



In a major shake-up within the Burmese military leadership, several high-ranking senior officers have reportedly resigned in order to join the junta's proxy political party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

According to army sources, the officers include Lt-Gen Thar Aye, Lt-Gen Ohn Myint, Lt-Gen Myint Swe and Lt-Gen Khin Zaw—all of whom are chiefs of the regime's bureau of special operations, which oversee the regional military commands.

Others included Lt-Gen Maung Shein, defense services inspection and auditor general, Lt-Gen Tin Aye, chief of ordnance production for Burma's armed forces, and Lt-Gen Myint Hlaing, chief of air defense.

If confirmed, this would be the second batch of high-ranking military officials to leave their posts to work for the USDP led by the junta's Prime Minister Thein Sein and other former military officials.

The latest unconfirmed reports say the regime's No.3 Gen Shwe Mann and Gen Tin Aung Myint Oo, the regime's No.4 and Secretary (1), are also expected to resign their army posts and stand as USDP candidates in the November election.

Lt-Gen Min Aung Hlaing and Lt-Gen Ko Ko who are also heads of bureau of special operations, Lt-Gen Hla Htay Win, armed forces training chief, and Lt-Gen Thura Myint Aung, adjutant general, are reportedly not on the list of resignations.

It is rumored that Min Aung Hlaing is expected to become the deputy commander-in-chief of the army and that Hla Htay Win will fill the position vacated by Tin Aye.

There has not yet been any official announcement of the reported resignations, which are said to have occurred last Wednesday. The positions for bureau of special operations may no longer exist, said an army source.

The retired military officials are expected to stand as USDP candidates in the November election. The USDP, led by Prime Minister Thein Sein, claims to have a membership of 20 million people and is Burma's largest political party. USDP candidates have already began organizing campaigns in constituencies which they will be contesting in the election.

In a related development, some other military officials were recently transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A source said that Brig-Gen Myint Naung in Karen State, Brig-Gen San Myint Oo in Shan State and two other officers ranking as Brigadier Generals were assigned to the ministry.

These four military officers are expected to be assigned to postings in Burmese embassies abroad. The Burmese ambassador to the United Kingdom, ex-Brig Gen Ne Win, ambassador to Vietnam Khin Maung Soe and four other Burmese ambassadors in foreign countries have been recalled to Burma.

The diplomatic postings left vacant by the recall would be filled by current military regional commanders in the army and other senior military officials, sources said.