



Unquiet Northern Border (图)

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2010-08-30

Not a week passes without gunshots at the Mongolia's northern border with Tuva, claiming casualties and hundreds of cattle stolen from both sides.

"It was already well past midnight when a dog barked," recalls D.Munkhbaatar, 27, from Tes locality in Zavkhan province. "I came out and saw in distance several horse riders. When they came closer, they suddenly shot at me several times. Then they broke into our gher and begun firing."

"Luckily my two cousins stayed overnight at our home, so they blew off candles hearing gun shots and laid on the floor protecting with their bodies my younger brothers. They stayed alive while both my father and mother were shot dead in their bed."

The young man was left with his leg and arm bones smashed by bullets. The night intruders took away 68 cows and two horses.

After this tragic event of January 13, the two countries' governments finally agreed to step up border guarding between Mongolia and an autonomous Tuva republic, part of Russia. However, situation did not improve much since.

January 18

Shootout between borders guards and five Tuvinians

January 21

A group of Tuvinians, armed with AK-47, opened fire at Mongolian border guards while herding across border cattle stolen from herder B.Magsar.

January 25

About 60 horses were stolen. Two owners of horses, herders Ochirdari and Magsarjav from Tes locality in Uvs province, pursuing the thieves, shot several times at a Russian jeep driving on the other side of the border, killing the driver and taking the passenger a hostage. However, it turned out that the two have had nothing to do with the theft. Now they face a murder case trial.

February 2

Herder G.Damjin from Tes locality was found wounded near the borderline. Three days before armed people driving on a Russian jeep crossed the border and took him away. For two days he was beaten and interrogated about whereabouts of cattle stolen from Tuva. Then the robbers shot him into both legs and left him near the border. When he was found lying helpless in snow, both his legs and arms were badly frost bitten.

This brief chronicle gives an idea of the situation in the two northern provinces of Mongolia since 1994, deteriorating and tensing ever since. Shoot outs from both sides, captured hostages, kidnapped children and cattle stolen in hundreds, represents a sad legacy of disruption of normal trade between the two countries.

Experts say that before Mongolia used to feed half of Siberia, exporting up to five millions sheep and cattle to Russian meat factories across the border. Since the Russia introduced in early 90s import tariffs and strict requirement to conduct all transactions in hard currency, the export of Mongolian beef and meat products to Russia slowly dwindled.

"We found that a well established ring of criminals in Tuva quickly slaughter the stolen cattle and then sell the meat on food market in Siberian cities and towns where the demand for meat is high," says a Mongolian police officer who recently visited Tuva.

Meantime, the life is getting tough for Mongolian herders living near the frontier.

"Sometimes we can not sleep, forced to guard our cattle against the Tuvinian cattle thieves," shares his grievances Ya. Tumurjav, a herder from Zuungobi locality in Uvs province. "And even then, what can we do against armed robbers?"

Last year he has lost 570 sheep and the latest news was that his 88 horses were gone while he visited the capital city carrying the petition of Tokhoi locality residents to the Government and the Parliament to take action. Out of 110 families living in the Tokhoi area almost third of herder families already moved away afraid to lose the remaining animals and property.

According to the latest official statistics, 423 cases of illegal border crossing from Tuvinian and 194 cases from Mongolian side were registered last year alone, hardly a day without an incident. While Tuvinian cattle thieves took away 2,056 heads of cattle, Mongolians retaliated stealing 719 heads.

However, this is only official data, while many more cases simply go unreported. Often herders take arms to settle the disputes and end up in a courtroom.

As the Russian Izvestia daily reported recently, the border region between Mongolia and Tuva reminds a “battle scene” but with Russian border guards absently watching in binoculars the cross border illegal traffic.

General-Mayor Bazarsad, head of the Mongolian Border Guards, says that they adhere to “soft” approach to avoid any confrontation with the Russian side.

Such “soft” approach only plays on the hand of criminals who make the living out of selling stolen cattle meat to depressed Siberian regions.

A recent statement by now the Russian President Vladimir Putin that the issue “would be dealt with as a top priority,” gives a sign of hope to Mongolian herders that they can finally sleep without fear of theft and murder coming across the border.

[存档文本](#)