



## News Bulletin

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### **DKBA soldiers burn down huts, detain villagers and loot property in Thailand**

*Following skirmishes on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 between soldiers from DKBA Battalions #999 and 907 and KNLA Battalion #103 in north-eastern Dooplaya District, DKBA troops crossed the Thai-Burmese border and have since been operating in and around Thai-Karen villages in Umphang District of Thailand's Tak province and harassing local villagers. This area also includes Noh Poe refugee camp, home to approximately 14,000 refugees from Burma, many of whom remain anxious about the ongoing military operations in the area and a potential attack on the camp.*

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On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) troops from Special Battalion #999 and Battalion #907, under the command of Na Kha Mway and Saw La Po, combined to attack the base of Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Battalion #103, under the command of Htee Nay Shee, situated at Ta Htoo Gkyo along the Thai-Burma border inside Dooplaya District, Karen State. On the same day, the DKBA soldiers then entered Thailand near Gklaw Htaw village, Umphang District, and have since that time been operating in and around Thai-Karen villages in the area. These villages include: Gklaw Htaw, Kler Pa Doh, Htee Koh Nee, Gkoh Kee, Gka Neh Lay and Ya Wa Gklo.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009, DKBA and KNLA troops fought at a location inside Dooplaya District, near Gklaw Htaw (a nearby village on the Thai side of the border). After the fighting, DKBA soldiers withdrew at approximately 11:20 pm. As the DKBA troops were returning to their base at Tha Waw Thaw in Kawkareik township, Dooplaya District, they burnt down the farm field huts of the Thai-Karen residents of Gklaw Htaw. One local villager described the incident to KHRG:

*"When they [DKBA soldiers] arrived in the Thai village of Gklaw Htaw, they detained villagers and ordered them to guide them to the location of [the camp of KNLA Battalion #103 in Dooplaya District]. They detained 11 or 12 villagers in the village... The villagers couldn't refuse, so they had to go and show them the location of [the KNLA camp]. When they arrived mid-way [to the KNLA camp in Dooplaya District], the [KNLA soldiers] saw them and shot at them... When the villagers ran away, the [KNLA] soldiers shot at the DKBA soldiers. A few of the [DKBA] soldiers got hurt, so they had to retreat. They [the DKBA soldiers] ordered the villagers to help them carry back their patients [the wounded soldiers]. When they arrived in the village, they released the villagers. But the villagers then had to find a car to deliver them [the DKBA] to [the DKBA base at] Tha Waw Thaw. This occurred on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009. When they [the DKBA soldiers] went on their return trip, they burnt down the villagers' huts that they saw. There was a lot of property in those huts that were burnt down by the DKBA."*

The specific details of the villagers and their farm huts and belongings destroyed by the DKBA on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 are listed below:

#	Villager's name	Details of destroyed huts and other items
1	Saw O---	One wooden hut with a tin roof containing 2 hand tractors <sup>1</sup> , 10 big tins [160 kg./352 lb.] of rice, 8 cooking pots and other materials as well as another hut used to house goats. When the soldiers burnt down the hut with the goats, all 11 goats residing within were killed.
2	Saw H---	One wooden hut containing 15 big tins [240 kg./528 lb.] of rice and 120 milk tins [approx. 23.4 kg./51.5 lb.] of radish seeds as well as other materials such as clothing, pots and blankets. The burnt hut and destroyed items were valued at approximately 100,000 Thai Baht [US \$2,857.14].
3	Saw Gk---	One hut containing pots, blankets and clothing.

Following the destruction of the villagers' farm field huts, DKBA soldiers set up a new temporary camp at a location near Gklaw Htaw, Thailand. Since setting up this camp, the soldiers have reportedly harassed local villagers and stolen their livestock, including ducks and chickens. Amongst other looted property, the soldiers stole 38 ducks and 15 chickens from Naw A--- and 3 sacks of rice from Naw N---.

On January 9<sup>th</sup> 2009, DKBA soldiers encountered Saw P---, a local Thai-Karen villager, travelling to his corn fields. The soldiers called to him, provided him with 5,000 Thai Baht [US \$142.85] and then ordered him to purchase eight sacks of rice for the soldiers. The soldiers told Saw P--- that if he failed to return with the rice, they would burn down his corn field. However, the money was insufficient to purchase eight sacks of rice and Saw P--- therefore had to use 3,000 Thai Baht [US \$85.71] of his own money to cover the entire cost of the rice.

On one occasion in January, the DKBA troops operating in Umphang District fired on Thai soldiers, apparently thinking that they were KNLA troops. A local villager described it thus:

*"The Thai soldiers went to them to ask them [the DKBA soldiers] to withdraw [back to Karen State]. When they [DKBA] saw the Thai soldiers, they shot at them. And immediately the Thai soldiers fired back at them. Then the Thai soldiers ordered someone to go and ask the DKBA soldiers, 'Why did you shoot at us?' And they [DKBA] replied, 'We shot at you because we thought that you were [KNLA soldiers].'"*

Local villagers have reported to KHRG that DKBA soldiers remain active in and around Thai-Karen villages in Umphang District of Thailand's Tak province and continue to harass local residents. Furthermore, the information which KHRG has received regarding DKBA operations in this area supports similar reports that have recently come from other news sources. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, *The Irrawaddy* reported that refugees in Noh Poe camp (located in Thailand's Umpang District, southwest of Klaw Htaw village) were nervous about ongoing attacks between KNLA and DKBA forces operating near the camp.<sup>2</sup> Also on January 19<sup>th</sup>, the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) reported that DKBA soldiers had conscripted Karen villagers living in north-eastern Dooطلا District – near the Thai-Burma border – in order to support ongoing attacks against KNLA positions and had crossed the border into Thailand to harass villagers residing on the Thai side.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These are long-handled, self-propelled (petrol-fuelled) ploughing machines used mainly to plough irrigated rice fields; the operator walks behind the machine.

<sup>2</sup> "Karen Refugees Fear More Attacks," *The Irrawaddy*, January 19<sup>th</sup> 2009. Accessed at [http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=14950](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14950).

<sup>3</sup> "Pictures of Oppression: Attacks, Displacement and Oppression in Karen and Karenni States," Free Burma Rangers, January 19<sup>th</sup> 2009. Accessed at <http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2009/20090119.html>

Further to these accounts, KHRG field researchers have reported that DKBA soldiers operating on the Thailand side of the border have summoned local village heads and threatened them that if KNLA soldiers attack DKBA positions, then DKBA soldiers will proceed to burn down their villages. On January 12<sup>th</sup> 2009, DKBA soldiers warned village heads and deputy village heads from the Thai-Karen villages of Gklaw Htaw, Noh Pa Htaw Wah and Noh Poe and that *“If Kaw Thoo Lei [KNLA forces] shoot at us, we’ll burn down all of your villages.”*

Despite the fact that the communities living in villages on the Thai side of the border are Thai-Karen (and thus have a legitimate expectation of protection by the Thai Army), DKBA soldiers have continued to harass them. Since the start of January, these villagers have continued to carry out their livelihoods – despite the ongoing and nearby military operations – because many of them maintain corn and other crops which require constant cultivation. Nevertheless, one villager expressed concerns about ongoing security threats:

*“In my opinion, I would like the Thai government to say something to them [the DKBA]. The villagers are afraid that the DKBA will plant landmines in the vicinity of the village. Since they first arrived in the village, two of the villagers’ cows have died by their [DKBA] landmines. Therefore, in the future we’re afraid that people will be injured by their landmines. In the night time we dare not speak loudly—we’re afraid that they [DKBA] will come and kill us.”*

For more information on the situation in Dooplaya District and the human rights abuses involved in DKBA and SPDC control in other areas of Karen State, see the following previously published KHRG reports:

- *DKBA soldiers attack Karen village in Thailand* (October 2008)
- *Forced recruitment by DKBA forces in Pa’an District* (September 2008)
- *Daily demands and exploitation: Life under the control of SPDC and DKBA forces in Pa’an District* (September 2008)
- *DKBA soldiers burn down Ler Bpoo village, Pa’an District* (August 2008)
- *SPDC and DKBA order documents: October 2007 to March 2008* (August 2008)
- *Exploitative governance under SPDC and DKBA authorities in Dooplaya District* (July 2008)
- *SPDC soldiers arrest and kill villagers on allegations of contacting KNU/KNLA* (January 2008)
- *Forced labour, extortion and the state of education in Dooplaya District* (October 2007)

Recent photos from the area are presented in *KHRG Photo Gallery 2008* and *KHRG Photo Gallery 2007*. These and other KHRG reports and maps of the region can be found on the KHRG website at <http://www.khrq.org>.





# Karen Districts



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Scale: 1 cm to 22 km  
1 in. to 35 miles