukraine, with the Russian assets. We can require that—

Mr. PERRY. And that requires no act of Congress, right? The Treasury could do that all on its own.

Ms. CURRIE. The Treasury can do that with its independent authority today.

Mr. PERRY. Okay.

Ms. CURRIE. We should also make sure that countries that are receiving humanitarian assistance from the United States, whether

through the United Nations or bilaterally are providing opportunities for refugees and refugee communities to do work themselves.

These people want to work. They will work inside the camps. They will do things, work for pay. And the governments in these countries, Bangladesh sadly, but also Thailand, has limited the ability of people to work. And Thailand has a labor shortage. They need workers but they deny them the opportunity to do this.

And so we need to be more robust in using our diplomacy to help alleviate some of the burden by allowing these communities to be a little bit more self-sustaining and have access to other services locally. And we can work with them to provide those services in a much more cost-effective way.

It is cheaper for us to give the Thais some support to allow access or Burmese or Bangladesh some support to allow access to local services than for us to create a parallel system for the refugees.

So there are ways we can maximize what we are doing without spending more money while also benefiting these communities in important ways. Burma has been kicked out of the SWIFT system for some time. Again, clamping down on some of these things, also going after crypto and putting them—taking money that they have stolen, whether it is scam centers or the government, out of crypto accounts and moving it into the new U.S. crypto account that we can do with the asset recovery would be a great way to help support some of these programs.

Mr. PERRY. So with the chairman's indulgence, I would just say that you two individuals, if you would get the list of things that you would recommend to my office, we would like to put that in a form to the administration as a request.

And I imagine you have a lot of people on this committee on both sides of the aisle that are interested in being a part of that.

And with that, I yield back and I thank the chair.

Mrs. KIM. Sure. I now recognize Ranking Member Ami Bera from California for your 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Madam Chair. And my apologies. I had to step out so if this is ground that has already been covered. Maybe it is a question for Mr. Ross.

Getting an assessment of where the conflict is right now, there have been times where the various ethnic resistance groups have made progress. It does seem like it is either at a stalemate or perhaps they lost some of that progress as China has kind of changed.

Could you give us an assessment of what you see on the ground?

Mr. ROSS. Sure. Thank you for the question. I don't like the term stalemate for the conflict in Myanmar. It is a very dynamic conflict, and it is constantly changing.

Over the last 2 years, the resistance and ethnic armed groups have made significant territorial gains since the launch of Operation 1027 in Shan State, in Kachin State in the north near the border with China, in the southeast in Karen, in the west in Rakhine State as well as in the center in some Myanmar majority regions.

Some of those gains have been rolled back a bit in the last year as China has swung behind the military and put significant pressure on ethnic armed groups, particularly those on the China/

Myanmar border that have pressed them into bilateral cease-fire agreements, which have been—allowed the Myanmar military to redeploy resources and arms against other armed actors.

So that has shifted the momentum somewhat over the last year. But the military has only been able to retake small parts of the land that it has lost, and there are significant parts of the country that it does not control and that will be reflected in where elections can and cannot be held when they start next month.

Mr. BERA. And can I get your assessment on cooperation amongst the various ethnic resistance groups? Are they working well together? Are they fighting with each other?

Mr. ROSS. Yes, it varies around the country. I would say that Operation 1027 again was sort of a critical moment because it demonstrated a really unprecedented degree of collaboration between ethnic armed groups and Burmese resistance actors.

Prior to that, some of the most important ethnic armed groups had not sat on the sidelines but had limited their engagement to training and support. Once they entered the fight in October 2023, there was much more operational collaboration.

Some of that is at risk though. China has put significant pressure on ethnic armed groups not to collaborate among themselves and with Burmese resistance actors because that is seen as a significant threat to the regime in Naypyidaw, which has over decades pursued a divide and rule approach that has sought to split communities from one another. And China has aided and abetted that over the last year.

Mr. BERA. And then just in the last few minutes I have to Ambassador Currie or to you, Mr. Ross, how can we best engage and support the ASEAN nations in this and then what would you like Congress to do to support the resistance groups outside of what you have already covered in terms of sanctions and secondary sanctions?

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you for the question, sir. I think that as far as supporting the resistance groups, there is plenty of legislation already on the books that would allow the administration to do so.

There are multiple problems, one being that the regional bureau that is now responsible for assistance to Burma is not well-suited to be implementing programs in this kind of conflict. Also because Burma is one of the seen issues, it is a problem both in the South Central Asia Bureau and the East Asia Pacific Bureau as evidenced by this hearing today. But those bureaus are not working together to address the problem.

In fact EAP feels very proprietary about Burma and tends to block out SEA Bureau from dealing with it even though they are hosting 1.3 million refugees and are downstream of a lot of the consequences. And India plays a very important role here too. So there is a need.

I think the special coordinator or special—if any situation cries out for some kind of special envoy, it is Burma. And so pushing the administration to appoint someone who can look at the problem holistically and recommend programs, recommend policy, really take ownership in a way. And it needs to be a senior level person.

Mr. BERA. What would—

Ms. CURRIE. Right now the person handling Burma is a DAS.

Mr. BERA. What would you recommend us, with the ASEAN nations in Southeast Asia, that would you want us to push them to do?

Ms. CURRIE. Again, you need someone like this, a senior level diplomat who can focus on Burma. He can go to the ASEAN ministerials and meet with the Ambassadors here in town solely to talk about the issue of Burma because it is like Number 7 on the list of priorities for EAP and ECA.

Mr. BERA. So asking for a special envoy would be something that you would recommend Congress to push for?

Ms. CURRIE. Continually, yes.

Mrs. KIM. Great. Thank you very much. I believe that is something that we have been pushing for and have that special envoy in place to specifically serve and pay attention to what is going on in Burma. And that should be elevated to the Ambassadorial level as you mentioned.

I wholeheartedly agree with that. I believe that is covered in the Burma Act, which we are working on, so.

I now recognize the gentleman from Guam, Representative Moylan for your 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yes, I appreciate this hearing today and hearing what you folks have to say. It is really a poor situation that we are in.

You know, I recall just reading the economics or The Economist's article just in June where it talks about the same thing that you have been discussing. They start with an earthquake. Almost 4,000 people died. And then what happens next? The military coup in 2021, 10,000 civilians passed away there.

And then the U.S. estimates that there is 3 million that have been displaced and 2 million in the blink of a famine. And all this made—now Myanmar is a hub of lawlessness in Asia. We have got illicit drug production. We have human trafficking. And we have this huge scam industry booming. We need to do something different.

And I like what I hear from the recommendations that you have on where we are going with this committee. But with these issues, of course, the only one that seems to be happy here is the People's Republic of China, right? And they enjoy conflict. And they come in saying we want to negotiate peace and try to make western fear a mockery.

And China says it can—otherwise, they will bully them. China says they can restrict electricity, water, internet access, goods, and a whole bunch more. So it is a threat to be peaceful. What a joke.

And the recent State Authorization Act from this committee, I included an amendment that looks at promoting smart investment strategies as you were discussing to countries that receive aid from us.

And no doubt the famine disasters and senseless killings should be approached from an international cooperation. And I appreciate what you are trying to do to make that happen.

These efforts deserve their due attention and funding. But if Myanmar and the United Wa State Army refuse to cooperate with the United States while giving preference to China, I believe our

aid should reflect their careless decision, and this is about putting the people before power.

So Ambassador Currie, thank you for your long career in doing what you are doing and still wanting to continue. And your expertise in this is very helpful for us to understand.

So your role in the Burma transition initiative, what do you see Myanmar going from its current situation and what meaningful arguments, and I have heard some, that you would like to expand upon would give us some stability from this chaos?

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, sir, for that question.

Look, Burma is—yes, I started out as a congressional staffer 30 years ago working on Burma as I was telling Chairwoman Kim. And so many things that I dealt with 30 years ago are still problems today, and the United Wa State Army is one of them. They have only grown more powerful, wealthier, and more influential.

We have sanctioned them for decades. And because we refuse to address the root cause of the problem which is, again, in Kunming and Beijing and the People's Republic of China the decisive enablers of this conflict just as they are in the conflict in Ukraine, they will continue to be able to be a scourge on the people of Burma and the region as one of the world's largest drug producers. They are to Asia what the cartels in Mexico are to the Western Hemisphere. I need to make people understand that. It is really a huge problem.

We need to—Singapore continues to host their leadership and allow them to buy property there. Thailand continues to give them citizenship. The People's Republic of China especially continues to host their businesses and their wealth.

We need to put secondary sanctions in place that really try to squeeze them and really empower the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Treasury Department to go after their assets. They have billions of dollars in assets. They can be targeted more effectively.

As far as some of the other things that I think we can do, peace will only come to Burma when the people of that country are allowed to drive their own future without the interference of their big neighbor, China, and without the military creating the enabling environment for conflict that they have created since independence in that country for the past 80 years.

So it is imperative that the military be driven out of power. There is no other way. And the people are doing it themselves. This is a DIY revolution. They get no support from anybody. But they are fighting. And, you know, they are winning without any help from us or anybody else.

And so we should stop helping their adversaries at a minimum. Like, let's just stop helping their adversaries. And they can do this and then let them have the political space to solve their own problems.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you so much. I ran out of time. I appreciate the comments. Madam Chair, I yield back.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. I now recognize the gentlelady from Washington, Representative Jayapal, for your 5 minutes of questioning.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Thank you so much, Madam Chair for holding what I think is a really important and informative hearing. Thank you very much to our witnesses. I think we are all concerned about

the plight of the millions harmed by the military junta in Burma and the many others including—especially the Rohingya who have fled to all these neighboring countries.

And I think as I have been listening to the three of you, I am reminded again about the importance of all the tools in our toolbox. And I know this hearing is titled America's Limited Options. I think we actually have more options in front of us than perhaps we are recognizing.

And I am reminded in my 10 years of development work cross the world, including in South and Southeast Asia, the three-legged stool was always security, humanitarian assistance, and development assistance. And I think that is still relevant here.

I wanted to talk about China first because I think both Mr. Ross and Ambassador Currie have both spoken about this, and I think it is critically important.

Given China's demonstrated interest in keeping the military junta in power, can you just briefly discuss why that is actually a reason for clear and consistent U.S. engagement in Burma? Because I think there is a constant discussion in the United States about whether something is in the American interest and to me you both have laid out a very clear case for why it is in our interest to engage on this issue. So maybe if you can briefly speak to this. I know, Mr. Ross, you recently authored an article about this topic as well.

Mr. ROSS. Sure, I can start. Thank you for the question. I think clear and consistent is a really important factor here.

Since the coup, I think expectations have been raised about what the role the U.S. and other international actors can and will be in Myanmar. There are significant authorities that exist, particularly under the Burma Act and under the executive order that came out after the coup. But those have not been fully implemented to the extent possible.

And both created expectations among the population in Myanmar about what role the U.S. would play and provided a pretext for China to become more involved and more fully back the Myanmar military.

So I think being clear and consistent is an important through line for U.S. policy on Myanmar. I would add just a degree of nuance on China, which is that the relationship between the Myanmar military and China is a somewhat uncomfortable one.

China does not like Min Aung Hlaing. And they are hoping that these elections create an alternate source of power that they can back instead of him.

I don't necessarily think that things will play out in that way. I think that Min Aung Hlaing wants to hold on to both the commander-in-chief role and the presidency. And if that plays out in that way, it is possible that the pendulum of Chinese support for the military regime will shift back in a different direction.

But more broadly, you know, I think that engaging clearly, consistently, finding ways to support the various Democratic and resistance actors that have the support of the people in Myanmar and are building up grass roots governance structures that will be a model for going forward is a way to go forward for U.S. policy.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Anything you want to quickly add, Ambassador?

Ms. CURRIE. Yes, ma'am. I would agree with what Steve says. I do think that the people themselves, again, like I said, this is DIY revolution. They are doing it on the ground, too.

It is not just the arms struggle. It is also the governance structures they are building up. It is also the inner ethnic dialogs that are happening. They are painful, sometimes very ugly, sometimes very foolish, but they are happening in a way that has never happened before in the history of this country.

And this is extremely healthy and important. It is costing us nothing for these things to happen. But we can support them in some important ways. We did cutoff some critical support that I think should come back.

I think we also need to think about Thailand with a long border with Burma and our relationship with Thailand. They are our oldest security ally in our region.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Ambassador, I am sorry. I want to get in a question for Ms. Karim before my time runs out.

So I want to quickly—I am going to talk Democrat. I am the ranking member on the immigration subcommittee. And refugee resettlement has long been a bipartisan issue and a tool in our foreign assistance toolbox.

And I know that you were resettled in the United States. But due to this current administration's very restrictive immigration policies, it would be almost impossible for you to resettle.

Can you talk about your experience resettling and also why it is so important for us to keep that refugee resettlement program strong?

Ms. KARIM. I am sorry. I see there is not a second.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Will the chairwoman just indulge your answer?

Mrs. KIM. Yes.

Ms. KARIM. Yes, thank you for the question. I think, as you can see, I am one of the many examples. And I also want to acknowledge this. The resettlement program is one of the many solutions that we need. As I did mention, the ultimate goal for us is to return back to home when it is safe to do so. And it is not that—there is no condition situation for us now for refugees in Cox Bazar to go back.

However, given the—as we have heard from three of us, given the current situation in the camps in Bangladesh and across the region, it is an issue in specific countries, it is very important to continue bringing refugees to this country, a country that care about the human rights, a country that gives identity to refugees, and a country that allows me to call a place home that I was never able to call a home for my entire life, and that actually allows me to continue advocating for millions of people left behind.

Ms. JAYAPAL. So beautiful. Thank you. We are so fortunate to have you in this country.

I appreciate your indulgence.

Mrs. KIM. Of course. Thank you very much. I now recognize the gentleman from Indiana, Representative Shreve, for your questioning.

Mr. SHREVE. Thank you. And I thank our subcommittee chairs and ranking members for convening this hearing.

This is a subject that matters to all of us in representative government because we have victims of this fast-growing crime in all of our districts. But this is of particular importance to some of us that have large communities of Burmese citizens in our home states and districts.

I represent a district in Indiana. Indiana is the home to 42,000 Burmese. We have got about a quarter of the population in the U.S. in our State. And, of course, I have victims across my district as well. And this is a crime wave with victims on both ends. We recognize that.

We have got victims of scams and then we have human trafficking victims on the other end of this very sad proposition. And as you noted, this is at its core rooted in money laundering. And so we have got the victims of the drug trade.

Mr. Ross noted that annual revenues approached \$10 billion. But I think we recognize that this crime wave is so underreported, so difficult to track, our office thinks that it may be a \$15 billion a year problem today and sure to be much larger next year and the following year. And we have got so much work to do to get our arms around this problem. These scam centers represent a national security threat and a humanitarian crisis.

Ambassador Currie and Mr. Ross, given our need to better understand what occurs inside these closed off scam compounds and considering that there is no formal process for collecting information from freed victims when they gain their freedom, if they gain their freedom, should a structured process be established to gather and analyze their accounts so we can learn from this?

Ms. CURRIE. I think that is a wonderful idea, Representative Shreve. I think that one of the things that Thailand especially can do because most of these people end up in Thailand when they are rescued or flee these scam centers, and Thailand should think about how they can allow, whether it is the U.N. Office of Drug and Crimes or some other, or the U.N. Office of—the International Organization for Migration, to set up a special office in Mae Sot/Mae Sai area where most of these people come across the border to collect information.

Right now, it is very ad hoc. I worked on a report for the U.N. on this a few years ago when it was not as well-known of a problem in 2021. And even then they were struggling to get their arms around it.

Now it is a much bigger problem, much more serious. And you do need an inner agency approach here in the United States as well as at the international level.

Thailand is really struggling to deal with it also because of corruption in the Thai domestic security forces and some of the other—and the reliance on the Thai banking system that these scam centers use to launder the money as well.

So those are things that we really need to work with Thailand on.

Thank you.

Mr. ROSS. I would echo Ambassador Currie that I think Thailand is really key, both as a conduit for people being trafficked into Myanmar and for people fleeing from the scam centers or being allowed to leave from them.

At present, as I understand it, when people leave from scam centers into Thailand, it is the responsibility of their country to repatriate them to that country. So you have a very ad hoc process of people from dozens of countries, some of whom don't have diplomatic presence in Thailand, trying to figure out how to get their citizens back.

And in the case of China, the Chinese nationals who are fleeing from the scam centers or leaving the scam centers and going back to China are being taken back on Chinese flights without any investigative process. So it is a black box for the U.S. and for everyone outside of China as to the information that those individuals have.

Another key aspect of this is safe houses for those who are leaving or trying to leave from scam centers. And that in and of itself could be a useful information and intelligence gathering source.

Ms. CURRIE. If I can add on that point? Right now ethnic armed groups from Burma, some of the Karen National Union in particular, are providing safe houses for scam trafficking victims themselves and doing this because these people end up in their territory and then they help them get repatriated. It is a kind of crazy situation.

Mr. SHREVE. I thank you both. My time has expired.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, Representative Castro, for your lines of questioning.

Mr. CURRIE. Thank you. Thank you all for your testimony today. Ambassador Currie, you have served as Ambassador at large for global women's issues in the first Trump Administration.

And in testimony to the Congress in 2020, you lauded the successes of the Women Peace and Security Act of 2017, bipartisan legislation enacted during the first Trump Administration to, as you said then, "recognize the importance of women's meaningful participation in global security and peace efforts."

Recently, you echoed the same sentiments by warning that women are often invited into peace processes as an afterthought instead of as central political actors. You played an important role in the initial implementation of this landmark law and by all accounts, this was an important bipartisan effort during the first Trump Administration and also part of your legacy.

So can you speak to how important this landmark legislation is, including in the context of Burma?

Ms. CURRIE. I will try to be brief, but this is a topic close to my heart because I came into the women, peace, and security universe, as it is, from Burma by working with Burmese women in Thailand who had fled the regime in the 1980's and were forming women's organizations to stand up for peace and to get engaged in peace processes and to fight against the military regime through primarily non-violent means.

So I have a long history of working with these women, and they really introduced the whole concept of women, peace, and security to me. So this is very close to my heart.

Unfortunately, and, you know, when I was at U.S. United Nations, I would say—I would find myself in meetings and pointing out that you cannot solve problems created by men with guns by

turning to men with guns for the solution. That is not how any of this is ever going to work.

And so I think that we need to be mindful of that and that there continue to be very incredible women like Lucky Karim who are involved in this struggle today and are leading it in ways, including on the battlefield from the people's defense forces and the ethnic armed organizations that are fighting against the regime.

There are many strong women on the battlefield, many strong women keeping communities safe and alive inside Burma and on the border. And they deserve our attention and our support.

Thank you.

Mr. CASTRO. Yes, and let me just ask a followup on that.

You know, a critical component of the legislation is the annual report describing implementation of the law. And for the first time, the administration has failed to submit that report to Congress, which was due on October 31. The bill requires specialized training for U.S. diplomatic and development professionals on the role of women in peace processes.

As far as we can tell, no such training has occurred this year. And they have eliminated key positions with implementing this law, including at the Office of Global Women's Issues, which you led during the first Trump Administration, and closed down the whole Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, which house the negotiation support unit, which supported the role of women in peace processes.

A key for an assistance program supporting the law have been terminated with no explanation or transparency. And there is little to now remaining women, peace, and security expertise at the State Department, USAID, and DHS, three of the four agencies responsible for implementing the law.

For the fourth, the Department of Defense, we understand that they are requesting that Congress repeal parts of the law to eliminate requirements that they conduct training for their officers.

So I wanted to ask you, are you at all concerned that the administration has turned its back on its important bipartisan legislation that you had a big part in shaping?

Ms. CURRIE. Not just me, but former Congressman Mike Walz, who was the co-chair of the Women, Peace, and Security Caucus in the Congress when he was here. I think this is a huge mistake, and I have spoken about this.

I am working with other conservative women who support the Women, Peace, and Security Act, including women who have served this Nation faithfully and well. And it is a foolish and short-sighted thing that is happening.

I hope that the administration will recognize that President Trump did the right thing signing the Women, Peace, and Security Act in 2017, during his first term, and supporting this strongly from the White House. And that it is important not just for our domestic armed forces but also our position in the world and our security globally. Thank you.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. And I have one last question. And for Ms. Karim, the answer may have to come for the record because I am running out of time. But I wanted to ask you. Rohingya advocates and U.N. investigators have documented how Facebook and

other U.S. social media-based platforms or U.S.-based social media platforms were used in Burma to spread hate speech and help organize attacks on Rohingya.

In your view, have those companies done enough since 2017 to ensure their platforms are not again used to incite violence against your community?

We will take it for the record just because we run out unless—

Mrs. KIM. I will allow that.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure.

Mrs. KIM. Thirty seconds to answer. If not, you are free to submit your response in writing. Your choice. Submit in writing? Okay. Thank you.

I will now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Representative Kean for your 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I want to thank our distinguished witnesses for being here today.

As we evaluate the ongoing crisis in Burma, we must ensure that the U.S. continues to advocate for justice for the Burmese people. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today regarding opportunities to address the refugee crisis and ensure that religious freedom is protected.

Ambassador Currie, a report from the United Nations in June of this year noted that the military in Burma is repressing the entry of aid into the country, noting that humanitarian workers have been physically blocked at checkpoints.

What are the most effective means to ensure that aid is received by those, like the Rohingya, who need it the most?

Ms. CURRIE. Very briefly, sir, working through cross-border organizations, including with ethnic health systems, ethnic educational systems, and there is a long history of U.S. support for cross-border assistance from Thailand and also working with India to help get cross-border assistance across the India-Burma border.

And we are seeing increased cooperation between India, Bangladesh and actors in Rakhine State. Again, some of these folks are not people I would choose to cooperate with, but they are facilitating some aid into areas that have long been blocked.

The regime consistently blocks any humanitarian assistance from going to areas outside of its control, and it instrumentalizes what humanitarian assistance flows through its channels. And we have—I have long recommended not providing any humanitarian assistance through regime controlled channels because it only benefits them.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. Mr. Ross, how do you believe the sanctions and other economic actions in the U.S. Government can be used strategically to pressure the junta to protect the rights of all Burmese civilians?

Mr. ROSS. Thank you for the question. As I said earlier, I think that there has been an incremental approach to sanctions over the last almost 5 years, and I would say a much heavier focus on the imposition of sanctions than the enforcement or coordination of sanctions.

So certainly I think there is some additional benefit from continuing to look at actors that are benefiting from the drug trade from scam centers that are supplying weapons to the military and

looking at those actors. But there is also a lot on the table that is ripe for further enforcement and coordination interagency and also with other allies and partners.

Mr. KEAN. And then as a followup, Burma has increasingly aligned itself militarily with China and with Russia to armaments and training respectfully.

How do you believe that these Burmese alliances will impact America's allies in the region?

Mr. ROSS. Sure. Yes, I think that the arms flows from China and Russia and to a lesser extent others in the region have an impact on stability within Myanmar and then have a spillover effect elsewhere in the region.

So the outflow of refugees, the impact of disease that is not confined to borders, all of those things are follow-on impacts of the arms support that is being provided by China and Russia to the regime that enables it to continue to wage war against the Myanmar people.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. Ms. Karim, can you please share what actions from the United States and other members of the international community have been the most impactful in addressing the plight of the Rohingya in Burma?

Ms. KARIM. Thank you for the question. The international community members and the United States have done a lot already. I think I would also want to mention for the last two and a half years, because of the competing priorities in the world, we have lost the attention—the level of support and attention from the international community members, and I would like to call on them to continue engaging on these issues and to work to make sure that the issues have been addressed timely.

The United States could do much more, including providing funding to matching the programs on the ground, but also working with the host country, including Bangladesh, to allow refugees to work within the camps.

These are the short and medium term solutions that we need but for the long term, to facilitate the sustainable and dignified and safe return for those who are still in the camps back to our homeland in Burma.

Thank you.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. And I yield back my time.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you. And let me now recognize the gentleman from Texas, Representative Self.

Mr. SELF. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to explore—you have painted a picture of basically Burma being fractured. I want to explore the idea that are they becoming a client State of China? For a couple of reasons, the Belt and Road initiatives and the Kyaukphyu Deep Water Port and the China Myanmar pipelines because it looks to me as though this gives a strategic advantage to China by allowing them to bypass the Strait of Malacca.

So first of all, let's start with that. Ambassador?

Ms. CURRIE. Yes, sir. China sees Burma as their gateway to the Indian Ocean. This has been a plan that has been in place for some time now. Jodhpur is existential for China. That port and those pipelines are critical infrastructure for them. They will do whatever

it takes to preserve those. And they are doing whatever it takes right now to preserve their access and for precisely the reasons that you State.

The biggest threat to that right now is the ascent of the Arakan Army in Rakhine State where Jodhpur is located. And so one of the reasons that the Chinese have become more of a decisive enabler of the regime's war and are trying to shut down some of the problems in other areas of the country are to allow the Burma army to target its resources on the areas that China—that are most critical to China.

And right now you have Chinese armed forces, police and armed forces, operating inside Burmese territory to protect critical infrastructure for the Chinese. This is unprecedented in the history of Burma.

As Mr. Ross said, the Burma military hates the Chinese because they have a long history of enmity. And the fact that Min Aung Hlaing has allowed China to become so influential in that country is a sign of his desperation and weakness. But China is fully taking advantage of all of it.

And if you go back to 2010 and 2007 and 2008 when the regime started to experiment with openness, the reason they did that was because they were becoming too dependent on China for their own comfort. That was a key driver of the 2010 elections and the openness and the freeing of Aung San Suu Kyi and all of those things that happened after 2007.

They are now so desperate to hold onto power, Min Aung Hlaing specifically, but also the senior people around him, that they have allowed China to come in a way that they have never done before.

Mr. SELF. Mr. Ross?

Mr. ROSS. Yes, I agree with Ambassador Currie. I think that what China has pursued in Myanmar is enough stability such that it can advance its geostrategic and economic interests through these mega infrastructure projects but not so much stability that it can't wield leverage over all stakeholders involved.

And right now it has a lot of leverage over both the regime and of the ethnic armed groups that are operating on the China-Myanmar border. And it has positioned itself extremely well and at great risk to U.S. interests.

Mr. SELF. So I see that South Korea, India, Myanmar of course, and China are all involved in the pipeline project. Is there a leverage there by the U.S. on particularly the South Korea and India companies? Ambassador?

Ms. CURRIE. Yes, sir. POSCO, which is the South Korean company, we have quietly tried to shut this down and have engaged with the South Koreans about this problem and tried to get them to withdraw.

I think they have reduced their footprint in Burma substantially since 2021. But they continue to provide critical support.

Other countries that are allies in the region also continue to provide—or participate in the legal economy in Burma and provide meaningful support to the regime through that. India is a major one.

India has tried to play the China game of playing both sides. They are just not flexible enough to do it and don't have the strategic depth that China does to pull it off.

But the answer there right now, the short term, is to encourage India to try to diversify their relationships and not be solely dependent on the regime for engaging in Burma and protecting their security interests, which they do have genuine security problems coming out of Burma. Thank you.

Mr. SELF. It looks to me like if we could put pressure on South Korea and India for instance because they provide legitimate cover for China in Burma in the pipeline. So if we could remove all other international presence, I think it would make it more directly apparent that this is a strategic defensive move—defense move.

With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Mrs. KIM. We have a few more minutes so I would like to go for second rounds of questioning. And I would like to continue on the conversation that my Ranking Member Ami Bera raised regarding the ASEAN's role.

ASEAN's five-point consensus that calls for a ceasing of violence, facilitating dialog, and providing humanitarian aid remains the bloc's official position. But we have seen little progress on implementation. So, is the five-point consensus still a viable framework or has it become an obstacle to a more concrete action?

Can you address that Ambassador Currie? And maybe Mr. Ross you can address that, too.

Ms. CURRIE. The short answer is no. It is not viable. It wasn't viable from the minute the ink was dry on it because Burma basically violated—the Burma army basically violated it from the get-go. And yes, it does need to be replaced with something else.

I think that there is a big divide within ASEAN, the countries that can be influenced by China, such as Cambodia and Lao continue to block a consensus. Other countries that are downstream of problems, Thailand and Malaysia particularly have been a little waffly but have tried to do more.

But ASEAN itself is quite divided. We have allowed ourselves to be held captive by the five point consensus and allowed it to be the driver of U.S. policy in Burma, which is a mistake. We should have our own policy. We should not be downstream of ASEAN's dysfunction.

But we should work with ASEAN to try to strengthen their hand in this regard and create pathways for at least individual members of ASEAN that want to do something different to do that and provide diplomatic engagement with them in ways, whether it was with Indonesia and Malaysia or rethinking our approach to Thailand on Burma and our approach to Thailand overall, which enables this kind of squishy policy that doesn't—it is really more a non-policy than a policy. Thank you.

Mrs. KIM. Can you supplement Ambassador's response with—maybe you can talk about how the U.S. can be more effective in providing the regional response? And I appreciate Ambassador's response.

Mr. ROSS. Sure. And just to add that the five point consensus, I would say, is the least common denominator. It is the baseline, the foundation, for what everyone could agree to although since it

was agreed, I think it has not been effectively implemented. And I think ASEAN admits that.

One of the challenges, I think, is the turnover in ASEAN focus on Myanmar. Every year there is a new special envoy that is appointed by the ASEAN chair. The Philippines, the incoming chair, has just appointed its new special envoy and that prevents a coherent and strategic and long-term approach that is needed to a challenge that is not going to be resolved in a 1-year timeline.

So I think for the U.S. it is encouraging ASEAN to take on this in a way that recognizes the long-term nature of the challenge and that ASEAN needs significant support as a bloc to be able to effectively address the challenges that Myanmar is facing and the impacts that it is having on the region.

I would just conclude by saying that I agree with Ambassador Currie on the divides within ASEAN, particularly between mainland and maritime Southeast Asia. And the structural impediments of ASEAN's principles of consensus and non-interference to them playing a more significant and more constructive role in realizing a political solution.

Mrs. KIM. Thank you.

I will turn it over to Ranking Member Bera for your questions.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ambassador Currie, you touched on something that in terms of the tenuous relationship between the junta and China, are there—again the junta does seem to align with China right now for survival sake. But that is also, again, a tenuous relationship.

Are there things that we should be thinking about strategically in terms of either exploiting that uncomfortable relationship or, you know—and we can also follow that up offline as well, but.

Ms. CURRIE. Well, one of the things that we could do, and I will go back to Chairwoman Kim here, we have lost one of our best tools for highlighting how problematic this is for the Burmese people by shutting down Radio Free Asia and its broadcasts into Burma.

One of the main sources of information we were getting about the predations of Chinese industry and Chinese state-owned businesses and problems arising out of these pipelines and these port projects, whether it's, you know, trafficking or other huge problems that have come about as a result of these Chinese investments in Burma is from Radio Free Asia, also from human rights organizations that report on the situation in Shan State or in Kachin State where mining projects by Chinese state-owned enterprises and Chinese companies are having a devastating effect on the local communities.

Reporting on those things comes from Radio Free Asia and from human rights organizations operating on the ground, often with U.S. Government support, very quiet, very small, but important support.

And so cutting off that nexus has blinded us and also taken away a major vector of information to the Burmese people about the problems of this collaboration between the junta and the People's Republic of China.

Mr. BERA. I couldn't agree with you more. I mean, it is one of the best vehicles we have in terms of making sure the people of Burma understand what is happening in this relationship.

Let me just ask another quick followup question. You talked about one of the challenges within ASEAN is, as leadership turns over, new envoys, et cetera. At the start of this conflict, you know, I think there was probably a hope that it wouldn't be a long-term conflict. I think we have to think about it differently now.

You know, this isn't going to wrap up in a year and what does a longer term engagement, whether, you know, we have our special envoy, whether it's through the United Nations and us and folks that can work on this over a longer period, and then also can imagine what happens post-conflict. Would that be the right way for us to start thinking about this? Not as a short-term thing, but long term and the conflict, find the cease-fire. What's the path forward?

Mr. ROSS. I can start on that. Thanks for the question. I would say that since the coup in 2021, we have had a bit of a piecemeal approach in terms of U.S. strategy. And I think that a really thorough look at what U.S. policy and strategy toward Myanmar should be is necessary.

I understand there is a policy review underway in the State Department. But that is something that I think has been lacking for the last four plus years and would serve U.S. interests well to be able to develop something that is more coherent and strategic over the medium term.

Mr. BERA. We should do that in concert with our ASEAN partners.

Mr. ROSS. Yes.

Mr. BERA. Great. With that—

Ms. CURRIE. If I can answer, Burma policy has been under review since the administration came in. And during the Biden Administration, it was completely adrift. You were being too diplomatic, I think, Mr. Ross, in calling it incoherent. It was adrift.

We coopted to the least common denominator of the five point consensus and took some piecemeal actions.

I think that there are things we can do, low cost solutions. We do need to—the review is important. But it is not going to matter if we have lost all of the tools or eviscerated all of the tools we have to actually implement a coherent policy.

And then I would also add that, again, I talk about Thailand a lot when it comes to Burma because for decades now, for some time now, we have not had a Burma policy to speak of. We have a Thailand policy that consists of doing whatever will keep us in good standing with the most regressive elements of the Thai leadership.

Thailand is changing. We need to rethink our strategy on Thailand and then think about our strategy on Burma in a partnership with that strategy on Thailand and how those two things lock together for success.

Thank you.

Mr. BERA. Thank you.

Mrs. KIM. A very good point. Chairman Huizenga for your questions.

Mr. HUIZENG. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I am going to make a quick statement, and I am going to give you each about a minute and a half. Okay?

So, I am not trying to be rude. I am trying to make sure I hit it all. I want to hear from all of you.

I couldn't agree with you more, Ambassador Currie. We need a coherent policy. We got virtually nothing out of the last administration when we would push them, whether it was Blinken in front of us or whether it was the administration. I am pushing to make sure this administration doesn't make the same mistake. And so, they have got an opportunity. My message to them is to seize it. We need to do that.

Ms. Karim, I would like to know from you, we have got a number of these initiatives that have been going on. But I am curious to know from your view on the ground, how has the interim caretaker government's treatment, the current Bangladesh government, how has their treatment of the Rohingya refugees differed from the previous government's?

Ms. KARIM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think—well, I also want to make it clear that Bangladesh itself is going through a huge political transition given that the Prime Minister has now been kicked out of the country and the new interim government.

But to be—frankly, we haven't seen any much larger policy change yet since the interim government in terms of refugee response in the camps.

There has been lots of improvement, including transportation, the very basic across the board level improvement in the camps. But we haven't seen much policy change yet from the capital.

So I think in terms of responding, Bangladesh itself, what we would like to see from them and have not seen yet, would be allowing refugees to work in the camps. And I would echo Ambassador Currie on these. Refugees want to work, of course, and it is not only—

Mr. HUIZENG. Be self-sufficient.

Ms. KARIM [continuing]. to help their families, yes, correct. And it will also prepare refugees for their return back to home so we don't have to keep coming back and forth—

Mr. HUIZENG. Okay.

Ms. KARIM [continuing]. to Bangladesh over and over again.

Mr. HUIZENG. Great. I am going to stick to my admonition here. I have got 3 minutes.

Mr. Ross, the October military junta raid on online scam centers in non-junta controlled Eastern Burma, it seized Starlink satellite devices. What does the operation reveal about the junta's relationship with scam operations? Is it generally cracking down or selectively targeting operations outside of its control while protecting those that benefit the regime?

Mr. ROSS. Thank you for the question. I think this is purely a performative act. The Myanmar military and the border guard forces that control the areas where the scam centers are operated from are very closely intertwined and there are strong personal linkages, financial linkages that extend quite deep on both sides.

So the intent behind this, I think—I think we need to link it to the elections. It is an effort by the military to—and its allies in the

border guard forces to give the impression that it is cracking down ahead of elections but without the substance behind it to actually demonstrate that it is cracking down.

So there is a new crackdown that has been happening this week against one of the other scam centers called Shwe Kokko and information in the public domain suggests that several thousand people were notified in advance that this crackdown would happen so the leadership——

Mr. HUIZENGA. Basically, what you do on raid, right?

Mr. ROSS. Leadership was able to flee and perhaps, you know, evidence, materials, other things that would be of interest were squirreled away to other scam centers that continue to operate. So it is a purely performative measure.

Again, the areas where these scams are taking place are intricately linked to the military itself and operate with the acquiescence of the military.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Okay. Ambassador Currie, do you agree and what can we do to encourage or actually verify that those crackdowns are effective?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, there is not a lot we can do inside Burma to do that because the regime is—I 100 percent agree with everything that Mr. Ross said about the performative nature of these.

They do this with drug seizures too where it is Kabuki Theatre. They warn the kingpins in advance, and the important people are gone. There is always a scapegoat of people who are arrested, and drugs that are burned and, in this case, things that are seized. But it is always very performative.

I think that, again, money, it is about money. We have got to find better ways to cutoff the flows of financing in and out of these regimes and in and out of these scam centers. That is the key.

Treasury needs to have a dedicated set of resources to this problem and really, like, put some people on it and do it immediately. It is costing Americans money and lives. And it is enabling a whole ecosystem of criminality that is endangering us, our allies, and the future of Burma. Thank you.

Mr. HUIZENGA. With that, Madam Chair, I yield back and thank you very much again, all three of you.

Mrs. KIM. With that, I also want to thank all of our witnesses for joining us today and providing wonderful, wonderful, and very powerful testimony.

I know the intent of our hearing was to eliminate the prominent source of regional instability and talk about ways that we can come up with some foreign policy opportunity for the United States.

Through the Q&A sessions, I think we were able to glean a lot of those opportunities, so we are going to continue to have this conversation with you. And I want to thank all of the members that participated in this session.

And the members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for you. So we will ask you to respond to those in writing.

So, pursuant to our committee rules, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitations.

So, without objection, this committee now stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Chairman Brian Mast

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific
Young Kim (R-CA), Chairwoman**

**Subcommittee on South and Central Asia
Bill Huizenga (R-MI), Chairman**

November 12, 2025

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific and the Subcommittee on South and Central Asia at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Wednesday, November 19, 2025

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: 2172 RHOB

SUBJECT: No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and
America's Limited Options

WITNESSES: The Honorable Kelley Currie
Non-resident Senior Fellow
Atlantic Council's Indo-Pacific Security Initiative

Steve Ross
Senior Fellow
Stimson Center

Lucky Karim
Executive Director
Refugee Women for Peace and Justice (RWPJ)

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202 -226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF EAP/SCA JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date November 19, 2025 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 10:00 Ending Time 12:01

Recesses ☐ (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairwoman Kim

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

NA

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Attached

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 12:01

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs
Joint Subcommittee Hearing
East Asia and the Pacific
South and Central Asia
119th Congress

ATTENDANCE

Meeting on: No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options
Date: November 19, 2025

[illegible]

October 28, 2025

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

House Foreign Affairs Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Burma's military always has been and remains today the single greatest source of instability and economic destruction in the country.

Dear Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee,

We, the undersigned, write to you to express our grave concern over the Burmese military regime's recent hiring of U.S.-based lobbying firms at the cost of some \$3 million in order to sanitize its genocidal and illegitimate image under the false pretense that supporting the regime's scam election¹ will advance U.S. interests². Using a small coterie of ostensibly independent actors, including scholars and business intermediaries involved with the country's brief opening from 2011 to 2021, the military regime seeks to promote the notion that the elections will reestablish a stable environment for investment, commerce, and humanitarian access, reversing the inevitability of state collapse in the absence of continued military rule. This is a false narrative that masks the fact that Burma's military always has been and remains today the single greatest source of instability and economic destruction in the country.

The conditions on the ground in Burma today tell us that the elections will be another monumental failure for the military regime, because it has already been reduced to a minority force in the country by overwhelming popular resistance to continued military rule—a reality underscored by limitations on opposition parties, voting restrictions and arbitrary detention of political rivals³. The junta now controls a little more than 15 percent of the country's territory in the face of a large well-armed resistance⁴. This reality will make the elections yet one more cause for nationwide violence because they are designed specifically to entrench military rule. The military regime cannot broker credible deals, it has only a small fraction of the population participating in the elections, and it is beholden to Russia⁵ and China⁶ for military support, financing, and diplomatic cover.

The lobbyists' promise of access to Burma's rich supply of rare earth is hollow, because these riches are located in remote regions of the country under the control of resistance forces along the Burma-China border⁷. The military regime does not control the mining sites or transit routes to these areas, and the

¹ Shwe, Tun Aung. "From Scam Centers to Scam State: The Road to Myanmar's Scam Election." *The Diplomat*, September 16, 2025.

² Brunnstrom, David. "Myanmar Signs Deal with Washington Lobbyists to Rebuild US Relations." *Reuters*, August 8, 2025.

³ Maung Kavi. "Myanmar Citizens Fear More Harassment, Violence as Election Nears." *The Irrawaddy*, September 15, 2025.

⁴ "Effective Control in Myanmar: 2024 Update (Briefing Paper)." *Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M)*. May 30, 2024.

⁵ ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR). "Russia's Support for Myanmar Junta Deepens Repression and Threatens Regional Stability, Southeast Asian MPs Said." *ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)*, March 4, 2025.

⁶ Abuza, Zachary and Nyein Nyein Thant Aung. "Too Little, Too Late: China Steps Up Military Aid to Myanmar's Junta." *Stimson Center*, March 4, 2025.

⁷ Hein Htoo Zan. "Myanmar Junta-Allied Border Battalion Falls in Kachin Rare Earth Hub." *The Irrawaddy*, October 15, 2024.

elections will hardly reverse these facts⁸. To pretend otherwise would undercut the key U.S. asset in Burma: the trust and goodwill of the vast majority of the population who support the resistance with their lives and stand as a bulwark to Chinese domination of the country.

We are grateful for your strong support for Burma’s democratic movement. At this critical moment, we urge the U.S. Congress to unequivocally reject the military regime’s propaganda and lobbying efforts that tout hollow diplomatic and business promises which ultimately undermine U.S. long-term strategic interests in Burma. There is little question that continued military rule will only consolidate Chinese hegemony over Burma, mainland Southeast Asia’s largest and potentially richest country. The spectacle of junta boss General Min Aung Hlaing standing beside Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, and Kim Jong Un at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit should leave no doubt about his ambitions⁹.

We believe that U.S. strategic interests in Burma will be better served by continued U.S. Congressional support for the policies set out in the BURMA Act. We also support and commend the BRAVE Burma Act, No New Burma Funds Act and Burma GAP Act that were recently passed with overwhelming support in their respective committees and await introductions to the House floor.

We, the undersigned, **condemn** efforts by business intermediaries and other outside actors advocating engagement with the military regime under the guise of securing economic opportunities to advance U.S. interests. For all the reasons laid out above, we believe firmly that these lobbying efforts are destructive to long-term U.S. strategic interests and harmful to the people of Burma.

We also **pledge** not to work on behalf of these actors, nor accept their funds, directly or through affiliates. Instead, we will continue to prioritize advocacy that strengthens justice, accountability and the democratic will of the people of Burma.

In strength and solidarity,

U.S. Communities, Coalitions and Organizations¹⁰

1. Albany Karen Community
2. Alliance for Democracy in Myanmar
3. Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches
4. American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
5. Anti Dictatorship in Burma - DC Metro Area
6. Atlanta Matupi Community Church
7. BEHD 3 KYEE MYING TAING CDM
8. Boston Free Burma
9. Buffalo Myanmar Association
10. Burma Advocacy Group
11. Burmese Community of North America

⁸ Poling, Gregory B. “The Dangerous Allure of Myanmar’s Rare Earths.” *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, August 1, 2025.

⁹ “China Summit Helps Myanmar Junta Leader with ‘Legitimacy’ Ahead of Elections.” *Mizzima (English)*, September 8, 2025.

¹⁰ Note: All listed groups have significant U.S. representation, though some are headquartered internationally.

12. Burmese Community (LA)
13. Burma Research Institute
14. Burmese Rohingya Association of North America
15. Burmese Rohingya Student Union
16. Calvary Burmese Church
17. California Karen Youth Connection
18. Campaign for a New Myanmar
19. Cambodian American and Friends for Democracy and Human Rights Advocate
20. Chin Baptist Association of North America
21. Chin Baptist Churches USA
22. Chin Community of USA – DC Area
23. Chin National Unity Organization
24. Chin Presbyterian Council USA
25. Citizen of Burma Award, Buffalo Chapter
26. DEEKU – Karenni Community of Texas
27. Democratic Burmese Students Organization
28. DFW Myanmar Ethnic Community
29. DMV & PA Strike Committee
30. Eastern Pennsylvania Karen Community
31. EmpowerAsia Initiative
32. Formosan Association for Public Affairs, Los Angeles Chapter
33. Free Burma Rangers
34. Free Myanmar Inc.
35. Gender Equality Network
36. General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church
37. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
38. Global Fund for Burma
39. Greater Indianapolis Karen Community, Indiana
40. Haitian Support Center
41. Helping Hands for Burma
42. Hong Kong Forum, Los Angeles
43. International Campaign for the Rohingya
44. International Network for Myanmar Spring Revolution
45. Jubilee Campaign USA
46. Kachin American Baptist Association
47. Karen Associate of Iowa
48. Kachin Baptist Churches USA
49. Karen Baptist Churches USA
50. Karen Community of Akron
51. Karen Community of Louisville
52. Karen Community of Minnesota
53. Karen Community of New Bern
54. Karen Community of North Carolina
55. Karen Community of the Quad-Cities
56. Karen Organization of America

57. Karen Organization of Utica
58. Karen Society of Utica
59. Karen Society of Buffalo
60. Karen Society of Nebraska
61. Karenni-American Association
62. Karenni Community of Arizona
63. Karenni Community of Minnesota
64. Karenni Organization of America
65. Logansports Burmese Community
66. Lowell International Church
67. Mon Business Association of America
68. Myanmar Spring Helping Hands
69. Nebraska Chin Baptist Church
70. New York City Burmese Community
71. No Business with Genocide
72. One Dollar for People of Burma
73. Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship
74. Philadelphia Ethnic Community of Burma
75. Preventing and Ending Mass Atrocities
76. Project Maje
77. Rohingya American Society
78. Save Myanmar, DMV-PA Area
79. Save Myanmar, San Francisco
80. Save Myanmar, USA
81. Saydanar Community Development Center
82. Sone Yay Foundation
83. Students for Free Burma
84. St. John Catholic Church - Iola, Kansas
85. Syracuse Karen Community, New York
86. Texas Alliance for Myanmar
87. The Rangoon Post
88. The Sentry
89. U.S. Advocacy Coalition for Myanmar
90. U.S. Campaign for Burma
91. United States Chin Coalition
92. Women for Myanmar, DC Metro Area
93. Women Peace Network
94. Zomi Innkuan Portland Oregon

US drops sanctions on Myanmar junta's allies after military chief praises Donald Trump

By [Libby Hogan](#) and wires

Economic Sanctions

Sat 26 Jul 2025 at 2:20am



Myanmar's military chief Min Aung Hlaing met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in May.
(Reuters Handout:Alexei Nikolsky/RIA Novosti)

In short:

The US has lifted sanctions it had imposed on some allies of Myanmar's generals.

The move follows the junta chief sending a glowing letter of praise to US President Donald Trump.

What's next?

Human rights groups say the move raises concerns about weakening efforts to punish

Myanmar's military for its continued strikes on civilians.

The United States has lifted sanctions on several allies of Myanmar's ruling generals and their military-linked companies in a move that has prompted concern from politicians and rights groups.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing seized power in a 2021 coup, deposing the civilian government and sparking a civil war that has killed thousands, displaced 3.5 million left and half the nation in poverty.

The US Treasury announcement it would lift the sanctions came two weeks after Min Aung Hlaing sent a glowing letter of praise to US President Donald Trump, in response to his threat of tariffs, and commended him for shutting down US-funded media outlets covering the conflict.

Rights groups say the decision risks undermining efforts to hold the country's military regime accountable.

The US Treasury said it had dropped sanctions against KT Services & Logistics and its founder, Jonathan

Myo Kyaw Thaung, who were sanctioned in 2022 for leasing Yangon's port from a military-owned firm.

Others delisted include the Myanmar Chemical and Machinery Company and Suntac Technologies, which were previously sanctioned for producing arms, including tanks and mortars.



The Myanmar military bombed a school in Sagaing in May despite a ceasefire. (*AFP: Stringer*)

A US Treasury spokesperson said the removals were conducted "in the ordinary course of business" and declined to explain why the individuals were removed from the list.

A senior Trump administration official said the decision was unrelated to the general's letter.

John Sifton, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, described the decision as "extremely worrying" and said it suggested a weakening of the US sanctions regime.

"The individuals involved are not marginal players; they have facilitated the junta's arms imports from countries such as China and Russia," analyst Sean Turnell told the ABC.

"These are people who are closely tied to Myanmar's war economy.

"Lifting sanctions on them sends the wrong message."

Civilian casualties mount as conflict continues

The sanctions decision comes as Myanmar's military continues deadly air strikes against civilians.

In May, a junta air strike on a school in Sagaing region killed 20 students and two teachers, according to local witnesses.

The strike was carried out despite a purported humanitarian ceasefire called to help the nation recover from a devastating earthquake.

In July, more than 20 civilians, including children, were reportedly killed in another air strike on a monastery sheltering displaced people.

Amnesty International data has shown that the military has continued importing aviation fuel despite sanctions, enabling lethal air strikes across the country.

This year, the junta's China and Russia-backed forces have clawed back ground on the northern front. State media also said its soldiers managed "to fully retake" the gold mining town of Thabeikkyin this week.



A Myanmar military bombardment damaged this school in the Sagaing region in May. (AFP: Stringer)

Financial levers remain critical

Early this month, as part of a slate of import tariffs Mr Trump ordered, Myanmar was notified of a 40 per cent tariff to take effect on August 1.

On July 11, Min Aung Hlaing responded by proposing a reduced rate of 10 per cent to 20 per cent.



Min Aung Hlaing (left) visited Moscow earlier this year.
(Pool via REUTERS)

US Democratic Representative Ami Bera, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, said the decision to lift the sanctions "goes against our values of freedom and democracy".

However, White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said that sanctions delistings "were collected over the last year in accordance with standard Treasury course of business".

The US maintains sanctions against Min Aung Hlaing and two state-owned banks, the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) and Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank (MICB).

Mr Turnell said it was important to keep individuals and banks involved in the military's procurement network on the sanctions list as it

could complicate efforts to restrict the regime's access to foreign currency, which remains critical for weapons purchases.

"Even Myanmar's allies, such as Russia and China, insist on payment in dollars or euros," Mr Turnell said.

"That makes financial sanctions one of the most effective levers the US still holds."

ABC/wires

Posted Sat 26 Jul 2025 at 2:20am

House Foreign Affairs Subcommittees on East Asia and the Pacific and South and Central Asia
11/19/2025 Joint Hearing
“No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options”
The Honorable Kelley Currie, Non-resident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council's Indo-Pacific Security Initiative
Questions for the Record from Rep. Self of Texas

Question 1:

The crisis in Burma has become a [strategic vulnerability](#) for the United States—but the question remains, *how much* of a vulnerability. China is exploiting the junta's instability to expand its Belt and Road Initiative, including the Kyaukpyu (*pronounced: “Kee-Auk-pyou”*) deep-water port and the China–Myanmar oil and gas that help Beijing bypass the Strait of Malacca. At the same time, northern Myanmar now supplies nearly two-thirds of the world's dysprosium and terbium—critical minerals [used](#) in U.S. defense equipment—much of which ultimately flows through Chinese processing chains. Junta-aligned militias are also driving massive cyber-scam operations and narcotics trafficking that directly harm Americans.

Given these interconnected U.S. interests—strategic access, critical-mineral supply chains, illicit financial networks, and China's expanding leverage—how do you assess the impact of the Burma crisis on U.S. interests?

Answer 1:

Burma's ongoing polycrisis impacts U.S. interests in several important ways. The violence and instability created by the Burmese military's coup and its war against its own people has created an enabling environment for lawlessness and criminality along Burma's shared border with Thailand, one of America's oldest and most important allies in the Indo-Pacific region. The scam centers and attendant human trafficking, money laundering, violence, and other criminal activities have both a direct impact on Americans who are victimized, as well as undermining efforts to keep illicit activity out of the U.S. financial system. These scam centers also enable both the junta's corrupt and brutal rule, as well as facilitating Chinese influence in Burma. The illicit financial flows from these and other illegal activities corrupt regional banking systems, and benefit transnational criminal organizations that are also involved in drug production and trafficking. There is also evidence that the Chinese transnational criminal organizations that are involved in the scam centers are connected to drug cartels in North America, specifically for the purpose of money laundering.

China takes advantage of the misgovernance and disaggregated sovereignty of Burma to get concessions from the military regime, including on mega projects such as the Kyaukpyu port, oil and gas exploration and pipelines, large-scale hydropower projects, mining and other strategic infrastructure projects. Because the military junta systematically preys on any normal economic activity in areas under its control, very little legitimate economic activity is happening in Burma. This further enhances Beijing's ability to keep Burma weak, divided and dependent, a situation that only serves to benefit China and further immiserate the people of Burma.

Question 2:

Is there a way for the United States to extract critical minerals, including dysprosium and terbium, from Burma without any involvement from China?

Answer 2:

Theoretically, it is possible. The majority of the dysprosium and terbium mining takes place in areas outside of the regime's control. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) took control of these mines earlier this year, and has suspended and otherwise limited rare earth mining in their territory due to complaints about the

environmental damage this mining was causing for local communities. The KIA is interested in diversifying the market for minerals they control, but these mines are hard against the Chinese border and it would be difficult both logistically and politically to create an alternative to the current Chinese dominated supply and value chains. One possibility would be for major consumers to establish a consortium that could work with the KIA to create a more transparent marketplace that allowed them to establish contracts for mining that would include safeguards, remediation funds, and other high-standard elements. China would continue to put pressure on the KIA, but if other countries were willing to work with them it would give them more leverage to push back on China's harmful mining practices as well as their current monopoly on Kachin rare earths. Any such effort, however, should keep in mind that China has previously shown a willingness to provide additional political support, weapons, and other benefits to the military regime in order to secure critical supply chains, strategic infrastructure, and cooperation on scam center activity that the party-state objects to.

Question 3:

The Trump Administration has imposed 40% tariffs on all imports from Burma. How could the Administration leverage these tariffs to stabilize the country and deter Chinese influence in the region?

Answer 3:

U.S.-Burma bilateral trade is minimal, and even before the 2021 coup the Burmese economy operated largely in a gray zone that is difficult for U.S. and other western investors to navigate. Since the coup, the situation has only worsened as the junta has sought to reassert its control over both the legal and illicit economies. Any expansion of economic cooperation with Burma should focus on working with areas outside the control of the regime and engaging with revolutionary forces that are seeking to build a democratic society with the rule of law.

Question 4:

China is by far the most active outside influence in Burma, supporting both the junta and various Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) which are destabilizing the country. China would much rather prefer instability in the region than have a Westernized, democratically run government of Burma.

Aside from supporting military factions in Burma, what else has the PRC done to stoke tensions in the country? (big part of the answer is exploiting ethnic divisions)

Answer 4:

China has a long history of interference in Burma's internal affairs, going back to the early days of the country when Mao Zedong supported a communist insurgency that destabilized Burma and led to the first of many military coups. As previously noted, China wishes Burma to be weak, divided and dependent so that the party-state can take advantage of Burma's natural resources, access to the Indian Ocean, and other strategic assets. China plays all sides in Burma's long-running civil conflicts, including in stoking anti-Muslim sentiment during the so-called transitional period from 2010-2021. As an economic actor, China is extractive and rapacious—engaging in environmentally destructive mining and infrastructure projects that have aroused significant public opposition. At the United Nations, China has frequently provided political cover for the current and former military regimes, and disrupted efforts towards accountability and reform. As a major booster of the junta's planned sham elections, China's involvement in Burma is intended to stabilize the situation just enough to improve the prospects for additional extractive economic and political activities.

**¹House Foreign Affairs Subcommittees on East Asia and the Pacific and South and Central Asia
11/19/2025 Joint Hearing
“No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options”
Steve Ross, Senior Fellow, Stimson Center
Questions for the Record from Rep. Self of Texas**

Question 1:

Companies based in South Korea (POSCO International), India (ONGC Videsh & GAI), Myanmar (Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise), and China (China National Petroleum Corporation) are all involved in the Myanmar pipeline project.

These pipelines would give China a way to maneuver around a blockade of the Strait of Malacca if conflict arose over Taiwan. How significant an advantage would China's access to these pipelines be in the event a Taiwan Strait conflict?

Response: Broadly, China has three core interests in Myanmar: 1) advancing its geostrategic interests, including through China-Myanmar Economic Corridor projects (pipelines, ports, roads, rail, special economic zones, trade, etc.); 2) maintaining leverage over all key stakeholders in Myanmar to enable enough stability, particularly on the China-Myanmar border, to advance its geostrategic interests, but not so much stability that it does not have the ability to play one side off the other; and 3) ensuring Myanmar remains part of its sphere of influence, using the language of “sovereignty” and “non-interference” to keep the West out, but not viewing itself as subject to the same constraints.

In the event of a blockade of the Strait of Malacca, the completed oil and gas pipelines from Myanmar's coast on the Bay of Bengal to southwest China would likely alleviate some pressure on China's demand for oil and gas. But the benefits China would derive from the pipelines in such an instance would be tempered by the capacity of the pipelines. At present, China imports about 11 million barrels of oil per day, while peak capacity of the China-Myanmar oil pipeline is just 440,000 barrels per day, meaning the pipeline can meet just 4% of China's daily needs. Similarly, China imported nearly 300 million cubic meters of natural gas per day in 2024, while the China-Myanmar gas pipeline has a maximum capacity of just 32.9 million cubic meters per day, meeting at most just over 10% of China's daily needs.

In addition to the oil and gas pipelines, however, China is also building a deep seaport and special economic zone at Kyaukphyu; each component of these projects should be viewed in light of China's aforementioned interests in Myanmar.

Question 2:

The People's Republic of China has effectively deployed troops to the coast of Burma near Kyaukphyu in the Rahkine (*pronounced “Rahine”*) State where China's Sino-Myanmar pipelines reach the Bay of Bengal. These forces are technically mercenaries, operating legally under a junta-enacted law permitting foreign military personnel to serve as mercenaries in the area.

What action can Congress or the Administration take to prevent China from exploiting this mercenary loophole in Burma?

¹ Baron, Jeff. “China's crude oil imports decreased from a record as refinery activity slowed.” U.S. Energy Information Administration, 11 February 2025. <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=64544>. See also Reynolds, Sam.

“Understanding the competitive landscape for China's LNG market.” Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, 10 April 2025. <https://ieefa.org/resources/understanding-competitive-landscape-chinas-lng-market>.

Response: At present, U.S. options to address the role of Chinese security personnel in Myanmar, such as those reportedly deployed to Kyaukphyu, are somewhat limited. Congress or the Administration could, however, support efforts to investigate and shed light on the presence of Chinese security contractors in Myanmar as well as linkages between these personnel and the Chinese state. In addition, there may be scope for the Administration to engage ASEAN on the development of national or regional standards on the deployment of private security and military contractors within the bloc and among its members given ASEAN's principle to be free from external interference.

Question 3:

All things considered (Chinese influence, tensions between ethnic groups, the junta's grip on Burma, etc.), how realistic or attainable is it to expect Burma to transform into a peaceful, democratic country?

Response: Myanmar will not become a peaceful, democratic country overnight. But Myanmar's emergence as a peaceful and democratic country would serve U.S. interests; in contrast, continued military rule poses a threat to regional stability and to U.S. interests. Through divide and rule tactics, a brutal counterinsurgency strategy, and with support from China and Russia, the Myanmar military has sought to extend its rule with significant collateral damage in the process. Since the coup in 2021, the military has displaced millions, killed thousands of civilians, done significant damage to the Myanmar economy, and overseen the proliferation of drug production and online scam centers that directly affect Americans.

Nonetheless, the Myanmar military is now close to the weakest it has ever been. It has lost wide swathes of territory to ethnic armed groups and other resistance forces and opposition to military rule has had more broad-based support since the 2021 military coup than at any other point in Myanmar's history. Moreover, ethnic armed groups and People's Defense Forces have consolidated or established control and governing structures across wide swathes of the country, structures that have the potential to form the building blocks for a future system of governance that is more democratic and that, by granting much greater autonomy to actors at local levels, addresses core grievances, particularly of ethnic minorities, and thus enables a more durable peace to emerge.

Question 4:

The Department of State has maintained its Country of Particular Concern designation since 1999. Are there sanctions under the CPC designation that the Administration has not yet imposed that you would recommend?

Response: There are a few sanctions-related tools at the disposal of Congress and the Administration. First, additional targeted sanctions could be considered for individuals and entities that perpetrate rights abuses or enable them. For example, the U.S. had placed sanctions on the military junta, the State Administration Council (SAC), as a bloc, but it has not imposed sanctions on the successor body, the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC), after the regime lifted a state of emergency in July 2025. Should the regime that emerges from military-planned elections continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests and to commit indiscriminate abuses against Myanmar civilians – as seems likely – the U.S. should consider placing sanctions on the successor to the SAC and SSPC or its members. In addition, the Administration and Congress should consider imposing additional targeted sanctions on individuals and entities that sell weapons and jet fuel to the Myanmar military and engage in or benefit from drug trafficking and online scamming. Second, the U.S. has already imposed a broad range of largely incremental sanctions on individuals and entities in Myanmar; beyond the mere imposition of sanctions, however, Congress and the Administration could do more to ensure sanctions are effectively enforced and better coordinated, both within the U.S. Government and through engaging partners and allies to impose and enforce similar measures.

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“No Exit Strategy: Burma's Endless Crisis and America's Limited Options”
Lucky Karim, Executive Director , Refugee Women for Peace and Justice
Questions for the Record from Rep. Self of Texas**

Question 1:

Has China had any role in the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities in Burma?

China's role in supporting the Military has been consistent since the Military seized power in the 1960s, China has always chosen to favor its national security and economic interests in Burma over holding the Military to account for its abuses of Human Rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Burma. (They have stood idle in the face of Military's attacks on religious and ethnic minorities and has continued to step-up its support for the Military.)

China has also played a supportive role in 2017 Genocide that the Military committed against the Rohingya community.