FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Victor Win (650) 756 5887
Nyunt Than (510) 220 1323

January 2, 2008

MEDIA ADVISORY

BADA urges US Congress to take strong measures against foreign Oil Companies in Burma

Burmese American Democratic Alliance (BADA) today praised the United States Congress for imposing stronger sanctions against Burma's junta, but urged to take strong measures against the foreign oil companies operating in Burma.

In a response to the recent peaceful demonstrations and brutal ongoing crackdowns in Burma, last month, the United States House of Representatives and the Senate unanimously approved a sanction bill on Burma, the Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2007, introduced by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-CA).

"This is a much welcomed and needed action by the US Congress. It will strengthen the existing US sanctions against the Burma's junta and will tighten the collar around the regime's neck," says Maung Maung Latt, a BADA Board member and an exiled elected representative of Burma's 1990 election. "But, to have a real impact on the junta, the US Congress must do more against the foreign oil companies operating in Burma," he added.

Burma's military government relies heavily on the oil and gas sector to sustain itself in power. In its recent report, the New York based Human Rights Watch (HRW) pointed out that billions of dollars generated by the oil projects in Burma, which involved at least 27 companies from 13 countries, helped to fund the military without bringing benefits to ordinary people. California-based US oil giant Chevron is one major player cited in the HRW list.

In 1997, President Bill Clinton imposed an investment ban on Burma, but the Chevron's investment (formerly Unocal's investment) was untouched by the bill that had a grandfather clause allowing existing investment to continue. In 2003, after the regime's physical attack on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her convoy, the Congress approved more sanctions against the regime, but the US oil investment in Burma was not targeted again.

This foreign investment provides a crucial source of support to the junta, allowing it to ignore demands that it returns Burma to civilian rule and end human rights abuses. The regime earned approximately $2.16 billion in 2006 from the Chevron's investment, Yadana Gas Pipeline project that channels Burma's gas to Thailand, allowing the regime to tighten its grip on the power greatly oppressing its people and the opposition forces.

"It has been long overdue for the US Congress to take on Chevron and the foreign oil companies in Burma. And such action should start with the closure of the Chevron's investment in Burma, followed by the financial sanctions against the remaining foreign oil companies operating there," says Nyunt Than, the president of BADA, which has long been advocating against the Chevron's investment in Burma.

More importantly, the Chevron's investment has set an example on how to take advantage of the Burma's situation. Following the Chevron's lead, foreign oil companies – many from oil-thirsty Burma's neighboring countries such as China, India and Thailand, are lining up to partner with Burma's military junta and tap into the country's lucrative resources, particularly oil and gas fields.

On 16th October 2007, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has also introduced a similar sanction bill on Burma, the Saffron Revolution Support
Act of 2007, which would close the loophole and effectively end the Chevron's involvement in Burma. However, many are concerned that his effort will not get enough support in the Senate.

"As long as Chevron remains involved in Burma, any US sanctions against the brutal regime will be a hollow one. US must clean itself first and start setting a good example, not a bad one. We urge the US Congress to produce a bill that would effectively end the Chevron's investment in Burma," Than added.

###

BADA is a community-based organization in the San Francisco Bay Area. BADA has been advocating democracy and freedom for all the people of Burma since its founding in 2001.