



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

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Mu Traw District Short Update: The destruction of old ordnance by the Tatmadaw results in UXO contamination in Bu Tho Township, December 2020

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District in December 2020 and January 2021. On December 19th 2020, the Tatmadaw¹ destroyed old ordnance on land belonging to a local farmer without his consent, resulting in UXO [unexploded ordnance] contamination. Although the land owner asked the soldiers to clear the area of UXO, they did not do so until late January 2021.²

On December 19th 2020, the Tatmadaw Maintenance Unit #642 under Hpapun Operations Command destroyed old ordnance [by detonating it] right beside a local villager's paddy field in H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract,³ Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District. The land owner is Saw L---.⁴ According to him, the Tatmadaw had already destroyed old ordnance on his land in January 2020.

The Tatmadaw did not inform Saw L--- in advance nor ask for his permission to destroy the ordnance on his land. On the day of the incident, the owner begged the soldiers not to destroy the ordnance on his paddy field, but outside of it. A Tatmadaw soldier replied that since nearby areas are bushy, they would do it beside the farm. However, they ultimately detonated the ordnance right beside the paddy field's embankment, less than one foot [30 cm] away from the farm.

Saw L--- then told the Tatmadaw soldiers to take away or destroy all the pieces of ordnance that had not exploded [but they did not do it immediately]. They left behind unexploded mortar shells, RPG-7 [40 mm rockets] and other pieces of ordnance. Saw L--- was therefore concerned for his security because of the presence of [unexploded] ordnance on his land. According to an update provided by a KHRG researcher on February 24th 2021, the Tatmadaw eventually cleared the area of unexploded ordnance in late January 2021.

¹ Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

² The present document is based on information received in February 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.

³ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

⁴ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name



These photos were taken on January 4th 2021 in H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District. The photo on the left shows the hole created by the explosion of the old ordnance. The photo on the right shows Saw L--- looking at his farm. [Photos: KHRG]



These photos were taken on January 4th 2021 in H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District. They show some of the pieces of unexploded ordnance the Tatmadaw Maintenance Unit #642 left behind after destroying old ordnance on land belonging to a local villager. [Photos: KHRG]

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

- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: Militarisation, indiscriminate shelling, displacement and landmine contamination in Bu Tho Township”](#), May to July 2020, December 2020.
- [“Mu Traw District Incident Report: Villager injured in a UXO explosion in Bu Tho Township, September 2020”](#), November 2020.
- [“Hpa-an District Incident Report: Four children injured in a UXO explosion in T’Nay Hsah Township, July 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.khrg.org.

Mutraw (Hpapun) District

