



Short Update

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Hpa-an District Short Update: SAC military activity frightens local civilians and raises fears of forced portering, April to May 2022

This Short Update describes events that occurred in T'Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District during the period between April 20th and May 10th 2022. This report includes information about the State Administration Council (SAC) Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #547, whose soldiers frightened villagers by firing guns into the sky and planted landmines around their army camp, which is located close to villages. The movement of BGF soldiers' led to fear of forced portering among villagers in T'Nay Hsah Township.¹

State Administration Council (SAC)² soldiers frightened villagers

During the night of April 20th 2022, soldiers from SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)³ #547 in T'Nay Hsah army camp fired guns into the sky when they saw a light from villagers [who live around the army camp], who were hunting crickets. T'Nay Hsah army camp is located in T'Nay Hsah village, T'Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District. When the SAC fired guns, villagers were in fear whilst they were in their beds and were highly concerned that fighting was going to take place in the community. One of the villagers who lives close to the incident place expressed that, *"It happened when we were sleeping. We worried that the fighting would break out and [we] ran immediately to the bunker. Similarly, the other families also ran in fear and some of them could not bring their children with them in fear."* Villagers assumed that the SAC fired guns in order to frighten the villagers who were hunting crickets. A lot of villagers that live around the army camp do not feel secure going out at night to hunt and villagers informed other villagers to not go out and hunt at night, due to safety concerns. As the incident happened during insect hunting season, many villagers are still going out at night to hunt insects for their families.

¹ The present document is based on information received in May 2022. It was provided by a community member in Hpa-an 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.

² The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Burma/Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup.

³ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. 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.

On April 19th 2022, the day before the incident, SAC soldiers told the heads of the villages that are located near the army camp, such as Ler Poo, Noh Hta Baw, Noh Kaw Tay, T’Nay Hsa, T’Weh Dah and other villages, that villagers should not go close to the army camp because they [the SAC] would plant landmines around their army camp. The SAC did not provide the villagers with a reason for planting the landmines. They allowed villagers to travel on the road beside the army camp. The army camp is close to the villages, so villagers’ livestock always travel around the army base for food and villagers go looking for their livestock every afternoon. Therefore, both villagers and their livestock are at high risk of [stepping on] landmines in the community. However, villagers are not sure whether the SAC actually planted the landmines, because they have not seen a signpost [that warns villagers] of the landmine contamination.



These photos were taken on May 30th 2022 in T’Nay Hsah village, T’Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District. These photos show T’Nay Hsah army camp, where SAC LIB #547 is based. Soldiers from this battalion fired guns at night and prohibited villagers to go close to their army camp, because they [the SAC] had planned to plant landmines around the camp. [Photo: KHRG]

Local civilians fear forced portering by the Border Guard Force (BGF)⁴

On the morning of May 10th 2022, a large number of BGF soldiers [consisting of multiple troops] travelled from Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) or Mu Traw (Hpapun) District [it is unknown which district] into T’Nay Hsah Township, Hpa-an District. Villagers in T’Nay Hsah Township received information [from the news] about the BGF arresting villagers to be forced porters [in other districts like Doo Tha Htoo District⁵]. Therefore, local villagers became increasingly concerned that they were going to become forced porters for the BGF. Male villagers who live close to the vehicle road fled from their villages to escape, when they saw a large number of BGF soldiers travelling along public roads in Htoe Kaw Koe village tract⁶, T’Nay Hsah Township. [Male villagers are more likely to be arrested to become forced porters.]

Further background reading on the security situation in Hpa-an District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

⁴ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw.

⁵ See KHRG, “[Doo Tha Htoo District Short Update: Forced portering and the use of civilians as human shields by the SAC and BGF in Bilin Township \(September 2021\)](#)”, March 2022.

⁶ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

- [“Hpa-an District Situation Update: COVID-19 vaccinations, livelihood, education, and SAC activities, December 2021 to February 2022”](#), April 2022.
- [“Hpa-an District Situation Update: the Civil Disobedience Movement, COVID-19 and education, April to June 2021”](#), February 2022.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Burma. 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.

