



Short Update

March 5th, 2024 / KHRG # 23-374+375+381-D1

Taw Oo District Short Update: House burning, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes by the SAC in Htaw Ta Htoo Township (September to November 2023)

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District during the period between September and November 2023, including house burning, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes. In September 2023, tensions were heightened between the State Administration Council (SAC) and local armed resistance groups in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, after People's Defence Force (PDF) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) extrajudicially killed an SAC soldier who had been sent to the area as a spy. After this killing, the SAC burned down at least 27 villagers' houses in five different villages, shelled mortars into villages, and conducted air strikes in the area, causing three casualties. The shelling injured one villager, damaged five villagers' houses and one shop, as well as plantations, and killed one cow. The air strikes injured two villagers and damaged a villager's house.¹

House burning in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract

From the second week of August 2023, combined forces of the People's Defence Force (PDF)² and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)³ increased their military activities in every village in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District.

As reported by local villagers, Maung⁴ Kyaw Htun, a soldier from State Administration Council (SAC)⁵ Infantry Battalion (IB)⁶ #39, was ordered by his leader to return to his parents' village, A-

¹ The present document is based on information received in November and December 2023. It was provided by a community member in Taw Oo 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 People's Defence Force (PDF) is an armed resistance established independently as local civilian militias operating across the country. Following the February 1st 2021 military coup and the ongoing brutal violence enacted by the junta, the majority of these groups began working with the National Unity Government (NUG), a body claiming to be the legitimate government of Burma (Myanmar), which then formalised the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

³ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed (KNLA) wing of the Karen National Union (KNU).

⁴ 'Maung' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁵ 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.

-- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, to investigate the military activities of the KNLA and PDF there while posing as a civilian. Soldiers from the KNLA and PDF knew about this situation. On September 12th 2023, the KNLA and PDF arrested Maung Kyaw Htun whilst he was at his father's house, took him to a place outside the village, and killed him. Maung Kyaw Htun's family members went to SAC IB #39 army camp immediately after finding out he was killed and informed the SAC about what had happened. On September 13th 2023, at 6 am, SAC combined forces, including IB #39 which is based in Lay Maing village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, went with five military trucks and two artillery trucks to A--- village, B--- village, and C--- village, in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract.

At around 10 am on September 14th 2023, these SAC combined forces burned down four houses in B--- village. The owners of those houses are Saw⁷ D---, Saw E---, Saw F--- and Saw G---. Also on this day, these SAC combined forces burned down seven houses in C--- village. The owners of those houses are Ko⁸ H---, Ko I---, Ko J---, Ko K---, a daughter of Ko K---, Daw⁹ L---, and Daw M---. After the SAC troops burned down villagers' houses in these two villages, they stayed in B--- village for three days. On the third day, September 16th, at 6 am, the SAC troops retreated from the village and returned to their army camp. On the afternoon of September 16th 2023, KNLA and PDF soldiers burned down Maung Kyaw Htun's father's house. This contributed to increasingly heightened tensions between local armed resistance groups and SAC troops in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract.



⁶ An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are understrength 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. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

⁷ 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁸ 'Ko' is a Burmese title meaning older brother. It can be used for relatives as well as non-relatives.

⁹ 'Daw' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.



These four photos show villagers' houses which were burned down by the SAC troops, including Infantry Battalion (IB) #39, in A--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District, on September 14th 2023. [Photos: KHRG]

On October 20th 2023, SAC combined forces, including IB #39, went to N--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, where they burned down three villagers' houses. The owners of those houses are Saw O---, Saw P--- and Saw Q---.

On November 12th 2023 at 1:30 pm, the combined forces of the KNLA and PDF attacked these SAC troops using tripwire bombs in a place between A--- village and N--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, after which fighting broke out. On the evening of November 12th 2023, the SAC troops burned down nine houses in B--- village, as well as four houses in A--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. Villagers whose houses were burned down in B--- village are Saw R---, Saw S---, Saw T---, Saw U---, Maung V---, Naw¹⁰ W---, Naw X---, Saw Y--- and Saw Z---. Villagers whose houses were burned down in A--- village are Aa---, Ko Ab---, Ko Ac--- and Ko Ad---.

The SAC combined forces that are based in Lay Maing village, including IB #39, often fired mortar shells into villages and surrounding areas where they thought the KNLA and PDF soldiers might stay, regardless of whether fighting had occurred or not. During the reporting period, the SAC also conducted air strikes in this area.



¹⁰ 'Naw' is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.



These photos were taken on November 23rd 2023 in B--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. They show some villagers' houses which were burned down by the SAC on November 12th 2023. [Photos: KHRG]

Indiscriminate shelling into Day Loh Mu Nu village tract

On October 19th 2023, at around 1 pm, the SAC combined forces, including IB #39 that is based in Lay Maing village, indiscriminately fired rounds of mortars into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. These villages include A---, B---, C---, N---, Ae---, Af---, Ag---, and Ah--- villages. One of the mortar shells landed in a shop owned by U¹¹ Ai--- in C--- village. The mortar shell exploded, damaging the shop.

On November 17th 2023, the SAC troops indiscriminately fired mortar shells into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. One of the mortar shells landed in a farm near Ae--- village. It exploded and its shrapnel killed a cow owned by Saw Aj---. On November 19th 2023, the SAC troops again indiscriminately fired rounds of mortar into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu area. One of the mortar shells landed in a villager's house in N--- village. It exploded and damaged the roof of the house owned by Ak---. Shrapnel from the mortar shells also hit other three houses nearby, damaging them.



The photo on the left shows a cow killed on November 17th 2023 by a mortar shell explosion in a farm near N--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. The SAC shelled indiscriminately into this village tract on at least four occasions during October and November 2023. This cow was owned by a villager named Saw Aj---. [Photo: Local villager]

¹¹ 'U' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.



This photo was taken in November 2023 in N--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. It shows the roof of a house owned by Ak--- damaged by SAC shelling on November 19th 2023. *[Photo: KHRG]*

On November 27th 2023, the SAC troops indiscriminately fired rounds of mortar into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. One of the mortar shells landed in a rubber plantation owned by a villager near Af--- village. It exploded and damaged the rubber plantation. There were no casualties [caused by the shelling] in this village.

Also on November 27th 2023, at 9:04 pm, the SAC combined forces based in Lay Maing army camp and Kon Nit Maing (Seven Miles) army camp, indiscriminately fired rounds of mortars into Ag--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. The mortar shells exploded in a rubber plantation owned by a villager, damaging it. Shrapnel from the mortar explosion hit a house owned by a 34-year-old female villager, Naw Al---. She was also hit by the mortar shrapnel, sustaining injuries to her elbow.

Air strikes in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract

On November 27th 2023, at 3:17 pm, the SAC conducted an air strike in Ah--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. The air strike injured two villagers, one of whom was seriously injured. A villager's house was also damaged by the air strike.



A KHRG researcher received this photo from a local leader of Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District, on November 30th 2023. It shows Naw Al---'s injured elbow after she was hit by shrapnel from a mortar shell explosion. Naw Al--- was injured when the SAC fired mortars into Ag--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. *[Photo: Local leader]*

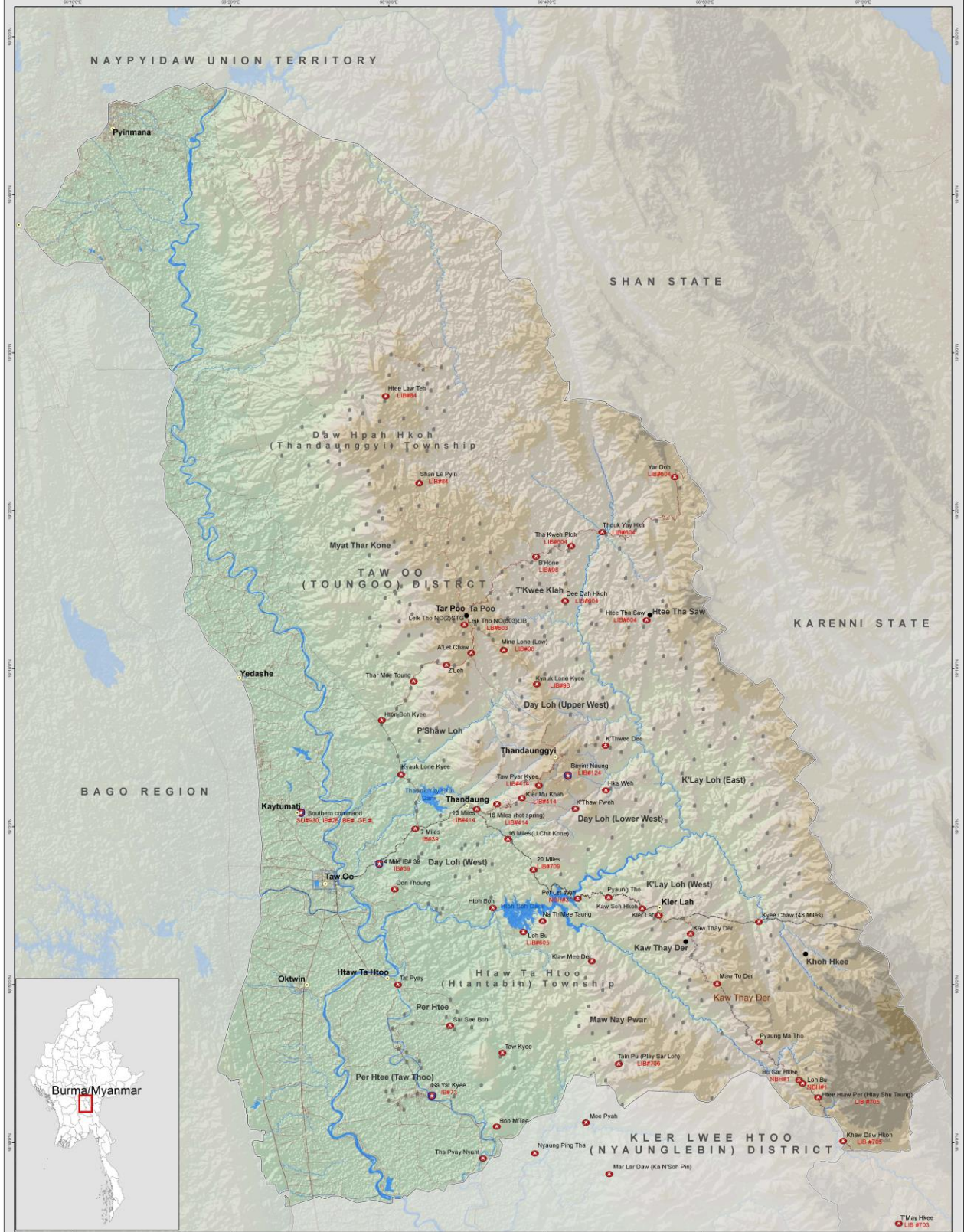
Further background reading on the situation on house burning, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes in Taw Oo District, Southeast Burma, be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Taw Oo District Situation Update: Fighting, shelling, and house burning in Thandaung Town, and air strikes in Htaw Ta Htoo Township \(January to July 2023\)”](#), January 2024
- [*Striking Fear: Impacts of State Administration Council \(SAC\) shelling on villagers’ lives in Southeast Burma \(January to October 2023\)*](#), December 2023.
- [“Taw Oo District Incident Report: Killings, property destruction, and indiscriminate shelling by the SAC in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township \(July 2023\)”](#), November 2023.
- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: Air strikes, displacement and property damage in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, July 2023”](#), August 2023.
- [*Burning Karen State: Retaliatory burning of houses and property against rural civilian communities of Southeast Burma \(2021 and 2022\)*](#), March 2023.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, 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.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District Map
SEVEN KWU ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT



Legend

- Town
- Village
- Village tract point
- Army Base
- Army Camp
- Major Road
- - - Sub-Road
- Water
- - - Kawthoolei Township boundary
- - - Kawthoolei District boundary

Elevation (meter)

- | | | | |
|--|-----------|--|---------------|
| | -35 - 15 | | 493 - 841 |
| | 15 - 96 | | 841 - 1,337 |
| | 96 - 261 | | 1,337 - 2,016 |
| | 261 - 493 | | 2,016 - 5,711 |

Map ID: KHRG_District_Map_Taw Oo
Date: 19-Jul-2022
Size: 33.11 X 46.8 inches

