



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

July 22, 2016 / KHRG #15-104-S1

Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, July to September 2015

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, Toungoo District between July and September 2015, including drug selling, Tatmadaw military activities, education and healthcare.

- *A drug dealer named Aung Myo Htun was arrested along with 10 pills of methamphetamine by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) on August 12th 2015 in Kaw Soh Hkoh village, Htantabin Township.*
 - *Some villagers report that they do not trust the Tatmadaw as they are still active in Toungoo District.*
 - *Flu, diarrhoea, stomach-ache and dengue fever are common illness facing villagers in Toungoo District. They usually access medical treatment in KNU or Burma/Myanmar government hospitals if they can afford the cost.*
 - *Schools in Toungoo District are struggling with limited funding from the Burma/Myanmar government which provides some funding for teachers but not all resources, and some of the teachers are not interested in teaching well.*
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Situation Update | Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, Toungoo District (July to September 2015)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in November 2015. It was written by a community member in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹

Introduction

There are two townships in Taw Oo [Toungoo] District which are Htaw T'Htoo [Htantabin] and Daw Hpa Hkoh [Thandaunggyi] townships. Taw Oo [Toungoo] District Situation Update [was documented] from July 16th 2015 to September 30th 2015. The Situation Update covers Tatmadaw's location and activity, healthcare, education, militia location bases, and drugs.

Drugs

Drug trading [selling] was happening on August 12th 2015 in Htaw T'Htoo [Htantabin] Township, Hkler La area, Kaw Soh Hkoh village, Taw Oo District. Methamphetamine² was being traded

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeast Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

² This drug is commonly referred to as *yaba*, which means "crazy medicine" in Thai. First developed in East Asia during World War II to enhance soldiers' performance, methamphetamine has become increasingly popular in

and the name of the drug dealer is Aung Myo Htun. He lives in Section 18 of Taw Oo [Town]. He is 29 years old and travels [carries the drug] from Taw Oo [Town] to Kler La road [where Tatmadaw army camp is based]. He came up to Kler La [village] on August 12th 2015 but when he was on his way there the KNU [KNLA] leaders got the information and ordered the soldiers to wait for him in Kaw Soh Hkoh village. Aung Myo Htun was arrested along with ten pills of methamphetamines [by the KNLA]. Aung Myo Htun said that related to those drugs the Tatmadaw soldiers who are based in Kler La army camp, Sergeant So Paing and Captain Nay Aung, ordered him to bring them for them. He said that he will be given 15,000 kyats (US \$12.77)³ for the traveling fee if he brought them to them. Aung Myo Htun was arrested by the KNU [KNLA] and they sent him to [the KNU] operations camp then to the district headquarters. He is currently in a prison cell. If we look at the drug situation it can ruin people therefore it brings worry [problems] for the people and community members. Moreover it is kind of tool for the Tatmadaw [to use civilians for selling the drugs].



The photos were taken on August 14th 2015 in the lower part of Kaw Soh Hkoh village, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District. The photos show an ethnic Bamar villager named Aung Myo Htun (left) who was arrested along with ten pills of methamphetamine (right). He was carrying them on his way to Kler La Tatmadaw Army Camp to send them to Sergeant Soe Paing and Captain Nay Aung. [Photo: KHRG]

The Tatmadaw activities and their locations [army bases]

The Tatmadaw are active in the same ways as before⁴ in Taw Oo [Toungoo] District. They usually send rations, [enough] for three or four months per time and rotate their base from battalion to battalion. If we look at [the situation] since the ceasefire⁵ has taken place to the

Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Vietnam, and in Burma/Myanmar where it is typically manufactured. See, "Yaba, the 'crazy medicine of East Asia,'" UNODC, May 2008 and "Woman raped and killed in Pa'an District, October 2012," KHRG, December 2012, and "Chapter: Drug production, use and the social impacts in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire," KHRG, June 2014. - See more at: [Growing drug use and its consequences in Doooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015](#), KHRG, May 2016.

³ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 23rd May 2016 official market rate of 1173 kyat to the US \$1.

⁴ "Before" in this instance refers to the time since KHRG's previous Situation Update: [Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014](#), KHRG, February 2015.

⁵ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the [KNU Stakeholder webpage](#) on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014. In March 2015, the seventh round of the negotiations for a national ceasefire between the Burma/Myanmar government and various ethnic armed actors began in Yangon, see "[Seventh Round of Nationwide Ceasefire Negotiations](#)," Karen National Union Headquarters, March 18th 2015. Following the negotiations, the KNU held a central standing committee emergency, see "[KNU: Emergency Meeting Called To Discuss Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement And Ethnic Leaders' Summit](#)," Karen News, April 22nd 2015.

current time they always keep the security guards with them when they are sending rations and they bring a lot of armed equipment with them. Therefore Taw Oo civilians cannot build trust in the Tatmadaw.

During 2015 the Tatmadaw MOC [Military Operations Command] #5 has been operating [in the following areas]:

1. MOC #5 is based in Kler La [army camp]. Aung Kyaw Myo is the MOC commander. MOC #5 came to base [their camp] in Taw Oo District on April 12th 2015.
2. Tactical Operations Command [TOC] #1 [is based] in Buh Hsa Hkee. Myo Naing is the TOC commander.
3. Tactical Operations Command #3 [is based] in P'Leh Wa and their TOC commander is Di Na.
4. LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #346 [is based] in Shet Chaunk Maing, Na Hsel Maing P'Leh Wa, Pyaung Shway, and Thay Say Taung villages. The battalion commanders [who lead that battalion] are Kyaw Myo Aung and Battalion Deputy Commander Tin Htun Lin.
5. LIB #543 is based in Play Hsa Loh and Klaw Mee Der village, and Nat Tha Me Mountain. The battalion commander of that battalion is Mo Win and battalion deputy commander is Lwin Day.
6. LIB #563 is based in Hker Weh village, K'Thaw Pyeh village, and Leik Pya Lay village and the battalion commander is Hla Htun and deputy battalion commander is Zin Win Htun.
7. LIB #371 is based in Kaw Thay Der village, Maung Taing Gyi, and [army location] Point 2606 and the battalion commander is Kyaw Htet Aung, battalion deputy commander is Zaw Mo Htet.
8. LIB #372 is based in Khay Pu place in Brigade 5 [Hpapun District] and the battalion commander is Zaw Zaw Lat, battalion deputy commander is Kyaw Mo Lwin.
9. LIB #566 is based in [army location] Point 3917, Htin Shu Taung, Buh Hsa Hkee and the battalion commander [of that battalion] is Nay Myo Aung, and battalion deputy commander is Win Htun.
10. LIB #562 is based in Kyi Hkaung, Lay Hsel Maing place [village] and the battalion commander [of that battalion] is Kyaw Htun Laing, and battalion deputy commander is Zaw Ya Min.
11. LIB #373 and LIB #317 are currently rotating with each other and the battalion commander is Kyi Lwin and battalion deputy commander is Htun Htun.
12. LIB #544 backline battalion commander is Aung Myo and the battalion deputy commander is Ko Ko Aung.
13. LIB #544 backline battalion commander is Yan Naung Htun and the battalion deputy commander is Chit Luin.
14. Tactical Operations Command #2 backline TOC commander is Myat Zaw Oo.
15. [LIB] #603 and LIB #73 are based in Leik Tho Myo.
16. [There is] a permanent army camp base in Than Daung Gyi and LIB #124 is based in that army camp and there is a military training school in there [too].

Headquarter militia's activity

There is a militia group in Taw Oo [Toungoo] district. They set up their headquarters in Pya Da Hkan village. The local headquarter is based in Lay Tho Town and their [two] front line army camps are based in Ta Khwe Pa Lo village and Shan Lel Pyin Aung village. They are operating

in the places which are based in their [operation] areas. They are supported by the Burma/Myanmar government and also receive wages from the Burma/Myanmar government. The headquarter militia group is led by Captain Kyaw Win.

Healthcare

There is no special support regarding the healthcare in Taw Oo [Toungoo] District but [therefore] if illnesses happen to them [the villagers] they treat it by themselves as much as they can. If they cannot do that they go to the KNU's hospitals [in Toungoo District]. [Some] civilians go for medical treatment in Burma/Myanmar government hospitals but some are not able to get medical treatment because of [their] lack of money. It is kind of a problem that they have to confront. We can say that there is no particular support from the government since the [2012 preliminary] ceasefire has taken place. Flu, diarrhoea, stomach-ache and dengue fever are the most common illnesses that are faced by civilians in Taw Oo District.

Education

Regarding the education in Taw Oo District there is a lack of support from the Burma/Myanmar government. In some places they provided support to the school teachers but they did not provide enough support [funding] for the school materials. The teachers are not interested in teaching and just fulfil their duty. Regarding the KNU Schools in Taw Oo [Toungoo] District [there are] three schools [situated there] and they are Htaw T'Htoo Township High School, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township High School and [the] District High School. [The] District High School was constructed in 2014 and it was opened in [early] 2015. It is located in Taw Koo village, in Per Htee area, and Htoh Lwee Wah is the school name. The purpose of the KNU leaders building this school is in order for the Karen people to be able to read and write [S'gaw] Karen language and to know the history of the Karen people. Moreover the children who are not able to get support from their parents [will have the chance] to study.

Livelihood

The community people who live in Taw Oo [Toungoo] District are mostly doing plantation, [flat] farming and cultivation [hill farming] for their living. They are farming agriculture plantations such as cardamom, betel nut, rubber, and durian. But the villagers who do not have land to do agriculture [on] are doing labour work for their daily [wage for] food. The villagers said that it was good that the KNU and government troops signed the ceasefire because they can travel and do their living [work] freely.

Conclusion

The information mentioned above is reported as we know by ourselves, and as have seen and heard from the villagers. But some information is not strong enough and we cannot write it in detail.

Further background reading on the situation in Toungoo District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to July 2015," (March 2016)
- "Toungoo Field Report: December 2013 to December 2014," (February 2016)
- "The 2015 Elections and Beyond: Perspectives from villagers in rural southeast Burma/Myanmar," (February 2016)

- “Toungoo Incident Report: Threats and arbitrary demands by Burma/Myanmar Police in Thandaunggyi Township, March 2015,” (February 2016)
- “Toungoo Interview: Maung A---, April 2015,” (January 2016)

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)