



Incident Report

November 9th, 2020 / KHRG # 20-102-I1

Mu Traw District Incident Report: Villager injured in a UXO explosion in Bu Tho Township, September 2020

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in K--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District on September 9th 2020. A villager from Y--- village was injured in a UXO (unexploded ordnance) explosion while he was working on his lands. He lost two fingers and sustained shrapnel injuries to his hands, legs and side. The victim had to spend ten days at the Hpapun hospital for treatment. Even though he asked the local village tract authorities to report this to enable demining or UXO clearance in the villagers' farms, it still remains unreported to the township and district authorities.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	UXO explosion resulting in injuries
Date of Incident(s)	September 9 th 2020
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A peanut plantation near K--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Victim Information	
Name	E---
Age	40
Sex	Male
Nationality	Shan
Family	Single
Occupation	Hill farmer
Religion	Buddhist
Position	Villager
Village	Y--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Kyaw May Htun	Captain	LIB #405	Koo Sait	Hlaing Htun, Battalion

¹ The present document is based on information received in September 2020. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons. The parts in square brackets are explanations added by KHRG.

			Tatmadaw Camp	Commander
Htet Myo Lay	Captain	LIB #405	Koo Sait Tatmadaw Camp	Hlaing Htun, Battalion Commander

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

On September 9th 2020, a villager phoned me and informed me about this incident. Later that day, I met with the victim at the Hpapun hospital.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The very first person who informed me of this incident sent the victim to the hospital. The victim experienced this incident first hand.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

As a consequence of the Tatmadaw² destroying the Karen National Union's [KNU]³ COVID-19 screening checkpoints,⁴ on May 7th 2020, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁵ soldiers fired at the [Koo Sait] Tatmadaw camp using 'Hsuh Bler' [Sniper fire]. The Tatmadaw soldiers from Koo Sait [Tatmadaw camp situated in Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District] returned fire with M79 weapons [grenade launchers] and grenades fell on the villagers' farms. Not all of them exploded so it created fear among the villagers. Villagers knew that the KNLA only used small arms in the periodic skirmishes [with the Tatmadaw soldiers].

When the fighting broke out, the Tatmadaw soldiers from Koo Sait were led by Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁶ #405 Captain Kyaw May Htun, who is subordinate to Military Operations Command (MOC)⁷ #8. There are three captains working together in the Koo Sait Tatmadaw camp. Kyaw May Htun stays in the camp, Htet Myo Lay assists Kyaw May Htun, and Pyo Kyaw guards the road.

On September 9th 2020 at 1:30 PM, E---, a villager from Y--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District went to clear his hill field to plant peanut plants. He is 40 years old and has no family [wife and children]. He went there with his brother. His peanut field is

² Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

³ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma/Myanmar government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Myanmar and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

⁴ See KHRG, "[Mu Traw District Short Update: Destruction of KNPF COVID-19 screening checkpoints by the Tatmadaw and skirmishes between the Tatmadaw and the KNLA in Dwe Lo Township, May 2020](#)", June 2020.

⁵ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁶ A Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

⁷ Military Operations Command (MOC) is comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) made up of three battalions each.

located next to K--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township. It is situated east of Pweh Loh Kloh and there is a Tatmadaw army camp in Koo Sait to the west.

While E--- was cutting the grass, his grass cutting machine [a roto-tiller] hit a grenade fired by LIB # 405, MOC #8. The grenade exploded and he was injured by the explosion. He was sent to the hospital by car right after the incident. He was admitted to the Hpapun hospital later that day. It took him about 10 minutes to get there by car.

There was nobody and no organisation to help him in the hospital, but the Social Relief Society [a Myanmar NGO] and the Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP)⁸ gave him 50,000 kyats [USD 38.92]⁹ each [total 100,000 kyats, USD 77.84]. Only his siblings took care of him while he was in the hospital. He had to pay for the medical expenses, but some villagers [from Y--- village] helped him with 5,000 kyats [USD 3.89], and [he also received] 10,000 kyats [USD 7.78] from other villagers. He had to stay in the hospital for 10 days.

E--- never attended a Mine Risk Awareness training. After he was injured by the grenade explosion, he said that several peanut fields were empty [had not been planted] in 2020. Because of the unexploded grenades, villagers are too scared to work on their fields. Travel restrictions are also imposed on the villagers whenever something [tension between the Tatmadaw and KNLA] happens. Therefore, E--- and villagers from K--- village said that villagers are too afraid to go and work on their farms. Villagers [from Koo Sait] are also afraid of the Tatmadaw's indiscriminate small arms fire and big weapons [mortar] shelling in retaliation for KNLA attacks.

E--- was discharged from the hospital on September 19th 2020. However, he has not fully recovered yet and has to undergo follow-up medical checks once a week. Each visit costs him 15,000 kyats [USD 11.68] in medication. He lost two fingers from his right hand in the explosion. He also sustained injuries to his hands, legs and side. The victim will not be able to work for two or three months after his discharge. He asked local village tract authorities to report this incident in order to demine or clear UXOs in the villagers' farms, but the request still remains at the village tract level without further report to the township and district.¹⁰

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

The victim allowed KHRG to use this information.

⁸ The Union Solidarity and Development Party (Pyi Khaing Pyo in Burmese, Pa Ka Hpa in Karen) is the successor of the Union Solidarity and Development Association. It was officially registered as a political party on June 2nd 2010 and is headed by Burmese politician Than Htay who is the current chairman and retired Brigadier General in the Tatmadaw. Previously the party was run by former Burmese President and Prime Minister, Thein Sein who was in charge until 2015. In November 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD) ousted the USDP in a landslide election, winning a majority of seats in parliament.

⁹ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the November 5th 2020 official market rate.

¹⁰ Because the grenade was fired by the Tatmadaw, local authorities are probably afraid to report the incident to higher levels for fear of Tatmadaw reprisals.



This photo was taken on September 11th 2020 at 8:29 pm at the Hpapun hospital, Mu Traw District.

It shows the injuries sustained by E--- after the UXO explosion.

[Photo: KHRG]

Further background reading on landmine and UXO contamination in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mu Traw District Interview: Indiscriminate shelling by the Tatmadaw and impact of militarisation on local communities, May to June 2020”](#), (November 2020).
- [“Hpa-an District Incident Report: Four children injured in a UXO explosion in T’Nay Hsah Township, July 2020”](#), (September 2020).
- [“Southeast Myanmar Field Report: COVID-19, armed conflict, landmines and sexual violence, January to June 2020”](#), (September 2020).

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Myanmar. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at www.khrq.org.

Mutraw (Hpapun) District

