Landmine explosion and death of villagers in Papun District

This report is based on information submitted by community members in March 2013 describing events occurring in Papun District in February 2013. On February 11\textsuperscript{th} 2013, a landmine exploded in K'Ter Tee village tract, Dwe Loh Township, Papun district. A total of five villagers were killed in the explosion; three of whom were under the age of 18. The villagers were hit by the landmine while transporting sand in a car for the Green Hill Company, a company affiliated with BGF Battalions #1013 and #1014. The group who planted the landmine is unknown. While no groups have taken responsibility for the incident, Green Hill Company paid 300,000 kyat (US $341) to the family of each victim, alongside the manager of the Company, Ko Myo personally contributing 200,000 kyat (US $227) to each family. This and other landmine incidents received by KHRG between August 2012 and March 2013 were published in a Briefer; see “Landmines shatter peace for villagers in eastern Burma,” April 2013.

On February 11\textsuperscript{th} 2013 at 8:00 am there was a landmine explosion beside the Yone S’Lin River, between K--- village and T--- village in K’Ter Tee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Papun district. Five villagers were hit by the landmine explosion while transporting sand in a car, having been hired to do this by the Green Hill Company\textsuperscript{1} manager Ko Myo\textsuperscript{2}. Specifically, the villagers were paid by the company to carry sand from a sand bank\textsuperscript{3} in H--- village to a Green Hill Company building using villager U M---’s car.\textsuperscript{4}

Initially, the company is reported to have claimed that the sand would be used for the building of a school, but later it became clear that the sand was being used for company business, with no benefit to the school. Saw L---, a sand bank owner living in T--- village reported: “Before asking the villagers to carry the sand for them, they [Green Hill company] went to talk with the vice

\textsuperscript{1} Green Hill Company is affiliated with both BGF #1013 and #1014, and also comes under Burma government control.
\textsuperscript{2} Ko Myo is a former administrator of K’Ter Tee village and is currently in charge of transporting the sand supplied by the villagers to the Green Hill Company base.
\textsuperscript{3} A sand bank is a naturally occurring deposit of sand, often found close to rivers.
\textsuperscript{4} This information was included in three unpublished interviews, one incident report and one situation update submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.
village tract leader and the vice village tract leader told them to stop but they didn't, so I think that was how the problems started. Likewise, T--- village administrator, Saw P---, said, “Before the landmine explosion, Ko Myo, who was a former K’Ter Tee village administrator, went to talk to the KNU [KNLA] who is controlling the area about the carrying of the sand. The KNU leader told Ko Myo to stop it on the day before the explosion [happened], however, Ko Myo didn’t [do anything to] stop it.”

These photos were taken on March 2013 in K--- village, K’Taing Tee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Papun District. They show the devastated car that the villagers were driving in when the landmine exploded between T--- village and K--- village. [Photos: KHRG]

Of the five casualties, including the driver, G---, “Three of them were under 18. One was 13 years old while the other two were 14 and 18 respectively,” reported K--- villager, Maung S---. The villager also reported to the community member that three of the victims died immediately in the explosion while one injured villager died on the way to hospital; the fifth victim died in the hospital. Until now, it has not been determined who planted the landmine or the reason why it was planted. A special security unit linked to the government military, the Sa Ah Pa, based in K’Ma Maung village, stated that it was the KNLA that planted the landmine, though villagers interviewed remain unsure about who planted it.

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5 The KNU leader is reported to have asked the company to bring a stop to their work because of concerns about its’ effect on villagers’ livelihoods.
6 This information was included in an unpublished interview submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.
7 This information was included in an unpublished incident report submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.
8 This information was included in an unpublished incident report submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.
None of armed groups are taking measures to provide assistance to the families after the deaths. The Green Hill Company provided 300,000 kyat (US $341)\(^9\) in compensation to the family of each villager who died. The manager of the company, Ko Myo is also reported to have personally paid 200,000 kyat (US $227) in compensation to the family of each victim.\(^{10}\)

Further background on the current situation in Papun District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- “Papun Situation Update: Forced labour in Bu Tho Township, January to February 2013,” (April 2013)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to September 2012,” (April 2013)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2011 to July 2012,” (April 2013)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, July to October 2012,” (April 2013)

\(^9\) As of April 12th 2013, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 881 kyat to the US $1. This reflects new measures taken by Burma's central bank on April 2nd 2012 to initiate a managed float of the Kyat, thus replacing the previous fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US $1.

\(^{10}\) This information was included in one unpublished incident report and one interview submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.