



Incident Report

February 2nd 2023 / KHRG # 22-361-11

Mu Traw District Incident Report: A villager from Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township was seriously injured by a landmine explosion while undertaking village security, September 2022

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District in September 2022. On September 2nd 2022, a 28-year-old man who lives in S--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District, stepped on a landmine while he was patrolling the area with two Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers. They suspect that the landmine was planted by State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers. After being admitted to a hospital in Thailand, he had to have one of his legs amputated and is now facing difficulties ensuring the needs of his children. Landmine incidents and landmine contamination continue to prevent some villagers from going to work on their farmlands to earn a livelihood.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Landmine explosion
Date of Incident(s)	September 2 nd 2022
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	S--- village, Meh Klaw village tract ² , Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District

Victim Information	
Name	Saw ³ O---
Age	28 years old
Sex	Male
Ethnicity	Karen
Family	Married

¹ The present document is based on information received in September 2022. 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.

² A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

³ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

Occupation	Hill farmer
Religion	Animist
Position	Village security guard
Village	S--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Rank	Company/Battalion/Division	Based at	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	(Suspected perpetrator) SAC Military Operations Command (MOC) #8, LIB #404	Mergui-Tavoy District	LIB #404 Commander Soe Htun Oo, and Deputy Commander Yan Aung Myo

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

A KHRG researcher heard from KNLA frontline soldiers that a village security guard stepped on a landmine. He then conducted an interview with one of the witnesses to the incident. He also had brief communication with the victim himself, who provided information about his recovery.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The primary information provider was travelling with the landmine victim at the time of the incident and witnessed the explosion. The victim also provided information. Although three people were travelling together, only one stepped on the landmine and was injured.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.

On September 2nd 2022 at 8:40 am, a village security guard [*gher der*]⁴, along with two soldiers from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁵ Battalion #102, Company #1, were traveling on the Y--- Road to the eastern part of S--- village to patrol for a security reason [to monitor for the presence of State Administration Council (SAC)⁶ soldiers].

⁴ 'Home guard' or *gher der* groups have been organised locally in parts of northern Karen State to address Tatmadaw operations targeting civilians and the resulting acute food insecurity. Villagers interviewed by KHRG have reported that *gher der* were established with the objective of providing security for communities of civilians in hiding, particularly when those communities engage in food production or procurement activities, and when other modes of protection are unavailable. For more on the *gher der* see: "[Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State](#)," KHRG, August 2010.

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

⁶ 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

The 28-year-old village security guard, Saw O---, stepped on a landmine before he and his friends [the two KNLA soldiers with whom he was patrolling] reached the place they had planned to go to. They do not know which armed group planted the landmine, but they suspect that it was the SAC. Saw O--- had already travelled on this road several times one to two days prior to September 2nd. The landmine victim and his friends had a suspicion that the landmine might have been planted by SAC soldiers [because this road was regularly used by the KNLA, and the two KNLA soldiers would have been aware of the landmines had they been planted by the KNLA]. They explained, *“We used to travel on this road not less than five times. We usually travelled on this road and did not know landmines had been planted there.”*

They also suspected that the SAC might have planted the landmine because SAC Military Operations Command (MOC)⁷ #8, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁸ #404 [based in Mergui-Tavoy District] had been carrying out military activities in S--- village for many months already. Therefore, they might have known about the KNLA situation there [that the KNLA were based in the area] and planted the landmine. [The witness also believed that] the SAC might have seen their [KNLA] footsteps [in the area].

E--- from KNLA Battalion #102, Company #1, witnessed the landmine incident involving Saw O---. Directly after the incident, the victim was first carried on the back of his friends and then in a hammock to R--- Place [from this location, it is possible to cross into Thailand]. On September 3rd 2022, he was sent by car from R--- to a hospital in Thailand.

The wife of the landmine victim did not know that her husband was involved in a landmine explosion on the day of the incident. The next day, the village head and village tract administrator informed her about the landmine incident.

He was brought to R--- by villagers, healthcare workers, and [KNLA] soldiers. None of them were allowed to accompany him to Thailand. Staff from a charity organisation [helping injured and critically ill people access health care in Thailand] took responsibility for him [arranging for his crossing and helping while he was in the hospital in Thailand]. At the hospital, his left leg was amputated due to the injuries he sustained in the landmine explosion. He was also seriously injured on his right leg.

There were expenses he had to cover while he was at the hospital. It is not clear whether he received financial support or not. Saw O--- is still staying at the hospital and has not been discharged yet [as of December 2022]. He does not know how many days he will have to continue staying at the hospital. It will depend on his injuries.

The landmine victim has four children. The oldest child is over 5 years old and the youngest one is just 2 months old. As the victim had his leg amputated, he is facing difficulties to take care of his children's health and educational needs, as well as physical and spritual needs [due to his limited mobility].

A similar kind of landmine incident happened in this area between March and May 2022 [no further details were provided].

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.

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.

⁸ A 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.

S--- villagers have never attended Mine Risk Awareness Training. The landmine victim wants NGOs and the international community to know about the difficulties he and other landmine victims will continue facing in the future. This kind of difficulty will never vanish if there is no freedom in the country [and if the planting of landmine does not stop]. Starting from 2022 [when there was an escalation in conflict] and in upcoming [years], there will be livelihood difficulties if no changes are made in the future. The landmine contamination prevents some villagers from going to work on their farmlands.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The information provider [witness] and the victim gave KHRG permission to use the information they provided.

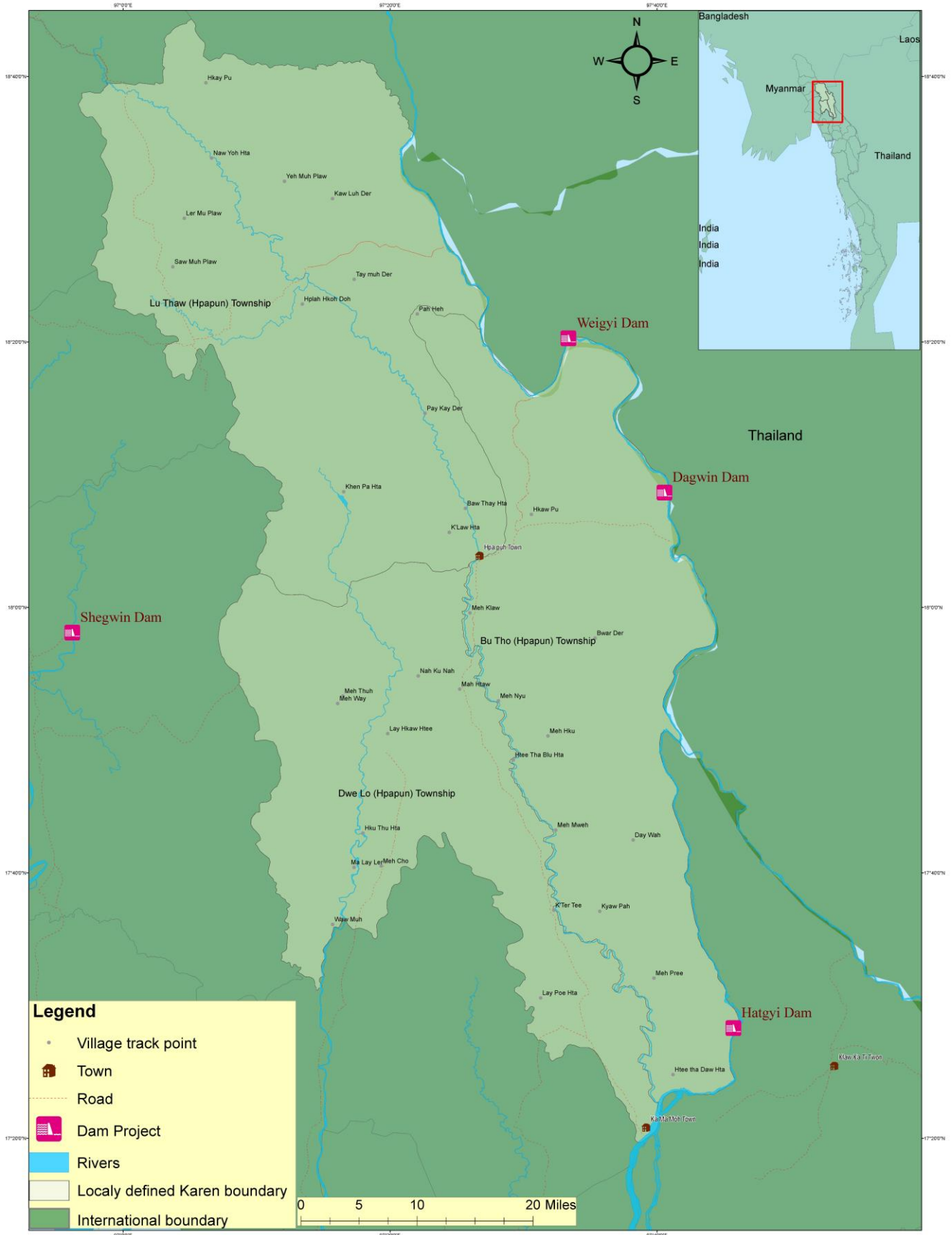
Further background reading on the security and human rights situation in Mu Traw District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mu Traw District Incident Report: Two villagers were seriously injured in landmine explosions in Lu Thaw Township, April and May 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC indiscriminate mortar shelling, an attack of a villager by an SAC soldier, People’s Defence Force \(PDF\) activity and a landmine incident, February to April 2022”](#), December 2022.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: Militarisation, displacement, humanitarian aid, landmines and the impact of COVID-19 in Bu Tho Township, June to August 2021”](#), August 2022.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC shelling, displacement of villagers, livelihood challenges, healthcare and education situation, and landmine incidents, April to May 2022”](#), July 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.khr.org.

Mutraw (Hpapun) District



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