



Short Update

July 26th, 2024 / KHRG # 24-84+187-D1

Taw Oo District Short Update: fighting, SAC looting and burning of villagers' houses, and two children killed by an UXO explosion, in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township (February and March 2024)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, in February and March 2024. On February 10th 2024, a skirmish broke out between State Administration Council (SAC) troops and local People's Defence Force (PDF) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) forces near A--- village, Htee Day area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township. During the skirmish, two cows were killed, and villagers fled to nearby areas. After the skirmish, the SAC troops looted several houses and villager's properties, including cars and motorbikes, and burned down 64 houses. One villager was arrested when he tried to obtain his car back. The SAC also made threats to burn the entire village if fighting occurred again. On March 21st 2024, two children from A--- village were killed by an unexploded ordnance (UXO). Local villagers believe that this UXO was one of the mortars that the SAC troops fired during the skirmish on February 10th 2024.¹

Skirmish and house burning in A--- village, Htee Day area

On February 10th 2024, at around 3 pm, a skirmish occurred between State Administration Council (SAC)² Infantry Battalion (IB)³ #49 combined with other [unknown] SAC battalions, against forces of the People's Defence Force (PDF)⁴ [unknown battalions] combined with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁵ Brigade #2, Battalion #4, near A--- village, Htee Day

¹ The present document is based on information received in February and May 2024. It was provided by community members 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 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 An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most 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. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

⁴ 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 formalized the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

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

area, Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District. The fighting lasted three hours. These SAC troops [IB #49 and other SAC unknown battalions] are from Naypyidaw Union Territory [an administrative division under direct control of the SAC]. Before the skirmish, the PDF had set up a temporary base near the village, where they stayed for a few days. When the skirmish happened, some soldiers from KNLA Brigade #2 Battalion #4 were also staying at the temporary PDF base. During the fighting, two cows owned by villagers were hit by bullets and killed, and some local villagers fled from A--- village for their safety to nearby farms, plantations, and the mountain. Villagers could not bring anything with them when they fled.



These two photos were sent in February 2024 by a local villager in A--- village, Htee Day area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. These photos show two dead cows, owned by A--- villagers, killed by bullets when a skirmish happened between SAC troops and local resistance armed groups near A--- village, on February 10th 2024. [Photos: local villager]

After the fighting ended at around 6 pm, the SAC troops entered the village and burned down 64 houses owned by villagers, causing some villagers to flee to nearby safer areas again. There are more than 100 houses in the village. Before they burned the villagers' houses, they looted what they wanted from them. They also looted two cars and three motorbikes. One of the cars' owners is named U⁶ B---. The names of the motorbike owners and a second looted car owner are unknown. The SAC demanded that the cars' owners pay four million kyats [USD 1,905.68]⁷ for each car if they wanted to get them back. U B--- attempted to redeem his car but was detained by the SAC. [It is unknown to KHRG if U B--- has been released.] Villagers were also threatened by the SAC troops that if any further fighting occurred [between the SAC troops and the PDF/KNLA] the entire village would be burned down.

Most of the villagers have returned to their village at present. Some villagers have not yet returned because they cannot afford to rebuild their houses, so they are staying at their friends or relatives' houses in other villages. Some villagers whose houses were burned down remained in A--- village and simply built temporary bamboo houses after the burning, with bamboo and trees provided by the KNLA. The Yay Tar Shay Social Service Organisation [from Yay Tar Shay Town in Bago Division, near Daw Hpa Hkoh Township] provided some food support for villagers consisting of one month's worth of rice and oil. After that, villagers did not receive any other support. No [other] humanitarian organisations provided food assistance or support for rebuilding their houses. Villagers reported they still need assistance to rebuild their homes and restart their lives.

Currently [as of July 2024], there are no PDF temporary bases near A--- village. Instead, the SAC set up a temporary base of their own in its place, which is still active.

⁶ 'U' is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the official market rate for July 3rd 2024 of 2,098.48 kyats to US \$1.



These photos were taken on February 24th 2024 in A--- village, Htee Day area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. These photos show villagers' houses burned down by SAC troops after a skirmish with resistance armed groups on February 10th 2024. [Photos: KHRG]

UXO explosion in A--- village, Htee Day area

On March 21st 2024, two boys named Wai Yan Lin (5 years old) and Kaung Khet Lwin (8 years old) from A--- village found an unexploded ordnance (UXO) [in A--- village]. [Villagers believe the UXO was a mortar round fired by the SAC during a skirmish between SAC troops and PDF/KNLA forces, likely on February 10th 2024.] Wai Yan Lin and Kaung Khet Lwin started playing with it, and the UXO exploded. The explosion caused extensive injuries to Wai Yan Lin's head, left arm, left leg, chest and abdomen, killing him instantly. Kaung Khet Lwin was seriously injured; his entire left leg was lacerated, and he sustained injuries to his left arm, hand and chest. Villagers attempted to transport Kaung Khet Lwin to the hospital in Swar Town, in Naypyidaw Union Territory, [located approximately two hours away by motorbike,] but he died right after leaving the village, while being transported to the hospital.

Villagers helped Wai Yan Lin's and Kaung Khet Lwin's families with the funeral's arrangements. No one provided any support to the two children's family members in the first two weeks after the incident. It is not known whether the families received any other assistance after this date.



These photos were received in May 2024 from a local villager in A--- village, Htee Day area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. On March 21st 2024, Wai Yan Lin (5 years old) and Kaung Khet Lwin (8 years old) were killed by an unexploded ordnance (UXO) found in the village, while the kids were playing with it and it exploded. The two photos in the top row show Wai Yan Lin, who died on the spot. The two photos in the middle row show Kaung Khet Lwin's injuries, who was severely injured by the explosion, and died while being transported to the hospital. The photo below, on the left, shows the graves where local villagers buried the two children. *[Photos: local villager]*

Further background reading on the situation on fighting, house burning, looting and UXOs in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

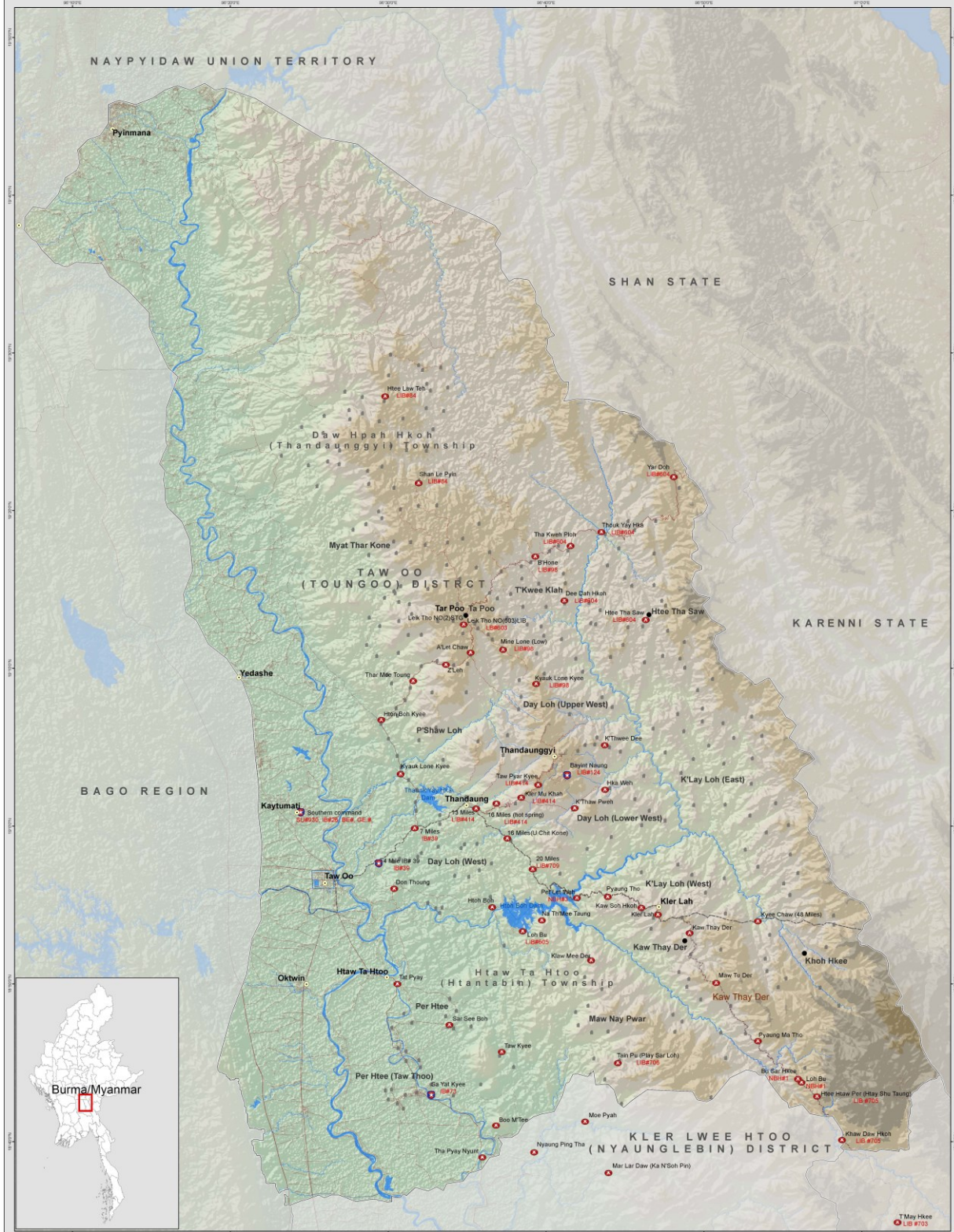
- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: Shelling, air strikes and house burning by SAC troops, and use of forced navigators by PDF soldiers in Htaw Ta Htoo Township \(November to December 2023\)”](#), April 2024;
- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: House burning, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes by the SAC in Htaw Ta Htoo Township \(September to November 2023\)”](#), March 2024;
- [“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;
- [“Taw Oo District Incident Report: Killings, property destruction, and indiscriminate shelling by the SAC in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township \(July 2023\)”](#), November 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 o

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District Map

SEVEN KNU 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

