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Analysis of Fiscal Year 2024 Draft Appropriations for Burma March 21, 2024

Background:

On Thursday March 21, 2024, Congress produced a draft for the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act 2024, a [package](#) of spending bills for Fiscal Year 2024. The bill will need to pass before Saturday, March 23 to avoid a partial government shutdown.

The package's six spending bills include one for the State Department, foreign operations, and related programs (SFOPS). As the bills are approximately six months [late](#), existing programs had been funded at previous levels by continuing resolutions.

Burma Appropriations:

The SFOPS bill for Fiscal Year 2024 contains \$121 million in appropriations for Burma through the Economic Support Fund. This is an increase over the previous year's appropriations of \$50 million through the Economic Support Fund and \$40 million in Development Assistance (which has been discontinued).

The \$121 million figure does not include funding for Burma through Global Health Programs, which in the previous year [amounted](#) to \$13.7 million through USAID and \$32.4 million through the State Department. If GHP assistance to Burma remains constant, as [recommended](#) by the Senate, then the total could amount to \$167 million in appropriations for Burma, an increase over the Fiscal Year 2023 [figure](#) of \$136 million.

These figures also do not include other pre-existing funding streams related to Burma such as the National Endowment for Democracy or the U.S. Embassy in Burma, or additional [commitments](#) of humanitarian aid as in September 2023.

Allocation Guidance:

The \$121 million figure for the Economic Support Fund and most of the bill's language on Burma come directly from the Senate's original SFOPS [bill](#) for Fiscal Year 2024.

The spending package currently includes all seven of the specific [allocations](#) made in the Senate bill's accompanying [report](#). The following areas are listed under the Economic Support Fund:

- Accountability and justice for Rohingya- \$1,000,000
- Atrocity prevention and accountability, including the documentation and preservation of evidence, and transitional justice programs- \$7,000,000

- Support for deserters- \$1,500,000
- Technical support and non-lethal assistance- \$25,000,000

According to Section 7043 on East Asia and the Pacific, the agreement also includes the following for Burma:

- Assistance and cross-border programs, including in Thailand and India- \$75,000,000
- Governance/federalism programs- \$10,000,000
- Support for current and former political prisoners- \$1,500,000

Implications for Policy:

In the three years since Burma’s military coup on February 1, 2021, the U.S. government [claims](#) to have spent nearly “\$400 million to help pro-democracy entities improve their governance capacity, develop local health and education policies, and refine plans for a political transition to civilian governance.” This is in addition to “over \$317 million in lifesaving assistance to people across Myanmar, through both international organizations and local partners.”

As these numbers imply, the U.S. government spends significantly more on [assistance](#) to Burma than appropriated each year, with humanitarian assistance as the leading category. Still, the funds specifically appropriated for Burma are an important component of overall aid.

While the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, contains a 6% [cut](#) to appropriations for foreign assistance to other countries, it appears to provide an increase in appropriations for Burma, particularly for pro-democracy programming. Just as importantly, it provides more specific guidance to the Biden administration on the usage of these funds.

In particular, the \$25 million allocation for technical support and non-lethal assistance is an explicit push for the U.S. government to more directly support pro-democracy forces. This type of non-lethal aid had already been [authorized](#) by the BURMA Act but never had specific funding attached. Non-lethal assistance could take any number of [forms](#), such as communications equipment or early-warning systems to protect civilians.

One of the other major changes is the explicit inclusion of “assistance and cross-border programs” in India, which was never mentioned in the previous year’s appropriations. This inclusion fulfills a major advocacy goal for CAM, as UNHCR [estimates](#) that the coup displaced 59,000 refugees from Northwest Burma, including Chin State, into India.

Relevant Documents:

- a. Draft of Further Consolidated Appropriations Act 2024 ([here](#))
- b. Draft Joint Explanatory Statement for SFOPS ([here](#))
- c. FY 2024 Senate SFOPS Appropriations Bill: S.2438 ([here](#))
- d. Accompanying Report for S.2438 ([here](#))
- e. The BURMA Act of 2022 ([here](#))
- f. CAM’s FY 2024 Analysis ([here](#))
- g. CAM’s FY 2023 Recommendations ([here](#))