

## Brief 3: Myanmar at War: D-Day and Its Repercussions

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### Key Takeaways

- *Conflict incidents escalated by 49 percent over September compared to August.*
- *It is not assured that the Tatmadaw will lose, but a month after D-Day, the momentum is decidedly not on its side. The Tatmadaw is under historic amounts of pressure across the country.*
- *D-Day did not initiate a marked shift in the strategies and tactics of resistance. Rather, it brought about a distinct escalation of the same strategies and tactics used before the declaration based on the resources available.*
- *Armed resistance to military rule is now self-sustaining in terms of resourcing, safe havens, and personnel and, thus, cannot be simply extinguished.*
- *The nature of the conflict in key parts of the country, namely Kayah and Chin states, is quickly evolving towards more conventional warfare involving extended battles to control fixed terrain rather than singular guerilla-type incidents.*
- *Tatmadaw is implementing a strategy of systematic violence against civilians across the country.*

### Introduction

This brief, the third in a series, reviews Myanmar's conflict trends for the month of September 2021. It focuses on the significance of the National Unity Government's (NUG) September 7 declaration of "resistance war" against the junta, e.g., the long-rumored 'D-Day.'<sup>1</sup> This brief builds upon analysis presented in *Brief 2: Myanmar's Shifting Military Balance*, which described how armed resistance to military dictatorship continued to expand in scope during July and August 2021. Particularly significant, by the end of August a total of 250 out of the country's 330 townships had experienced at least some conflict incidents since 1 February. Key to armed resistance has been the increasing assertion and steady expansion of self-defense groups. Since the coup, approximately 240 such groups have declared themselves in one way or another. It is likely that at least 180 of them have been active to some extent.



The NUG's September 7 declaration was a major milestone in the country's history.<sup>2</sup> Since then, there has been a notable increase in attacks across the country on Tatmadaw forces and other State Administration Council (SAC) apparatuses. Self-defense groups and key EAOs are active in resistance actions across the length and breadth of the country aside from Rakhine.<sup>3</sup> A strong argument can be made that resistance to military rule is now self-sustaining in terms of resourcing, safe havens, and personnel, and cannot be easily extinguished by the Tatmadaw.<sup>4</sup> The Tatmadaw has had no success forcing key EAOs to sign ceasefires or to break their burgeoning relationships with the NUG and peoples' defense forces (PDFs). Resistance forces now have established safe havens

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with both the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Karen National Union (KNU) where they can safely train and equip fighters.<sup>5</sup> Raids on villages are ineffective at killing PDF fighters. Tatmadaw ‘clearance operations’ in remote townships are costly and ineffective at controlling territory for the long-term. There are simply not enough security forces to move around. It is not assured that SAC will lose, but a month after D-Day, it certainly does not have the military initiative. The Tatmadaw is increasingly having to react to events driven by the resistance.<sup>6</sup>

As before, the analysis in this brief is underpinned by a ‘conflict incidents’ dataset compiled by the author. This dataset comprises approximately 3,400 incidents from 1 February to 30 September but focuses specifically on ‘conflict incidents’ from May onwards when the nature of resistance shifted towards nationwide armed revolt. This dataset draws on *Exera* daily briefs but is complemented by other sources, such as *74 Media*, *Khit Thit Media*, and *Mizzima*’s daily updates. The author notes up front his own doubts about trying to quantify a highly fluid situation. Such datasets are useful for highlighting general trends and trajectories and the analysis below should be understood accordingly.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, the brief intentionally provides a wide range of references to support policymakers interested in specific topics.

**Did D-Day have any effect?** The September 7 announcement by NUG interim president Duwa Lashi La provoked a lot of interest around the world and a palpable sense of excitement within the country. After a month, it is possible to make some preliminary observations about whether it had any significance to the military situation on the ground.

Most Conflict-Affected Townships per Conflict Incidents in September	
1. Monywa (Sagaing)	24
2. Kale (Sagaing)	21
3. Pale (Sagaing) & Yesagyo (Magway)	16
4. Myaung (Sagaing)	14
5. Muse (Shan) & Khin-U (Sagaing)	13
6. Chan Mya Thazi (Mandalay) & Thaketa (Yangon)	12
7. Gangaw (Magway), Taze & Kanbalu (Sagaing), Ye (Mon), Hpapun (Karen), Mogok (Mandalay)	11
8. Yinmarbin (Sagaing), Hlaing & Hlegu (Yangon)	10
9. Thantlang (Chin), Launglon (Tanintharyi), Ayadaw (Sagaing), Khayan & Kamaya (Yangon)	9
10. Demoso (Kayah), Hakha (Chin), Phekon (Shan), Aung Myay Tharzan & Maha Aungmyay (Mandalay), Hlaing Thar Yar (Yangon)	8

Over September there were approximately 779 conflict incidents, compared to 523 in August and 443 in July.<sup>8</sup> This represents a 49 percent increase month-on-month.<sup>9</sup> A review of the most conflict-affected townships, both overall and during September, highlights they are all over the country, including in major urban townships in Yangon and Mandalay. September saw new townships all over the country emerge as hotspots, such as: Ye Township, Mon State; Launglon Township, Tanintharyi Region; Thantlang Township, Chin State; and Ayadaw Township, Sagaing Region.

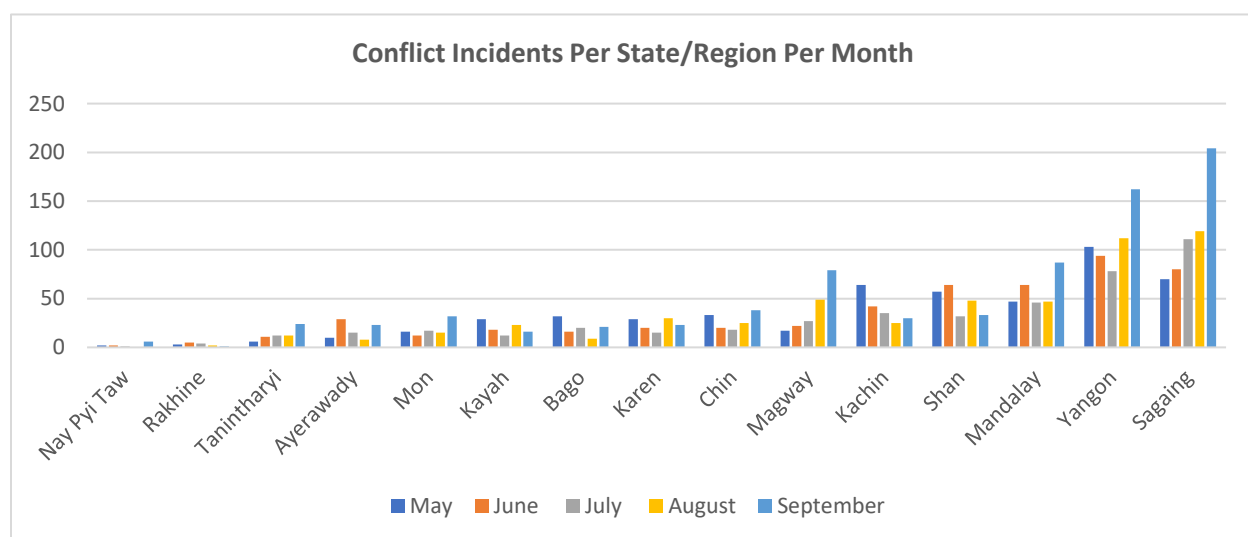
Examined from another angle, daily national averages of conflict incidents increased from 16.9 in August to 26 in September.<sup>10</sup>

Mandalay saw the steepest change, nearly doubling its average with several townships in Mandalay city seeing sharp rises in conflict incidents (see Annex 1). Magway was also notable, increasing from 1.55 to 2.64 conflict incidents per day, driven by resistance attacks in Yesagyo, Gangaw, Pauk, Saw and Taungdwingyi Townships. Yangon and Sagaing Regions were already high in August but still increased over September; from 3.61 to 5.4 and 3.84 to 6.8 incidents per day respectively. Overall, Sagaing, Magway, Yangon, and Mandalay Magway Regions represented 68 percent of all conflict incidents in September.

The widespread presence and quickening pace of armed resistance and conflict incidents in Bamar Regions is unprecedented. While the remaining three regions are not at the same levels, Bago, Ayeyarwady and Tanintharyi Regions also saw their daily averages of conflict incidents increase over September compared to August (see Annex 1). This was due to increased actions in townships with

existing concentrations of conflict incidents – for instance Patheingyi, Bago, and Dawei – but more significantly by rapid increases in other townships that did not have extensive conflict histories. For instance, Tharyethaung Township in Tanintharyi Region escalated markedly in September as did Kyaukkya Township in Bago Region. Seven townships also became active for the first time in September in these three Regions, namely Einme and Ngaputaw Townships in Ayeyarwady Region; Daik-U, Gyobingauk, Kawa, and Monyo Townships in Bago Region; and Tanintharyi Township in Tanintharyi Region.

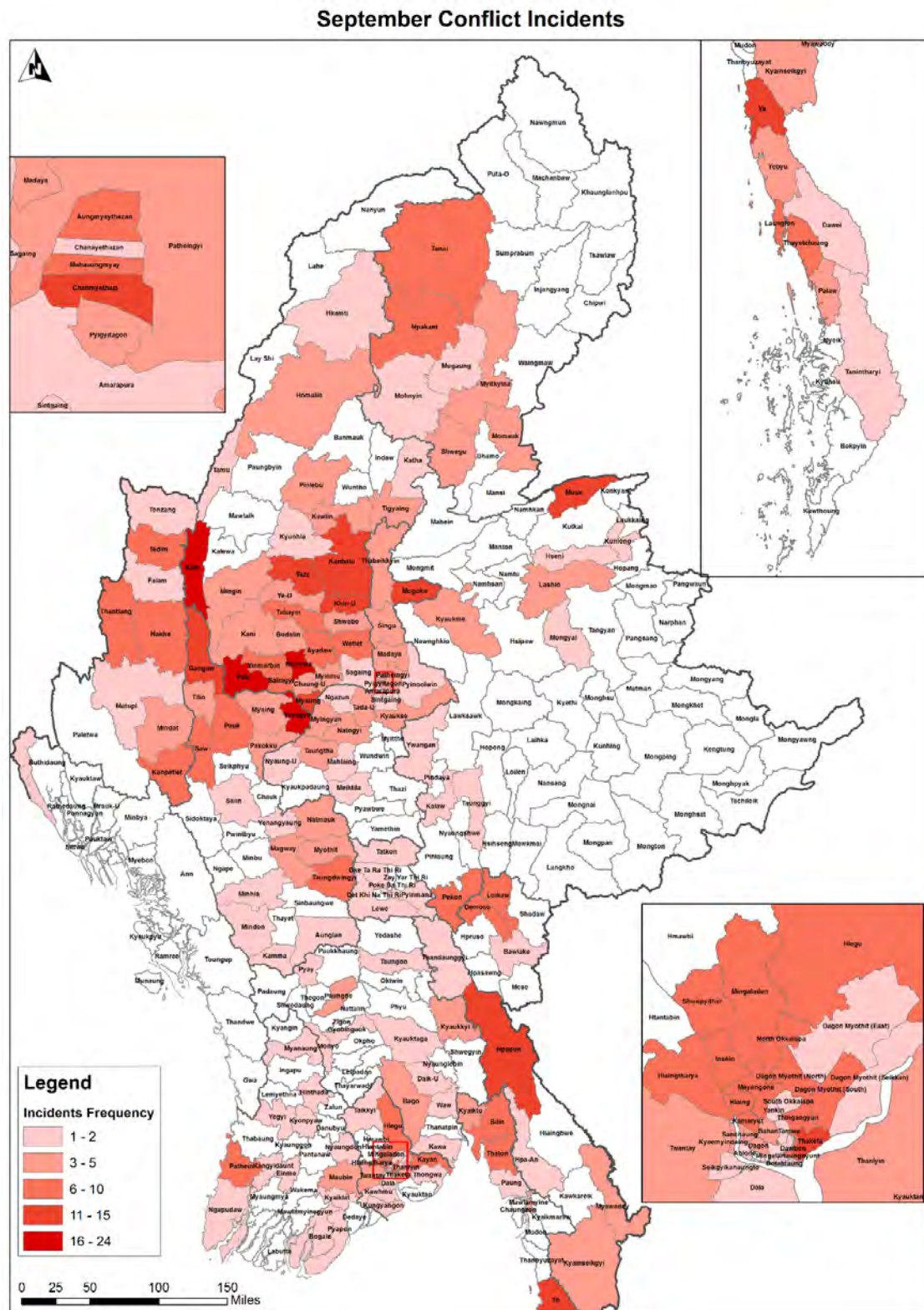
The D-Day announcement did not significantly change the strategy and tactics used by self-defense groups. Rather, it signaled a distinct escalation in attacks utilizing available resources. Self-defense groups are utilizing the gamut of tactics applied to date, including IED and mine attacks, assassinations, arson attacks, attacks on police stations, and bombings of strategic routes, offices, and infrastructure. Several new tactics have also emerged, such as the routine sabotage of MyTel telecom towers. During September there was a clear escalation of bombings in both Yangon and Mandalay. By example, from September 1 to 22, there were at least 39 explosions in Yangon Region alone.<sup>11</sup> Sabotage of MyTel telecom towers escalated significantly over September and by the end of the month over a hundred had been destroyed since the coup.<sup>12</sup>



As mentioned, conflict incidents have been consistently present in the States since the coup except for Rakhine. However, Shan State was relatively calm over September aside from consistently high levels of conflict incidents in Muse Township in the northeast and Phekon Township in the south, which has been the case for several months now. Overall, conflict incidents decreased across the State from 48 in August to 33 in September. That Shan State is *relatively* calm is a historic anomaly, but the ongoing fighting between the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) -- Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) coalition persists at comparatively low numbers of conflict incidents, albeit at high intensity as they are significant military forces engaging in battles. The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), an EAO from the Kokang community, has been active in Muse but was also increasingly active in Lashio Township during the last week of September. There were also notable attacks on Tatmadaw-allied forces in Kalaw Township.<sup>13</sup>

Although Chin State saw an overall increase in conflict incidents, both Kayah and Karen States saw slight decreases. Fighting over September was particularly pronounced in Chin State's Thantlang, Hakha and Tedim Townships in the north and Kantpetlet Township in the south. September was also significant for the amount of coordination by Chin self-defense groups and those in nearby Sagaing and Magway

Regions. Mon State also saw notable increases in conflict incidents over September, more than doubling compared to August. This was driven by marked increases in Ye, Bilin and Thaton Townships.



The nature of conflict in Kayah State is worth highlighting as it has crossed an important threshold. Throughout September, combined forces of the Karenni Army (KA), the armed wing of ethnic armed organization Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), together with the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), a coalition of Karenni PDFs, have engaged in running battles with Tatmadaw forces in Loikaw and Demoso Townships, as well as Phekon Township in Shan State. By September, Karenni self-defense groups had conspicuously armed up with automatic rifles and other heavier weaponry, allowing them to engage Tatmadaw units in significant battles, the type of which only EAOs were able to mount previously.<sup>14</sup> Undoubtedly the active role of the KA is important as it provides firepower and leadership in the fight against Tatmadaw forces. However, the KNDF, as a coalition of PDFs, has emerged as a major force, having grown significantly in size and military capacities over the last several months.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, self-defense groups have also increasingly waged protracted battles, ranging over several days to weeks at a time, in key townships in Chin State such as Thantlang, Kanpetlet, and Hakha. Tracking these events in detail has been harder, however, given the internet blackout of Chin State over the latter half of September. What is clear is that Kayah and Chin States are now seeing an intensity of conflict that was previously limited to major actions by the KIA, KNU and MNDAA against Tatmadaw forces. Given this, the utility of tracking conflict incidents for these areas will diminish as the nature of the conflict evolves towards more conventional warfare involving extended battles to control fixed terrain rather than singular guerilla-type incidents.

As will be detailed later in this brief, there has been an escalation in conflict incidents not just in the form of self-defense groups' attacks on Tatmadaw forces. Of the 778 conflict incidents in September, 65 of them were raids on villages by Tatmadaw forces. Such raids had been increasing since August, when there were 39 such incidents. There has also been a clear escalation in SAC arrests in both rural and urban areas as well as greater brutality against the detainees at Tatmadaw investigation units, resulting in an increasing number of deaths. As of September 29, the number of detainees killed within a few days of arrests is 49 according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). Overall, with conflict increasing and the economy collapsing, Myanmar is facing a worsening humanitarian situation. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Myanmar (UNOCHA) noted in early-September that 3 million Myanmar people need urgent assistance, an addition of 2 million since the coup.<sup>16</sup> There have been over 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) since the coup, with over 100,000 in Kayah State alone.<sup>17</sup>

**The role of EAOs after D-Day is mixed but stable.** NUG interim president Duwa Lashi La was quite specific on September 7 to ask EAOs to "launch offensive attacks" in their respective areas. While EAOs are already providing much needed political and in-kind support in terms of accommodating politicians, striking civil servants, activists, journalists and training resistance fighters, they have not formed an explicit coalition with the NUG except for the Chin National (CNF) where they have formed an official partnership.<sup>18</sup> Despite no official partnerships per se, there is consistent evidence on the ground that KIA and local PDFs as well as KA and local PDFs have been joining forces in fighting against the SAC troops. KNU, KIO and KNPP and maybe others have been providing safe havens for NUG leaders and providing other pressing support. Several EAOs are engaging with the NUG via the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and have been negotiating amendments to the Federal Democracy Charter and other issues.<sup>19</sup> None have explicitly announced their membership, but reliable sources indicate between 4 and 7 EAOs are regularly participating in NUCC meetings, as are members of at least 5 more influential ethnic political parties.

While no EAOs officially joined the NUG in making its D-Day announcement, several are clearly supportive of better coordinating and increasing armed resistance to the junta, notably the KNPP, KIA, and KNU. The



KNPP has become extensively involved in resistance efforts across Kayah State, as well as in Phekon Township in southern Shan State. The KNPP's armed wing, the KA, is actively involved in regular combat operations with the lead coalition of Karenni PDFs, the KNDF. Indeed, some of the biggest battles during September involved joint KA-KNDF attacks in Demoso, Loikaw and Phekon Townships.<sup>20</sup> There are also KNPP members in the NUG's senior leadership.

On September 3, the KNU released a statement saying they would work with "any organization against the coup and fighting against any forms of dictatorship."<sup>21</sup> Over the past several months the KNU/KNLA steadily accelerated both offensive and defensive actions on Tatmadaw forces. Over September, the KNU/KNLA had clashes in Karen, Mon, Tanintharyi and Bago, i.e., pretty much everywhere it has forces. In addition to providing refuge to NUG leaders and training PDF cadres, KNU forces are increasingly partnering with PDFs. While the KNU seems to prefer that PDFs not form in Karen State, since September 7 there have been multiple coordinated actions by the KNU with PDFs in Mon State, Bago Region, and Tanintharyi Region. Collaborations between the KNU and PDFs in the strategically located Bilin and Thaton Townships in Mon State and Kyaukkyi Township in Bago Region are particularly significant.<sup>22</sup>

While not specifically referencing D-Day, the KIO/KIA have been clear in their stance for sustained armed resistance to the junta.<sup>23</sup> Over the past several months the KIA has been steadily advancing military operations into new areas, both on its own and in partnership with PDFs.<sup>24</sup> KIA leaders have been vocal in stating it was important for Bamar areas to join the fight against the junta. As described in the previous brief, the KIA is actively training PDF recruits in its areas of control as well as partnering with PDFs in attacks against Tatmadaw forces. Since September 7, the KIA has been active with PDFs in Kachin State as well as Homalin, Pinlebu, and Katha Townships in northern Sagaing Region.<sup>25</sup>

Other EAOs' positions remain ambiguous vis-à-vis the NUG's September 7 announcement, but their forces are increasingly fighting the Tatmadaw. For example, there has been notable escalations in fighting by the MNDAA since September 7 in Muse and Lashio Townships, but the MNDAA has not made any public reference to D-Day.<sup>26</sup>

**SAC is implementing a strategy of systematic violence against civilians, whether they are involved in resistance attacks or not.** The Tatmadaw's ongoing violence against civilians is an extension of their long practiced "four cuts" counter-insurgency strategy.<sup>27</sup> This has been used for decades against local populations in EAO areas but is now being applied across the country, including in peri-urban and urban areas. The central objective of this strategy is to dislocate enemy forces from the civilian communities that support them. Rather than using 'hearts and minds' approaches of most modern counter-insurgents, this is achieved through mass displacement campaigns that 'clear' entire areas of all people or those of target ethnicities. Those who refuse to leave their land, homes, and property are treated as combatants and subjected to constant military operations to keep them in a state of disorganization, to cut off their food supplies, and to terrorize them into submission. People go into hiding in nearby forests, into EAO controlled areas, or across international borders. Millions have been displaced over the years, with many having been displaced multiple times in their lives.

Under the four cuts strategy, the Tatmadaw uses a range of tactics against civilian populations, including burning villages, looting properties, mass arrests, torture and execution of prisoners, gender-based violence, and random artillery fire into residential areas.<sup>28</sup> The last is increasingly prominent as Tatmadaw forces may not want to venture far from their bases but want to 'punish' local communities. The combined intent of these tactics is straightforward: to scare the public at large to be afraid of the resistance movement. It is important to note that physically displacing people is equally as important as deterring

resistance. The Tatmadaw do not really care if those individuals displaced want to support resistance or not.

The Tatmadaw's history of violence against civilians is well documented, spawning an entire literature on modern war crimes.<sup>29</sup> For instance, there is a long history of violence against women as a deliberate tactic against civilian populations.<sup>30</sup> The present scale of the Tatmadaw's effort is notable, however, as it sweeps across both non-Bamar areas that have long experienced such atrocities to now include Bamar Regions and major cities like Yangon and Mandalay.

After the D-Day announcement, the Tatmadaw conspicuously escalated random violence, mass arrests of young people in both rural and urban areas, as well as raiding villages to loot, burn property, and arrest villagers.<sup>31</sup> Many of the arrests of young people are done through indiscriminate neighborhood sweeps. At other times, there may be raids to arrest alleged PDF members, but through the process security forces intentionally intimidate and coerce local populations. This is done via a range of methods, spanning from petty harassment and verbal threats all the way through public acts of torture and forcing prisoners to pose with corpses.<sup>32</sup> Mirroring its long-established practice in States, in some Regions the Tatmadaw has also begun to lay landmines around its facilities and government offices, which are causing civilian casualties.<sup>33</sup>

A strategy of inflicting violence across large swathes of the civilian population clearly increased after the September 7 D-Day announcement. So systematic is the violence that prominent human rights activists are now calling for the Tatmadaw to be labelled a 'terrorist' organization by the UN Security Council.<sup>34</sup> This is not merely a pejorative term intended to delegitimize the junta; it is a defensible reference to an organization that has no legal claim to power but has seized it through methods of violence against non-combatants intended to affect political wills. Such violence is nationwide, but priorities for SAC seem to be areas where they feel resistance forces are ascendant in terms of local control, for instance across Chin and Kayah States, western and central Sagaing Region, and northern Magway Region. Tatmadaw forces use raids on villages, usually one-off attacks, as well as extended 'clearance operations' where troops stay in villages for several weeks or months and coerce civilian populations to flee.

Prominent examples of these activities were in Thantlang, Gangaw, and Kalay Townships (located in Chin State, Magway Region and Sagaing Region respectively) in the first weeks after the D-Day announcement. Thantlang, Chin State was so devastated by SAC forces that all but 28 of its approximately 10,000 residents fled the week after much of it was destroyed by Tatmadaw artillery barrages and subsequent fires.<sup>35</sup> Khayan Township just to the east of Yangon city has also been heavily affected by such tactics. UNOCHA Myanmar reported that in Sagaing Region 18,000 inhabitants were displaced just between September 7-10.<sup>36</sup>

Core to the strategy is inflicting 'punishment' on local populations, often in areas with active resistance groups but also in those without. In addition to the overt targeting of civilians with violence, there are increasing examples of Tatmadaw forces coercing local populations in other ways. The most basic method is amassing troops to encourage fear and anxiety with the intent to provoke large numbers of villagers to abandon their homes. In simplest terms, this means basing whole Tatmadaw units in local communities, for instance in schools and hospitals. These incidents have happened even in peri-urban areas, for instance around Yangon. A key notion for understanding Tatmadaw actions and their barbarity are the retributive nature that is increasingly pronounced. Whenever Tatmadaw forces suffer casualties, they routinely assault local civilians whether they are involved in the resistance or not.<sup>37</sup>

**Legend**

**Village raids**

Light Pink	1 - 2
Light Red	3 - 4
Medium Red	5 - 6
Dark Red	7 - 8

0 25 50 100 150 Miles



Other methods of intimidation and harassment are more overt. In some cases, the Tatmadaw has issued open threats, saying that villages will be forcibly relocated wholesale if PDF fighters do not surrender.<sup>38</sup> Entering a bunker mode, SAC is also conducting violent land expropriation around military factories as it fears attack even in Bago and southern Magway where most of its factories are located.<sup>39</sup> There are credible reports of Tatmadaw commanders threatening to burn entire villages with no connection to the resistance but where there is ongoing land grabbing by the Tatmadaw.<sup>40</sup> There are also routine reports of villagers being arrested and used as porters and human shields by Tatmadaw units during their field operations.<sup>41</sup> SAC has instructed ward and village tract administrators to compile lists of pro- and anti-SAC residents while monasteries are being asked to provide lists of the resident clergy.<sup>42</sup>

**Western Myanmar (Sagaing—Magway—Chin) is central to resistance efforts against the SAC as it is a vanguard for the rest of the country.** Despite downturns in conflict incidents in some areas over July and August, such as Ayeyarwady and Bago Regions during the height of the monsoon season, the number of conflict incidents in Sagaing and northern Magway Regions increased during those two months. Similarly, Chin State has been exceptionally active for months now. After D-Day, these trends only quickened. Twenty-eight of Sagaing Region's 35 townships had conflict incidents; 15 of Magway Region's 25 did; as did 8 out of 9 townships in Chin State.

Sagaing Region continued to experience the highest numbers of conflict incidents in the country. Townships that continued to experience high rates of conflict incidents included Pale, Depayin, Yinmarbin,

#### Disconnected

Military junta cuts off internet access in several townships  
(Data as of 27 September)



1. Hpakant (Since 20 Aug)
2. Ayadaw (Since 15 Sep)
3. Budalin (Since 15 Sep)
4. Kani (Since 15 Sep)
5. Mogoke (Since 15 Sep)
6. Myingyan (Since 15 Sep)
7. Pale (Since 15 Sep)
8. Taungdwingyi (Since 15 Sep)
9. Taze (Since 15 Sep)
10. Ye-U (Since 15 Sep)
11. Yinmarbin (Since 15 Sep)
12. Falam (Since 23 Sep)
13. Gangaw (Since 23 Sep)
14. Kanpetlet (Since 23 Sep)
15. Matupi (Since 23 Sep)
16. Mindat (Since 23 Sep)
17. Myaing (Since 23 Sep)
18. Paletwa (Since 23 Sep)
19. Tedim (Since 23 Sep)
20. Thantlang (Since 23 Sep)
21. Tilin (Since 23 Sep)
22. Tonzang (Since 23 Sep)
23. Kawnlin (Since 26 Sep)
24. Pinlebu (Since 26 Sep)
25. Wundho (Since 26 Sep)

Budalin, Taze, Homalin, and Khin-U. Other townships saw rapid increases over September, including Ayadaw, Myaung, Kanbalu, Pinlebu, and Chaung-U. Kale Townships was already exceptionally active but saw the number of conflict incidents double over September, making it the second most active township in the country. Monywa Township saw the number of conflict incidents in September triple compared to August, making it the most active township in the country. This is also notable because Monywa is a major center for Tatmadaw activity as it hosts several large army bases.

Conflict incidents across Sagaing—Magway—Chin span the range of possibilities, including IEDs, ambushes, small arms skirmishes, and targeted assassinations. Furthering trends of recent months, the KIA has continued to be active in northern Sagaing, specifically in Katha, Pinlebu, and Homalin Townships. Pinlebu emerged as a major battleground from September 20 onwards as multiple PDFs and the KIA engaged Tatmadaw forces repeatedly. As mentioned previously, Chin State is also seeing more fixed battles around its key towns, such as Thantlang and Hakha.

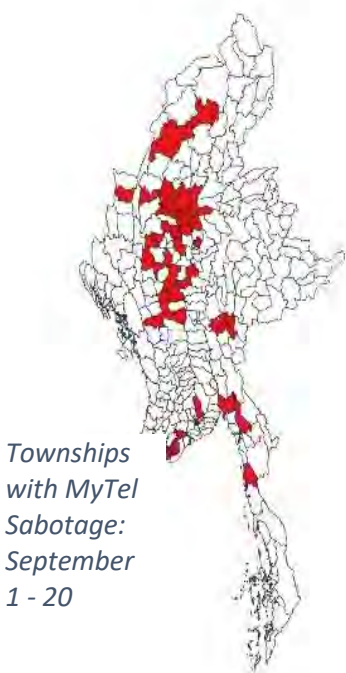
SAC is not oblivious to either the strategic significance of these regions or the escalating resistance. The Tatmadaw was conspicuously sending Tatmadaw reinforcements to these areas throughout September. Some reinforcements were sent by boats and barges up the Chindwin River while others were sent overland from major Tatmadaw bases along the Ayeyarwady and Chindwin Rivers, notably Pakokku (Magway Region) and Monywa (Sagaing Region). The Tatmadaw also deployed armored riverine patrol boats to the area around the Chindwin-Ayeyarwady confluence.<sup>43</sup> With the rainy season relenting, over

September there was greater use of air attacks on resistance forces in Western Myanmar, both by helicopters and jets that tend to operate out of Magway Air Base, just east of Magway town.

From September 15 onwards, SAC disconnected internet access in 24 townships in Chin State and Magway and Sagaing Regions that were perceived to have active resistance forces.<sup>44</sup> Given the Tatmadaw's history, this was likely done so that Tatmadaw forces would not have as much media and social media coverage of their atrocities. This motive includes to block visibility within their own forces and loyal communities so they can deny wrongdoing. This is perhaps even more important to Tatmadaw leadership than blocking international attention.

The battlefronts of Western Myanmar are of strategic significance for the country-wide conflict. Chin State is a bellwether for determining whether resistance forces can seize and hold territory.<sup>45</sup> Magway and Sagaing are symbolic as Bamar heartland regions that are leading resistance to the junta. By prioritizing

reinforcements to Tatmadaw units across these regions after D-Day, the junta stands to lose much credibility if its actions do not produce clear results. In this sense, even if Tatmadaw forces provoke large population movements through ongoing atrocities, a failure to clearly defeat self-defense groups in Chin, Sagaing, and Magway will highlight to the whole country that the resistance is now self-sustaining and the Tatmadaw does not have the initiative.



While the core tactics of the resistance remain the same after D-Day, some new ones have emerged. The most notable is systematic targeting of Tatmadaw-owned MyTel's telecom towers. It is likely that these towers support Tatmadaw communications systems necessary for combat operations. MyTel is also an important revenue source for the military. Despite public efforts to do so, that the Tatmadaw forces cannot protect them is surely embarrassing.<sup>46</sup> Tatmadaw forces have gone so far as to put landmines around some towers.<sup>47</sup> In sync with the D-Day announcement, which called for civil service personnel to join the CDM, self-defense groups are placing increasing pressure on local ward and village tract administrators. Over September multiple areas across western Myanmar saw significant waves of administrator resignations.<sup>48</sup>

**Resistance attacks against SAC forces are increasing in sophistication and potency.** Armed resistance across much of the country is only several months old and often carried out by young people new to warfare. Regardless, a systematic examination of conflict incidents highlights that implementation of common tactics employed by resistance actors is improving, which is increasing their potency. The classic guerilla tactics of staying mobile and deploying hit-and-run attacks are clearly increasing. Traditional 'tumi' rifles are still the norm for many PDFs, particularly those in the Regions, i.e., further away from international borders and EAOs. Yet, even with these archaic weapons, resistance forces are proving adept at avoiding costly heavy engagements with better armed Tatmadaw forces. The fact that Tatmadaw forces are focusing so heavily on attacking civilian populations underscores their inability to decisively engage and defeat PDFs.

As described in the last brief, there has been a 'maturing' of resistance forces for several months whereby they have gained leadership, experience, and armaments. The NUG has also further developed policies to

guide the democratic resistance's war effort. Most notable in September was the publication of guidance to PDFs regarding targeting enemy forces and the treatment of prisoners of war.<sup>49</sup> The NUG Ministry of Human Rights also issued directions to protect vulnerable populations and adhere to international human rights norms.<sup>50</sup>

Overall, this maturing has led to increasingly bold attacks on SAC. For instance, twice in September the Chin State Government building in Hakha was attacked by self-defense groups.<sup>51</sup> A bombing also took place in Nay Pyi Taw on September 30 of a Ministry of Defence office in Bayintnaung Ward, which was claimed by an increasingly assertive Nay Pyi Taw PDF.<sup>52</sup> Even central Yangon saw several extended shootouts over September as well as prominent ambushes and IED attacks on passing Tatmadaw forces.<sup>53</sup> In urban areas, self-defense groups are also increasingly utilizing 'double tap' attacks that use an initial explosion or the assassination of a pro-SAC administrator to lure Tatmadaw forces to an area where they are then attacked by further explosions or small arms fire.<sup>54</sup> The intelligence capacities of the resistance are also increasing. For instance, precision targeting has improved as illustrated by increasingly sophisticated IEDs and by the attack on a Tatmadaw supply train just outside of Mandalay city.<sup>55</sup> Regular attacks also occur on Tatmadaw supply boats on the Ayeyarwady and Chindwin Rivers, both by the KIA and increasingly by PDFs.<sup>56</sup> Even the Tatmadaw's armored patrol boats were attacked in September by PDFs.<sup>57</sup>

A review of conflict incidents also highlights that while there is still a major gap in armaments between Tatmadaw forces and those of the resistance, the latter is arming itself relatively quickly.<sup>58</sup> The Karenni self-defense groups seem to be particularly successful at securing arms. The use of automatic weapons has become more common as have IEDs utilizing more powerful explosives with remote triggering.<sup>59</sup> There are even reports of mortars being used by self-defense groups.<sup>60</sup> Heavier weapons allow for more

<b>Most Conflict-Affected Townships by Conflict Incidents Overall</b>		
1.	Kale (Sagaing)	60
2.	Myingyan (Mandalay)	53
3.	Hpapun (Karen) & Muse (Shan)	49
4.	Mindat (Chin) & Loikaw (Kayah)	48
5.	Hlaing Thar Yar (Yangon)	47
6.	Monywa (Sagaing)	45
7.	Kani (Sagaing)	43
8.	Hpakant (Kachin), Momauk (Kachin) & Pale (Sagaing)	38
9.	Demoso (Kayah)	37
10.	Bago (Bago), Chan Mya Thazi (Mandalay), & Thingangyun (Yangon)	35

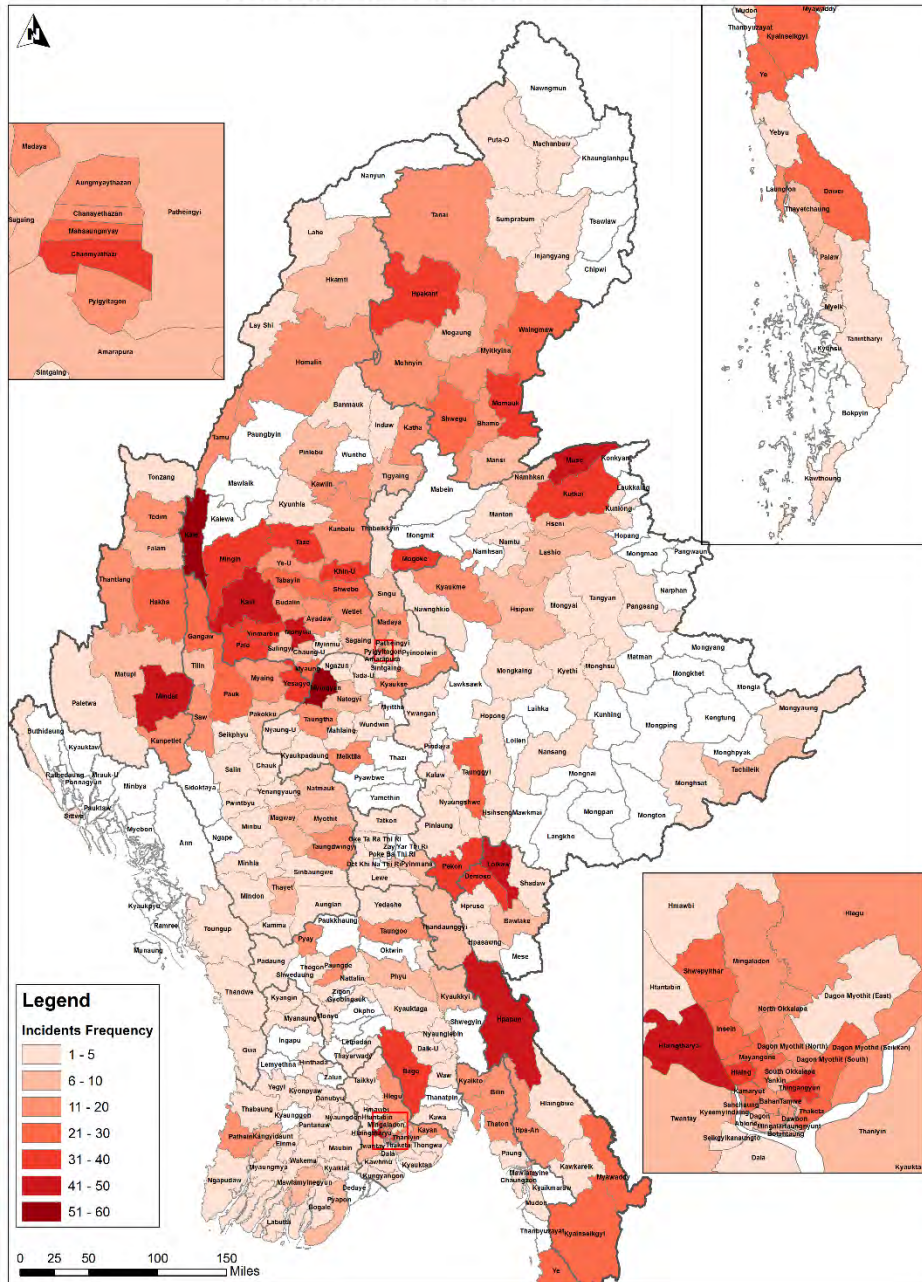
direct attacks, such as when the Pekon PDF attacked the Tatmadaw's 7<sup>th</sup> Military Operations Command using Rocket-Propelled Grenades.<sup>61</sup> Attacks by self-defense groups and EAOs are taking a toll on Tatmadaw forces. For instance, the NUG claimed 445 Tatmadaw soldiers were killed in clashes between September 1 and 20.<sup>62</sup> The fact that the Tatmadaw charged a regional commander with failure of duty because of high battlefield losses in western Sagaing also highlights that casualties are mounting.<sup>63</sup>

Coordination is increasing between self-defense groups.<sup>64</sup> For example, CDF groups in Chin State and the KNDF/KA coalition in Kayah State have been waging extended operations around key towns like Demoso, Loikaw, Mindat, and Thantlang. Coordinated action has been prominent along the Chin State border with both Magway and Sagaing Regions, particularly in extended fighting in Gangaw and

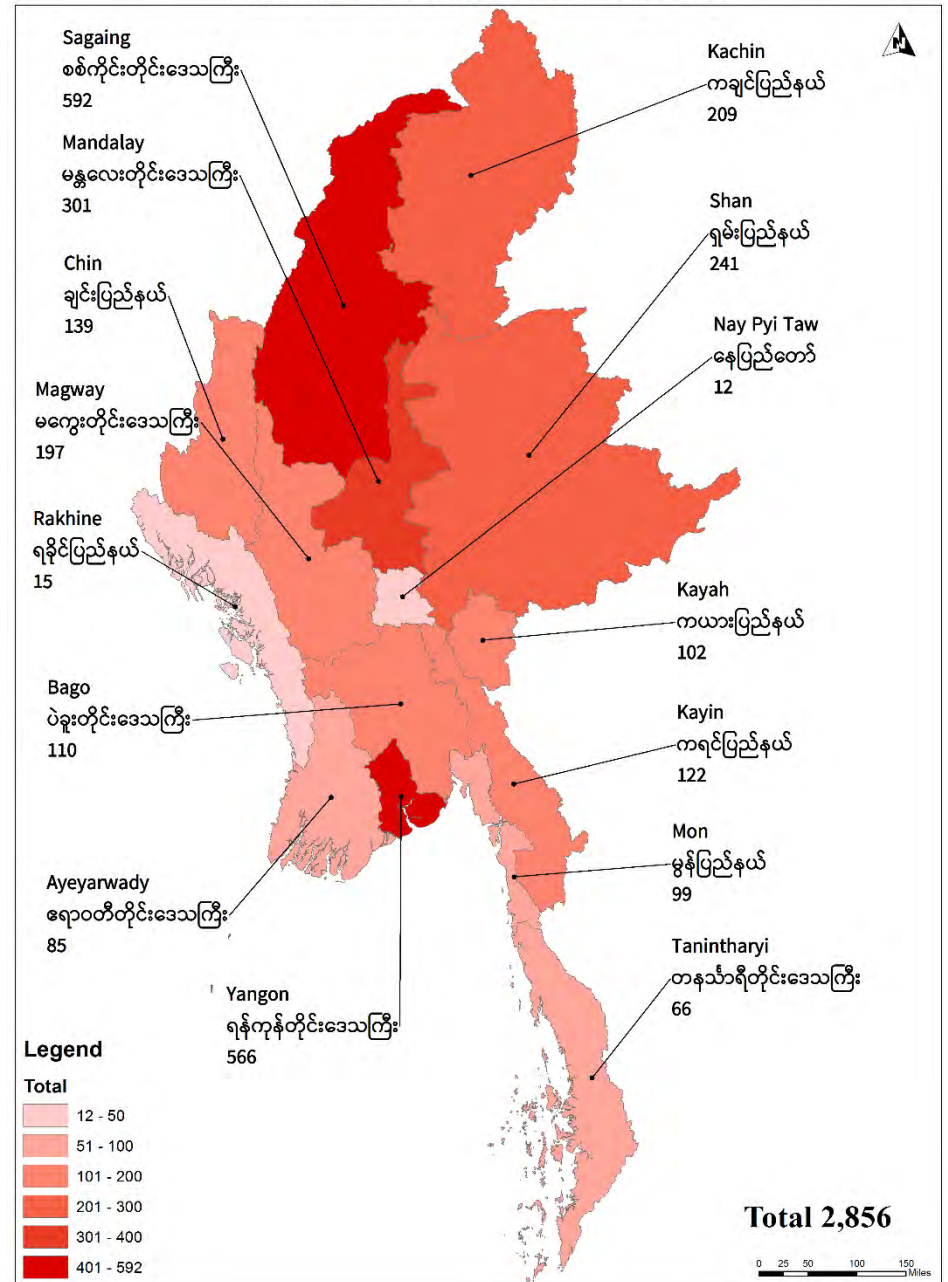
Kalay Townships.<sup>65</sup> There are also reports of the Nay Pyi Taw PDF providing support to self-defense groups in Kayah State under the direction of the NUG's Ministry of Defence.<sup>66</sup> Where coordination is successful, self-defense groups have been able to attack larger Tatmadaw units. For instance, on September 22 a combined force of the Pinlebu, Kawlin, and Wuntho PDFs ambushed the Tatmadaw's 44th Light Infantry Division, inflicting heavy casualties on it.<sup>67</sup> Overall, with the escalation of fighting after D-Day, SAC is facing multiple active battlefronts.<sup>68</sup> The below map of all conflict incidents between April 23 and September 30 highlights this point.



Total Conflict Incidents; April 23 - September 30



Conflict Incidents: April 23 - September 30, 2021



**Assessing the Tatmadaw's internal coherence is difficult, but it is undoubtedly under historic levels of stress.** It is apparent that the Tatmadaw has maxed out its reserve forces, meaning it is using all, or at least nearly all, the assets (personnel, arms, finances) it has available.<sup>69</sup> Tatmadaw reinforcements routinely number in the hundreds.<sup>70</sup> For an institution facing an existential crisis, such low numbers say a lot for a military conventionally understood to have over 350,000 members. It is also telling that the Tatmadaw no longer advertises deployments of its elite Light Infantry Divisions (LIDs) as it did last March and April. This is likely because they are undermanned and suffering significant casualties.

Moreover, townships that saw intense fighting early-on between Tatmadaw forces and the KIA – Momauk, Bhamo and Kutkai, for instance – are no longer as active as fighting moves further afield.<sup>71</sup> KIA operations are increasingly prominent across northern Sagaing and western Kachin. Hpapun Township in Karen State is still exceptionally active with conflict incidents, but the KNU has expanded operations in Mon, Bago and increasingly Tanintharyi. Fighting is still heavy in Shan State's Muse Township, but over mid-September the MNDAA started routine actions against Tatmadaw forces further south in Lashio Township.

Amidst these pressures, there are routine reports of SAC trying to form local militias in both Bamar and non-Bamar areas. These efforts have been ongoing for months, as described in the previous brief regarding *Pyu Saw Hti* militias. Tatmadaw proxy militias, notably the Border Guard Forces and People's Militia Forces, are undertaking forced recruitment, for instance in Laukkai, Kokang Self-Administered Zone.<sup>72</sup> While this is certainly not a new practice in Myanmar's conflict environment, it is unclear if these efforts are successful. There are credible reports of failed endeavors, such as in areas around Putao where elderly men were conscripted and forced to undergo militia training but are unable to deploy in any meaningful manner.<sup>73</sup>

Within the Tatmadaw proper, there are also proxy indicators of duress. For instance, redeployments of traffic police from Yangon to Rakhine, Chin, and Sagaing signifies the dearth of available personnel.<sup>74</sup> The tasking of such units to do things for which they were not designed, e.g., protracted counterinsurgency support, is exceptional and arguably not particularly viable. There have also been some notable 'friendly fire' incidents between Tatmadaw forces.<sup>75</sup> An order issued within the Tatmadaw for battalions across the country to be ready for attack and that soldiers' wives should be armed to defend bases was telling.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, repeated Tatmadaw advertisements announcing the extension of applications to officer cadet schools highlights the emerging challenges of recruitment. Lastly, stress and fatigue are creeping into the ranks of security forces as represented by routine brawls between SAC security forces, often resulting in fatalities.<sup>77</sup> There have also been several high-profile incidents where younger enlisted staff shot superior officers.<sup>78</sup>

Key issues to watch in the near-term will be normally routine HR, logistics, and administrative matters relating to the Tatmadaw's force structure. These include the timeliness and size of rotating units, consistency of resupply, as well as whether retirements or resignations are allowed again.<sup>79</sup> Exigency measures can sustain the Tatmadaw for the near-term, but attrition certainly will begin to be problematic as Tatmadaw personnel face chronic fatigue across the country.

Additionally, Myanmar's collapsing economy, and the Kyat with it, will increasingly have significance to the military situation.<sup>80</sup> While the collapse of the Kyat has horrible ramifications for the people of Myanmar, it will also have negative ramifications for the Tatmadaw's ability to fight. In some ways the SAC can compensate to bolster its own forces, such as by printing Kyat or selling natural resources for foreign exchange, but in other ways it will also suffer immensely, particularly as it struggles to buy critical inputs for its war machinery.<sup>81</sup> The Kyat's depreciation has major ramifications for the morale of Tatmadaw forces and is also a symbol of failed leadership of the country.<sup>82</sup> SAC's spokesman stated that



the Tatmadaw would not adjust soldiers' salaries, which by the end of September had lost a significant amount of their value since the coup.<sup>83</sup>

Amidst these threats, SAC is attempting to present an aura of normalcy and stabilization. The state-owned *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper turns out surreal amounts of reportage on agriculture while Senior General Min Aung Hlaing assures the public that he believes in democracy and can grow the economy to achieve developed status within 5 to 10 years.<sup>84</sup> The senior general has also made bizarre statements claiming that the country does not have military administration but rather all administration is under civil authorities.<sup>85</sup> He adds this is necessary to not scare the population through the presence of armed soldiers in communities.<sup>86</sup> It is also apparent that the senior general is attempting to bolster morale within his forces and present himself as a normal leader by making multiple visits around the country during September.<sup>87</sup>

**Absolutist arguments that the Tatmadaw cannot be defeated are simplistic and fail to account for how significant the events of 2021 have been in Myanmar's modern history.** No other year compares, not even 1988, in terms of social, political, and economic upheaval to 2021.<sup>88</sup> While nothing is a given in what will happen next in Myanmar, the NUG's D-Day announcement is assuredly a milestone in the historic events now unfolding in Myanmar. Following the announcement of the NUG's defensive war and a litany of military defeats, the Tatmadaw no longer has the initiative and is on the backfoot trying to quell resistance. Simply put, momentum has shifted against it as it regularly suffers battlefield losses.

While it is nowhere certain that Tatmadaw will 'lose', it is likewise not assured that it will 'win.'<sup>89</sup> To be clear, at best, what SAC can hope for in terms of 'winning' is enough pacification of resistance to allow it to reassert control over core areas of the country and hence nominally consolidate its power nationally. It will not be able to defeat all armed resistance as it has never achieved that since independence. The threshold necessary for the consolidation of power nationally is murky at best, especially in the near-term. In contrast, the terms for SAC 'losing' are increasingly more obvious as armed resistance entrenches itself across the country: losing now implies the removal of SAC from power.<sup>90</sup>

Given the fluidity and nuances of 'winning' and 'losing', the most important question is whether the junta can be removed from power and be replaced with a wholly different kind of regime that is not dominated by the Tatmadaw. Months of excessive violence against protesters, thousands of arrests, and widescale military operations, piled atop the COVID-19 pandemic and a collapsing economy, have done nothing to stem the expansion of armed resistance. Nationwide and not dependent on external support, resistance to military rule is now self-sustaining and cannot be extinguished by the Tatmadaw. This is apparent to the resistance, with an increasingly common refrain for protesters being: "You can kill the revolutionary; you can't kill the revolution."<sup>91</sup>

Regardless, the Tatmadaw seems resolved on perpetuating even more atrocities, witnessed most prominently in Magway, Sagaing, and Chin over September.<sup>92</sup> This will likely only deepen resistance further rather than diminish it. It now stands to reason that violence has crossed a threshold of scope and intensity whereby major actors on both sides – SAC forces and those of the resistance – feel the need to escalate fighting because a loss would mean death, displacement, or life imprisonment. A populace increasingly inured to state terror will only fight more.

**Before concluding, it is necessary to appropriately contextualize the rationale for the NUG's D-Day declaration.** Amidst ongoing calls from the international community for dialogue, notably by ASEAN, this is important to set expectations about why armed resistance was deemed necessary by the NUG and its partners and what it has, or potentially will, achieve.<sup>93</sup>

First, the September 7 announcement was a statement of reality: Myanmar is a country at war. Arguably, it had been at war for months before the D-Day announcement. Violence against civilians has been pronounced since at least March and armed resistance has been steadily increasing since early-May. NUG policy has been one of armed resistance since at least May 5 when it called for the formation of PDFs to defend local communities from Tatmadaw atrocities.<sup>94</sup> D-Day reaffirmed the need for PDFs and greater partnership with EAOs. The announcement called for a nationwide uprising to oust the junta and military dictatorship once and for all, i.e., the declaration of 'war.' There is now a deep seated, widely held belief within Myanmar's populace that SAC will not negotiate, certainly not in good faith. More importantly, even if it did, the only acceptable outcome for large parts of the public is the complete ouster of military dictatorship once and for all.

Second, NUG interim president Duwa Lashi La was quite clear to define the nature of armed resistance to the junta. Most important was the continued emphasis on the right of Myanmar people everywhere to self-defense. Resistance actors did not instigate the current crisis and first tried peaceful means to resolve it. The notion of a "people's defensive war" clearly resonates within the public after months of atrocities by Tatmadaw forces. Moreover, this was to be a national uprising. As the president highlighted, "This revolution is a people's revolution, and the entire population of the Union of Myanmar must resist Min Aung Hlaing's brutal military."<sup>95</sup> D-Day did not signal a marked shift in the strategies and tactics of resistance but rather a distinct escalation based on the resources available. This means active resistance utilizing a range of modalities – CDM, peaceful protests, economic sanctions, *and* armed resistance.

Third, it is important to see D-Day as part of a longer process necessary for securing a different future for Myanmar, one finally freed of military dictatorship. Since day one after the coup, the resistance has defined itself around national aspirations for democracy, federalism, and human rights. Notably, the resistance has focused on achieving the goals of both pro-democratic forces and long oppressed ethnic nationality groups. Armed resistance is the last resort after three decades of peaceful efforts to achieve these goals by the NLD; after ten years of good faith engagement with the Tatmadaw by both the NLD and by many EAOs, who have had such peaceful engagement violently thrown back in their faces once again.

**What happens now?** After D-Day, Myanmar is a country that is increasingly at war against one institution, the Tatmadaw. The form of this war is a national uprising. The strongest leverage SAC has over the Myanmar people is its willingness to use extreme violence. The junta is displaying its predictable barbarity in the clearest terms. This willingness to use violence is compounded by the inability of the international community to play a stronger role in influencing the junta, much less garner concessions to leave power. However, after a certain point, a threshold is crossed whereby violence does not suppress but rather encourages resistance because normal people believe they must fight or lose everything. Arguably, Myanmar has already crossed that point. The Tatmadaw's barbaric violence over March and April catalyzed armed resistance more than anything else. That it continues the approach means it accepts nothing else. This zero-sum game is recognized by the vast bulk of the population that now views armed resistance as an unfortunate necessity that needs to be seen through.

Definitive to how events ultimately unfold is which side can persevere longer as violence undoubtedly will get worse before the situation gets better. The Tatmadaw is not designed to counter a national uprising across multiple fronts, with others likely to open as the rainy season concludes.<sup>96</sup> Amidst this, the Tatmadaw has neither the personnel, armaments nor financial depth to mount combat operations across the full length of the country for an extended period. Arguably it can maintain such operations for a couple months, not years. It is likely suffering recruitment challenges given its unpopularity. A review of its

logistics methods also shows that it does not have extant systems to supply large numbers of small bases across the Regions when local communities turn hostile. Hence, the coming several months of conflict will be critical.

Core tenets of Tatmadaw military strategy, as well as visible metrics for success in the past, are sorely lacking in 2021. Most notably, the Tatmadaw has failed to secure new ceasefires with EAOs waging war on it. It extended a unilateral ceasefire with EAOs for another five months in late-September, declaring this a “goodwill” gesture, but this was comprehensively ignored by EAOs.<sup>97</sup> It is unclear which EAOs, if any, would agree to new bilateral ceasefires anytime soon when the Tatmadaw is pressed across the country. Moreover, the Tatmadaw’s reputation for adhering to promises is broken, most obviously by staging a coup in the first place but also from endless outrages since then. PDFs accepted tactical ceasefires last May and June, but such is the public’s mood presently that such ceasefires are unlikely to emerge again unless for very specific, limited periods to allow humanitarian access.<sup>98</sup> The Tatmadaw repeatedly broke these earlier ceasefires in any case.<sup>99</sup> It is unclear why actors like ASEAN propose such measures given this context.

By escalating violence after D-Day but failing to significantly suppress resistance, the SAC risks undermining the narrative to its narrow base of supporters that have believed it will inevitably persevere as the Tatmadaw has in decades past. Most important in this regard are its own soldiers. Facing constant threat, lacking steady supplies, limited to non-existent reinforcements, and fighting in areas that they never imagined are realities creeping into the collective psyche of the Tatmadaw’s rank-and-file. The officers may hold given the years of indoctrination they go through, but the rank-and-file will be quicker to raise doubts, as will police forces and proxy militias. Quelling a national uprising was never what they signed up for.

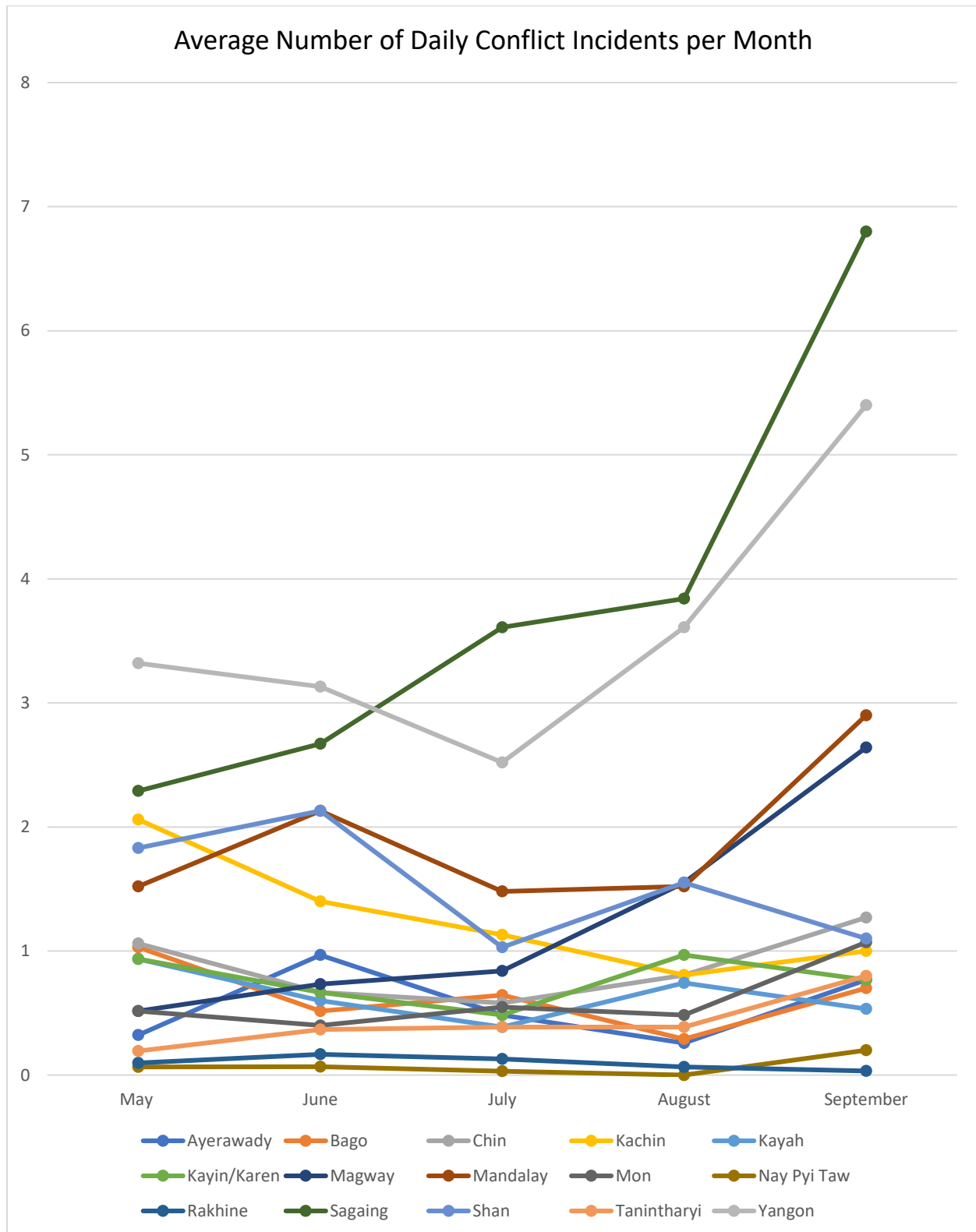
Whole Tatmadaw units are not yet deserting or defecting, but the pace of individual desertions and defections is increasing.<sup>100</sup> On September 17, the NUG with EAOs created a joint committee to implement the “People’s Embrace” program to encourage CDM defections in the security forces.<sup>101</sup> This effort is led by CDM soldiers and police officers, some of the estimated 3,000 who have left the Tatmadaw and police force since the coup, with over 450 in the two weeks after D-Day alone.<sup>102</sup> Over August and September, at least six outposts – Tatmadaw, police, and BGF -- were abandoned.<sup>103</sup> There are also credible accounts of troops being relocated out of remote outposts by helicopter, for instance in northern Chin State.<sup>104</sup> However, rather than expecting whole units to defect or desert, it is more realistic to anticipate the Tatmadaw’s command-and-control chain to diminish as so many small, dispersed units start to sit aside and ignore orders.<sup>105</sup>

Some analysts have argued the Tatmadaw has a high threshold for ‘absorbing’ losses, particularly those killed in action or wounded. While this trait may have been true historically, it is doubtful it holds in the current context of a national uprising.<sup>106</sup> Certainly the Tatmadaw absorbed significant losses in Rakhine fighting between 2017-2020, but that conflict occurred when things were relatively stable across the rest of the country.<sup>107</sup> While the senior officer corps assuredly doesn’t lose too much sleep over the deaths of the rank-and-file, as an institution it is hard to absorb losses when you cannot easily replace them. The Tatmadaw’s recruitment challenges and the slow but steady pace of defections and desertions are likely to become increasingly problematic for it. This will be compounded by mounting fatigue across the institution.

At the start of October, the Tatmadaw faces a stark reality as Myanmar’s national uprising escalates. It acts like a foreign occupying force desperately trying to quell an uprising that is only burning bigger day after day. PDFs are arming up. Conflict spans key States – Chin, Kayah, Kachin, and Karen – and is now entrenched in Bamar-heartland Regions -- Sagaing and Magway, plus the major cities of Yangon and

Mandalay. The Tatmadaw has had no success forcing key EAOs to sign ceasefires or to break their burgeoning relationships with the NUG and PDFs. Resistance forces now have established safe havens with both the KIA and KNU where they can safely train and equip fighters.<sup>108</sup> Raids on villages are ineffective at killing PDF fighters. Tatmadaw 'clearance operations' in remote townships are costly and ineffective at controlling territory for the long-term. There are simply not enough security forces to move around. The coming months will see more intense battles as the Tatmadaw loses control of states and regions, starting in Kayah, Chin, Kachin, and Sagaing. It is not assured that the Tatmadaw will lose, but a month after D-Day, the momentum is certainly *not* on its side.

## Annex 1





## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> [Myanmar's shadow government declares 'resistance war' against military junta | Myanmar NOW \(myanmar-now.org\)](https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/myanmar-shadow-government-declares-resistance-war-against-military-junta) Subsequent to the September 7 declaration, NUG statements and speeches started to frequently use the term "people's defensive war." Additionally, despite a general consensus that September 7 was in fact the so-called 'D-Day', there remains some confusion over the matter. See, Leong Wai Kit (@LeongWaiKitCNA) tweeted at 5:42 AM on Fri, Sep 24, 2021: @NUGMyanmar Human Rights Minister @aung\_myo\_min also told @Tan\_Hui\_Yee of @straits\_times that Sep 7 launch of People's Defensive War was an "alert" for civilians to understand situation rather than 'D-day' where "everyone would take up arms" (<https://twitter.com/LeongWaiKitCNA/status/1441231604928507906?s=03>)

<sup>2</sup> As per Exera, the main points from the September 7 declaration were: 1) From today 7 September onwards, the revolution against the SAC is declared. All civilians are to contribute to the best of their ability. 2) PDFs are to eliminate anyone associated with the military in their respective areas of control. 3) All SAC-appointed local civil administrators are directed to resign. 4) PDFs are to follow above instructions while prioritizing the public's safety. 5) PDFs are urged to put people's security first during operations. 6) The public is urged to refrain from travelling without emergency, gather supplies, and to assist PDFs. 7) Ethnic Armed Organizations are to launch offensives to claim their own areas of control. 8) Civilians are to assist in dismantling local civil administration. 9) Border Guard Police and Tatmadaw-affiliated People's Militias are urged fight the SAC. 10) The current revolution is a fair, and legal revolution. 11) The NUG believes neighboring countries and the international community will understand. 12) All security personnel are directed to defect to PDFs immediately. 13) All civil servants are urged to refrain from going to office from today onwards. 14) Every citizen sacrificed during this revolution will be recognized as martyrs. NUG's Ministry of Defence also released guidelines to PDFs, urging them to behave in lines with international laws and not to commit war crime.

<sup>3</sup> It should be caveated that while Rakhine does not have open conflict there is certainly growing tension between SAC and the Arakan Army (AA), which is steadily asserting control over the state. During September there was only one incident in Rakhine State, the murder of a village tract administrator on September 1 during an attempted kidnapping in Maungdaw Township.

<sup>4</sup> This is, obviously, a major assertion. The argument is worth debating as it gets to the crux of the matter for understanding policy options. Myanmar's conflict has already passed a threshold whereby the Tatmadaw cannot simply stamp out revolt against its rule. The resistance is now simply too large, and growing, as well as increasingly better equipped and funded.

<sup>5</sup> For an interesting video of a PDF graduation ceremony for the NUG's Southern Command, see (12) [NICHOLAS on Twitter: "#VIDEO: The National Unity Government \(@NUGMyanmar\) 's People's Defense Forces \(#PDF\) Southern Regional Military Command \(15\) weekly graduation ceremony was held in a liberated area. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar #Sep21Coup #RefugeesNeedHelp #UN\\_RecognizeNUG https://t.co/7LAS6uCuBt" / Twitter](https://twitter.com/NUGMyanmar/status/1441231604928507906?s=03)

<sup>6</sup> Military initiative is generally used to mean the "power of making our adversary's movements conform to our own."

<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it is important to qualify up front that this analysis covers the presence of conflict in the form of 'incidents,' but further analysis is required to detail the intensity and pace of it. This brief makes some preliminary observations about the *intensification* of conflict incidents in Kayah and Chin States, but further analysis is required to be able to systematically assess rates of intensification across the whole country.

<sup>8</sup> Arguably this is on the low end as there may be under-reporting of conflict incidents across Chin-Magway-Sagaing because 24 townships had the internet disconnected from mid-September onwards.

<sup>9</sup> In contrast, May, June, and July were relatively consistent, at 518, 499, and 443 conflict incidents respectively.

<sup>10</sup> For comparison, May, June, and July were relatively consistent, at 16.7, 16.63, and 14.3 per day respectively.

<sup>11</sup> [39 explosions occur in Yangon Region from September 1 to 22 \(nationthailand.com\)](https://www.nationthailand.com/news/39-explosions-occur-in-yangon-region-from-september-1-to-22)

<sup>12</sup> Prior to September there were intermittent attacks on MyTel offices, usually bombings, but very limited sabotage of telecom towers. (11) [RFA Burmese on Twitter: "စစ်တပ်က အာဏာသိမ်းပြီးနောက်ပိုင်း"](https://twitter.com/RFA_Burmese/status/1441231604928507906?s=03)

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<sup>13</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, most significant was a bombing on September 17 in Aungban Town (Kalaw Township, Southern Shan State) near a Pa-O National Organization (PNO) office and subsequent reprisal attacks on the Aungpan Special Defence Force (ASDF).

<sup>14</sup> (11) Nicholas on Twitter: "On 27/09 the fascist TMD sent LID66 with over 40 truck load of reinforcement+300 troops to Loikaw-Demawso corridors. Normally 90mins drive, they still couldn't even reach Loikaw. 1/ #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar <https://t.co/kYHJLdrlxy>" / Twitter

<sup>15</sup> For a good local perspective of the situation in Kayah State, see [“စစ်ကောင်စီကို အပြုတ်တိုက်မယ်။ NUG ကတိ...” - Ayeeyarwaddy Times | Facebook](#)

<sup>16</sup> UN OCHA, Humanitarian Snapshot. [Myanmar - Humanitarian Snapshot \(September 2021\) - Myanmar | ReliefWeb](#)

<sup>17</sup> Kayah State likely has even more than this, with some local civil society organizations estimating it is over 120,000 or roughly half the population of the State. (12) ACAPS on Twitter: "#Myanmar: #Displacement [↑] by 18% btw 1–15Sept compared to previous weeks because of clashes btw the military & armed groups. All #IDPs have extremely constrained access to basic services. +200,000 ppl displaced since 1Feb, most of them are in the southeast <https://t.co/FTZnlQY4u5> <https://t.co/fioktN2uOs>" / Twitter

<sup>18</sup> The only EAO to officially partner with the NUG is the Chin National Front (CNF), which did so last May.

<sup>19</sup> For an overview of these activities, see [How Myanmar's Coup Opens Opportunity for National Reconciliation | United States Institute of Peace \(usip.org\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> For a good account of KA-KNDF actions, see [Around 60 Myanmar Junta Troops Killed in Fighting With Resistance Forces \(irrawaddy.com\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> (20+) Facebook

<sup>22</sup> Also, there have been joint PDF-KNU actions in Kyaukkyi Township in Bago Region where Tatmadaw forces suffered significant casualties. (13) DVB English on Twitter: "12 soldiers were killed yesterday during all-day fighting between the Bago People's Defense Force (BPDF-YOMA) and the military outside of Kyaukgyi. BPDF-YOMA announced that the Tatmadaw suffered heavy casualties, and that the group confiscated 12 bodies plus a number of weapons." / Twitter

<sup>23</sup> (12) Thang Deih Tuang on Twitter: "D-Day message from General Gunmaw Sumlut, Kachin Independence Army. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar <https://t.co/9XOqvEFn27>" / Twitter

<sup>24</sup> For a good thread on the strategic significance of recent KIA actions, see (11) Nicholas on Twitter: "The fascist army also launched a massive assault in Kayah state as we speak. This 2 fronts ops will test the fascist army limits. Any defeats will shift the balance of power of this revolution. KIA is also heavily involved in Sgg PDFs." / Twitter

<sup>25</sup> For an example, see, (12) Jaw Tu Hkawng on Twitter: "The #Putao's PDF issues a statement which says they will fully participate in the Kachin Independence Army leadership to fight against the SAC Junta in Kachin State. They will also protect the lives and livelihood of the populace with their lives. #WhatsHappeningInKachin <https://t.co/RUXjNYwcuR>" / Twitter

As an example of a combined attack, and per *Exera* reporting: on September 24 in Pinlebu Township, fighting broke out between security forces and a coalition of Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Pinlebu PDF between Inn Gar and Sar Taung Pon Villages. Tatmadaw reportedly conducted air strikes.

<sup>26</sup> Note that people close to the MNDAA did make statements encouraging the D-Day announcement, but there was no official statement by the MNDAA. See, [The Kokang - 全面反攻日2021年9月7日 စုပေါင်းတန်ပြန်တိုက်ခိုက်သည့်နေ့ | Facebook](#)

<sup>27</sup> For a good overview, see [What is the Myanmar military's 'four cuts' strategy? | Military News | Al Jazeera](#)

<sup>28</sup> Illustrative experiences of villagers were seen in Pauk and Salin Townships in Magway Region over September. As per *Exera* reporting, in Pauk Township on September 2, 3, and 14, the following incidents occurred: security forces barracked in Wun Chon village set fire to some private property, [the] military presence was set up in the village after they first raided it on 31 August; security forces raided Tatcone Village, 3 houses were reportedly damaged; a civilian from Taung Bat Village was abducted by alleged Pyu Saw Htee members [and] the next

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morning, she was found dead. In Salin Township on September 14 and 17: security forces killed an NLD member from Khin Palu Village; security forces conducted clearance operation in Nga Hlaing Twin, Kin Mun Chon, Kywe U and Ber La Villages, thousands of villagers had to flee.

<sup>29</sup> UN special rapporteur reports going back years:

<https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?visitType=all&country=MMR&Lang=en>

Full list of UN reports and statements going back years.

[https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?c=125&su=129](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?c=125&su=129) Progressive voice library filtered by 'armed conflict': <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/resources/?cat=report&lang=all&tag=armed-conflict&author=all&year=all&key=>

<sup>30</sup> For an account of current practices, see [In western Myanmar, conflict creates new dangers for women | Conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

<sup>31</sup> An example of Tatmadaw violence against civilians includes one illustrative case whereby a family lost multiple members due to random violence by soldiers. [Myanmar Regime Forces Kill Family of Four in Mandalay Region \(irrawaddy.com\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> For example, in one reported case in Yangon Region, Tatmadaw soldiers "forced 82 men to lie on a tarmac road and hold stress positions while they beat them repeatedly." [Man dies after soldiers publicly torture dozens in Yangon Region village | Myanmar NOW \(myanmar-now.org\)](#). Also, see [Military vehicles hit by landmines in Chaung-U, killing six soldiers | Myanmar NOW \(myanmar-now.org\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> As *Exera* noted: On 18 September at around 17:00 hrs in Myaing Township (Magway Region), a child was injured by a landmine blast. This emphasizes the new risk posed by landmines and UXOs in a region which had never been contaminated before. Also, see [Military using landmines in Demoso - PDFs | Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Int'l Rights Experts Urge UN to Declare Myanmar Junta 'Terrorist' Organization \(irrawaddy.com\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> For a more detailed account of events in Thantlang, Chin State see: [Thousands flee Thantlang, Chin State after clashes with junta troops | Frontier Myanmar](#). Also, see [\(12\) The Irrawaddy \(Eng\) on Twitter: "Almost all of the nearly 10,000 residents of Chin State's Thantlang have fled their homes after junta troops shelled the town on Sept. 18 following clashes with civilian fighters. Fewer than 30 residents, some of whom have #COVID19, remain. \(Photo: Chin World\) https://t.co/psW51Fdxtv" / Twitter](#)

<sup>36</sup> As per *Exera*, on 22 September, UNOCHA Myanmar further reported that over 200,000 inhabitants have fled their houses in Myanmar since the 1 February military takeover.

<sup>37</sup> For example, a soldier steps on a landmine and the Tatmadaw can't pin down the EAO or PDF, so they go to the village and beat 10 random men, shoot livestock, steal stuff, or do other things. There have also been cases recently where PDFs do a hit and run attack and the TMD troops just shoot random passers-by or steal their motorbikes or do other things, openly claiming it is revenge.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, on September 14, SAC issued letters to eight villages in Ayadaw Township, Sagaing Region to relocate due to their alleged affiliation with PDFs. Also, see [\(13\) Burma Revolution 革命 MMMM on Twitter: "Locals say junta troops has distributed leaflets saying that if more ammunition and bombs do not arrive in 15 villages in Sagaing Division's #Ayadaw Township on time, relocation will take place and threatened military lines will be deployed. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar https://t.co/XqZsIPGKZ3" / Twitter](#)

<sup>39</sup> <https://twitter.com/Chanapai247/status/1439801560112848897?s=03>

<sup>40</sup> [Soldiers threaten to torch villages and murder civilians as they order residents to abandon homes | Myanmar NOW \(myanmar-now.org\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> There are numerous examples, but for one see: [\(12\) HaruLyn on Twitter: "On Sep20, nearly 300 ppl from 4 villages in #Bilin Tsp, #Thaton District incl: women & 12 underaged were ABDUCTED as porters by BGF Battalion-1013 \(sub-2\) & used as HUMAN SHIELDS, being forced to stand beside troops in an effort to stop @knuhq attacks. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar https://t.co/uOocpQi6Kk" / Twitter](#)

<sup>42</sup> [Khit Thit Media - သံဃာ၊ သီလရှင်၊ သာမဏေများ နှောင့်စားရင်းတိုင်ကြားရန်... | Facebook](#)

<sup>43</sup> For instance, as per *Exera*, on 2 September in Myaung Township, the Tatmadaw's Navy patrolling the Ayeyarwady River shelled a Myaung PDF (MYGPDF) training camp in Pauk Chaung Village; the MYGPDF retreated with no casualty, but the camp was destroyed. This unprecedented incident highlights the deployment of large military resources in Central Myanmar.

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<sup>44</sup> Map from [\(13\) Htaike Htaike Aung on Twitter: "As of today, internet access in 25 towns and cities across Myanmar have been cut off. This pattern of shutdown is concerning as it is happening particularly in areas with violent crackdowns by the military junta. #KeepItOn #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar https://t.co/bPWFeq2jEJ" / Twitter](#)

<sup>45</sup> Kayah State is also important in this regard. If KA-KNDF forces can clear and hold the State, it would change the conflict dynamics significantly across eastern Myanmar. For more on the strategic significance of Kayah State, see [\(11\) Nicholas on Twitter: "If KNDFs can hold in Kayah, then it would mean the Kayah state is effectively a liberated area. Down from Kayah is Phapun Tsp where KNU brigade 5 is aldy taking hold. From there, it can threaten the Bago region." / Twitter](#)

<sup>46</sup> Defensive measures include planting landmines and creating bamboo fences around the towers. Map until Sept 22: [\(13\) Philipp Annawitt on Twitter: "Townships were military junta-owned MyTel mobile phone towers have been destroyed. Credit: Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security. See link below. #whats happening in myanmar https://t.co/V2Y48BWUji https://t.co/geZoTPvpVc" / Twitter](#)

<sup>47</sup> [\(11\) Late Late Tweet on Twitter: " PDF များသတိပြုရန် တာဝါတိုင်များ အနီးတွင် စစ်ခွေးများ မြေမြှုပ်ပိုးထားထား သည် အနီးနားမသွားခင် ခပ်ဝေးဝေးမှ ခဲ ဖြင့် ပေါက်ကြည့်ပါ Myanmar military soldiers planting landmine near telecom tower #WhatsHappenigInMyanmar #Sep20Coup https://t.co/zbMzOfAshG" / Twitter](#)

<sup>48</sup> For instance, as per *Exera*, over mid-September, administrators from 10 villages in Htilin Township (Magway Region) resigned. Administrators in Htilin faced increasing pressure from the resistance: a total of 5 pro-SAC civilians had already been killed there in just one week in early-September. On September 10, 5 civil administrators from Kalay Town (Kalay Township, Sagaing Region) and 5 others from Yesagyo Township (Magway Region) resigned from their positions. In Chin State's Tedim Township on September 14, 4 local administrators resigned. On September, in Depayin Township (Sagaing Region), Taw Tan and Dain Pin village tract administrators resigned, possibly as a response to the NUG's calls to dismantle the civil administration. On September 27, in Chaung-U Township (Sagaing Region), it was reported that almost all local civil administrators resigned. Local administrators in Chaung-U face increasing pressure by the resistance: a total of 5 pro-SAC civilians have already been killed there since last week. On October 1, in Tigyaing Township (Sagaing Region), it was reported that 19 civil administrators resigned since last week. Local civil administrators in Tigyaing face increasing pressure: in the last 2 weeks, 5 pro-SAC civilians have already been killed there.

<sup>49</sup> [\(12\) Myat San on Twitter: "@MyanmarPdf targeting guideline & guideline on treatment of prisoners of war & soldiers that surrenders to pdf 1. Only target Junta's mechanism of oppression 2. Do not threaten or target regular citizens 3. Avoid targeting crowded places, schools, hospitals, religious building... https://t.co/vCoZHTInLZ" / Twitter](#)

<sup>50</sup> [\(12\) Aung Myo Min on Twitter: "\(1/4\) Plea to armed groups to avoid harming civilians, including children. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar https://t.co/6ncdJD4rsD" / Twitter](#)

<sup>51</sup> Specifically on September 4 and 18, as per *Exera* reporting.

<sup>52</sup> Nay Pyi Taw PDF had multiple attacks inside Nay Pyi Taw over September, including attacks on checkpoints. It also staged actions in southern Shan's Phekon Township to support the KNDF and other residents PDFs there. Three townships in Nay Pyi Taw had conflict incidents for the first time in September: Oke Ta Ra Thi Ri, Tatkhone and Zabuthiri.

<sup>53</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, On September 22 at around 19:00 in Kamayut Township, an explosive device went off near Sin Ye Dwin Bus Stop as a military vehicle drove past; locals heard gunshots, a passer-by was arrested. On September 9 around 16:00 in Sanchaung Township, a military vehicle patrolling along Baho and Bagayar Roads was targeted by an explosive device; 2 security personnel were killed. On September 15, around 17:50 hrs, a security convoy had been targeted by explosive devices near Nga Yote Thee Hlaw Bridge; 2 insurgents were killed in a shootout and one other arrested; he died during detention. Although independent media claimed that 5 security personnel had been killed, it was denied by State media.

<sup>54</sup> For example, and per *Exera* reporting: on 21 September, a shootout took place today at 16:55 Hrs, in Hlaing Thayar Township, when 4 explosive devices went off simultaneously near Bawa Thit Petrol Station; 1 civilian was injured. Security forces sent to investigate clashed with an unknown armed group; another device was flung into a military vehicle, injuring a soldier. Another example occurred on 13 September: at 06:30 Hrs in Taungoo Town

(Taungoo Township, Bago Region), a blast took place near Kha Paung Market; a second blast injured 6 security personnel sent to investigate the area.

<sup>55</sup> [People's Defence Force bombs 'military supply train' leaving Mandalay | Myanmar NOW \(myanmar-now.org\)](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Kani PDF launches multiple attacks on junta vessels travelling up the Chindwin River | Myanmar NOW \(myanmar-now.org\)](#)

<sup>57</sup> [\(11\) Khit Thit Media on Twitter: "မင်းကင်းတွင် ချင်းတွင်းမြစ်တွင်း ကင်းလှည့်နေသည့် စစ်ရေယာဉ်ကို PDF က တိုက်ခိုက်၊ စစ်ကောင်စီတပ်သားအများအပြား ဒဏ်ရာရ ရန်ကုန်၊ စက်တင်ဘာ ၃၀ Read More -&gt; https://t.co/WNQRdkTAB https://t.co/XMrwmphtZP" / Twitter](#)

<sup>58</sup> For pictures of PDF weaponry, see [\(12\) Nicholas on Twitter: "These photos from the battle of Demawso by KNDF troops shows us the for the past few months, significant improvement has been made with weaponry and equipment to the resistance. #WhatsHappeninginMyanmar https://t.co/8dxlmL1PEz" / Twitter](#)

<sup>59</sup> Per *Exera*, an example of an IED attack in an urban setting: On September 26 morning in Myingyan Town, a police patrol was targeted by an explosive device near Soon Loon Bridge; 3 security personnel were killed and 2 others injured. For a rural setting: on September 15 around 04:00 Hrs, in Kawlin Township, a military convoy hit landmines between Taung Maw and Thit Seint Kone Villages. Kawlin PDF claimed responsibility.

<sup>60</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, around 15:30 Hrs, in Pinlaung Township, the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) ambushed a military convoy sent from Kalaw Township; the KNDF notably mobilized mortars, the convoy called in artillery strikes in response.

<sup>61</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, on 23 September around 21:00 Hrs, in Pekon Township, Pekon PDF attacked the facilities of the 7<sup>th</sup> Military Operations Command; they reportedly used Rocket-Propelled Grenade.

<sup>62</sup> [Telegram: Contact @the74media](#) For further perspective, NUG's Ministry of Defence 1,283 security personnel had been killed over all of June and July; but 283 soldiers over roughly one week, between September 8-27. Also, see [\(13\) The 74 Media on Twitter: "မြန်မာနိုင်ငံအနှံ့တွင် စက်တင်ဘာလ ၁၈ ရက်နေ့မှ ၂၇ ရက်နေ့အတွင်း ဖြစ်ပွားခဲ့သည့် လက်နက်ကိုင်ပဋိပက္ခများတွင် စစ်ကောင်စီ ၂၈၃ ဦးခန့်သေဆုံးကြောင်း NUG ဝန်ကြီးဌာနများ၏ အချက်များအရ သိရသည်။ လက်နက်ကိုင်ပဋိပက္ခဖြစ်စဉ်များတွင် စစ်ကောင်စီ ၂၆၈ ဦး သေဆုံးပြီး ၂၀ ဦး ...https://t.co/JqJwO9NfM9 https://t.co/my6LJ3Cbjr" / Twitter. \(12\) Khit Thit Media on Twitter: "နိုင်ငံတစ်ဝန်း တိုက်ပွဲများကြောင့် ရဲနဲ့စစ်သားသေဆုံးမှု နှစ်ဆကျော်တိုးပြီး တစ်ပတ်အတွင်း ၂၂၄ ဦး သေဆုံးဟု NUG ထုတ်ပြန် ရန်ကုန်၊ စက်တင်ဘာ ၂၉ ပြီးခဲ့တဲ့ သီတင်းပတ်ထဲကထက် ယခု သီတင်းပတ်အတွင်း စစ်ကောင်စီတပ်သားသေဆုံးသူ Read More -&gt; https://t.co/000VVzk7AW https://t.co/VDdMmcl1yB" / Twitter](#)

<sup>63</sup> The commander later died during interrogation after being suspected of wanting to defect. [Myanmar Military Detains North Western Commander for Planning to Defect: Ethnic Insurgent Sources \(irrawaddy.com\)](#)

<sup>64</sup> Some of those effective actions after D-Day have been undertaken by key partnerships: KNDF/KA in Kayah State; KNU with PDFs in Bilin, Mon State; KIA with PDFs across northern Sagaing; CDF-Mindat and CDF-Kanpetlet partnering with the Yaw Defense Force and the Saw PDF.

<sup>65</sup> As an illustrated example and per *Exera*, on September 17 in Khaikam Town (Tedim Township), 9 miles police station at the border of Chin State and Sagaing Region was attacked by a joint force of PDF Zoland and CDF Kalay-Kabaw-Gangaw; 5 police officers were reportedly killed. In another example, on September 17 in Kalay Town (Kalay Township), a joint force of Chinland Defence Force Kalay-Kabaw-Gangaw (KKG), Civil Defense Militia and PDF Zoland attacked 9-Mile Police Station; 5 security personnel were reportedly killed. Lastly, on September 26 in Kalay Township, a joint force of the Kalay PDF and Chin National Defence Force (CNDF) clashed with Tatmadaw near Lay Aein Su and Sibin Gyi Villages.

<sup>66</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, Nay Pyi Taw PDF joined the fight, signaling a notable juncture between Nay Pyi Taw and nearby Kayah State. The statement released by Nay Pyi Taw PDF was apparently produced on behalf of the NUG's Ministry of Defence, Military Command for Central Myanmar. If true, that would be the first clear evidence that the NUG's military wing is involved in combat coordination.

<sup>67</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, on 23 September around 16:30 Hrs, in Pinlebu Township, a coalition of the Pinlebu, Kawlin, and Wuntho PDFs ambushed the Tatmadaw's 44th Light Infantry Division near Mu Myit Bridge; security



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forces reportedly suffered substantial casualties; arms and ammunitions were seized. Today, fighter jets flew above Pinlebu.

<sup>68</sup> For a good description of this, see [Around 60 Myanmar Junta Troops Killed in Fighting With Resistance Forces \(irrawaddy.com\)](https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/around-60-myanmar-junta-troops-killed-in-fighting-with-resistance-forces)

<sup>69</sup> [Homes destroyed, food trashed as Myanmar military tries to quell 'people's defensive war', East Asia News & Top Stories - The Straits Times](https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/news/homes-destroyed-food-trashed-as-myanmar-military-tries-to-quell-peoples-defensive-war-article)

<sup>70</sup> Overall, reinforcements have conspicuously ranged in the low hundreds. The exception to this would be reports of upwards of 1,000 soldiers being sent to the Pinlebu area in late-September. DVB English (@DVB\_English) tweeted at 10:11 AM on Sun, Sep 26, 2021: [https://twitter.com/DVB\\_English/status/1442024005066649601?s=03](https://twitter.com/DVB_English/status/1442024005066649601?s=03)

<sup>71</sup> Though, as noted, Momauk Township did see an uptick in fighting over the last month of September. It remains to be seen if this was a temporary blip or will become more protracted. Momauk is significantly symbolically for SAC as the Tatmadaw lost a base there last March to the KIA and despite major efforts, has never been able to recapture it.

<sup>72</sup> [https://twitter.com/DVB\\_English/status/1438920622021783567?s=03](https://twitter.com/DVB_English/status/1438920622021783567?s=03)

<sup>73</sup> <https://twitter.com/The74Media2019/status/1440301980887310339>

<sup>74</sup> There are other interesting examples, such as an *Exera* report from September 26 that an independent media stated that 30 Pyu Saw Hti members from Bogale Township (Ayeyarwaddy Region) were sent to Yangon Region for security operations.

<sup>75</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, on September 23 in Thaton Township, security forces reportedly engaged in friendly fire with Border Guard Forces (BGF) near Htone Bo Gyi and Htone Bo Lay Villages. Both sides reportedly sustained heavy losses. Nearby in Kyaikto Township on September 22, a military convoy hit landmines laid by the KNLA on Kan Ni Village bridge; Tatmadaw reinforcement were accidentally targeted by friendly fire.

<sup>76</sup> Arguments have been made that this is in fact routine for the Tatmadaw. Perhaps in a general sense, but the times are surely exceptional and such statements are made with actual intent now.  [\(10\) NICHOLAS on Twitter: "The People's Soldiers, a group of CDM soldiers, said in an official statement that military council instructed the battalions to be prepared ready in the event of PDFs attack and women police officers \(Soldiers's wives\) should be armed. \(1/2\) #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar #Sep16Coup https://t.co/pAeldWShKg" / Twitter](https://twitter.com/Nicholas10/status/1440301980887310339)

<sup>77</sup> As per *Exera* reporting, over just August and September, these included: 8 August: in Dala Township a lieutenant was shot dead in a brawl; 10 August: a brawl within security forces happened in Sintgaing Township, one security personnel was reportedly killed; 11 August: in Padaung Township a brawl between two police officers, one was reportedly killed; 16 August: in Mingaladon Township a brawl between security personnel happened in 323<sup>rd</sup> Logistics Battalion, 2 of them were reportedly killed; 24 August: in Depayin Township a drunken police officer stabbed a civil servant from Electricity department at a checkpoint; 29 August: in Kyainseikgyi Township a brawl between security forces resulted in 1 death; 29 August: in Matupi Township, a soldier from the 140th Light Infantry Battalion shot his commanding officer after the latter reiterated SAC's promise to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and hold free elections, the soldier shouted "no trust" and killed himself afterwards; 5 September: in Laukaing Township two traffic police officers fought after an argument, one was killed; 16 September: in Matupi Township some soldiers brawled, one was killed; 21 September: in Taungoo Township a Tatmadaw officer was shot by a soldier after an argument at an entrance checkpoint to Taungoo.

<sup>78</sup> For instance, see [Telegram: Contact @khitthitnews](https://t.me/khitthitnews)

<sup>79</sup> For an interesting example of stressed supply line from northern Sagaing Region see: [Telegram: Contact @the74media](https://t.me/the74media) Tatmadaw resupply is problematic when they need to utilize large numbers of troops to protect it.

<sup>80</sup> The Kyat lost 60 percent in value over the course of September. [Myanmar's junta powerless as currency drops 60% in four weeks, economy tanks | Article \[AMP\] | Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-currency/kyat-lost-60-percent-in-value-over-the-course-of-september-idKCN20210924)

<sup>81</sup> Overall, selling stockpiles of natural resources, such as hard woods, has not been particularly successful as the amounts paid have been very low. It is a buyers' market to the extreme. For an interesting thread on ramifications of the Kyat's devaluation, see  [\(13\) Nicholas on Twitter: "Skyrocketing \\$ rate would also have negative consequences for the fascist army too. First, end of Sept is the end of current financial year. There will be new budgets for the next year. 1/ #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar" / Twitter](https://twitter.com/Nicholas13/status/1440301980887310339)

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<sup>82</sup> Many commentators have noted that during the NLD government, a favorite critique made by Tatmadaw officers were exchange rate fluctuations. A seemingly weak Kyat was used to tar the NLD as ineffective.

<sup>83</sup> [\(12\) Leong Wai Kit on Twitter: "#Myanmar army spokesman Zaw Min Tun said at earlier press con it doesn't plan to increase salaries of military personnel" / Twitter](#)

<sup>84</sup> As *Mizzima* lamented, the "junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has been talking absolute nonsense every day, such as failed projects and impossible missions." [Spring Revolution Daily News for 26 September 2021 | Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight](#)

<sup>85</sup> [Military assigns civilians administrative duties without its direct involvement: SAC chairman | Eleven Media Group Co., Ltd \(elevenmyanmar.com\)](#)

<sup>86</sup> Such statements highlight conflicting possibilities. Either the general realizes that the military regime is incredibly unpopular and is desperately trying to present a different narrative, or he has simply lost all connection with reality about how his regime is in fact perceived by the vast bulk of Myanmar people.

<sup>87</sup> As *Mizzima* highlighted, the junta leader seems to have developed a proclivity to talk about an "electricity-based transportation system" wherever he goes.<sup>87</sup> [Spring Revolution Daily News for 22nd September 2021 | Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight](#). Presenting an aura of normalcy through such trips is proving hard as highlighted by a trip the senior general made a visit to Myitkyina, Kachin State in mid-September. During the visit, the KIA announced that the road to Putao was closed, and the Senior General had to cancel his plans to travel there citing "security concerns."

<sup>88</sup> Indeed, hypothetically if this were akin to 1988, it would only be early-1989 and the 1990 election would not have happened yet. The ABSDF, i.e., armed revolution by protesters, would not yet exist, and certainly not the NCGUB, namely a coordinated opposition government. General Than Shwe would not assume power for several years. In 2021, events have proceeded much faster and the NUG and its collaborators are much further along than their 1988 counterparts were in terms of pressuring a junta to relinquish power.

<sup>89</sup> The Tatmadaw does not have a history of winning. They have a history of making ceasefires with EAOs. Ostensibly, Min Aung Hlaing is a Tatmadaw hero because of his so-called victory against the MNDAA in 2009. This is one of the few exceptions when an EAO was seemingly pushed out of the country. Yet, given the current fighting by the MNDAA, this 'victory' was ephemeral and illustrative of the challenges of using binary win-lose conceptualizations in Myanmar. The MNDAA reemerged around 2013, then conducted major offensives in 2015, and then formed the Northern Alliance.

<sup>90</sup> Given the determination of the resistance, these terms should be readily apparent to external actors, at least to anybody other than ASEAN. Calls for dialogue between SAC and its assorted opponents miss both the instigating role and crimes against humanity perpetrated by SAC.

<sup>91</sup> [\(13\) Sahaphap Chanapai \( มิกซ์ \) on Twitter: "" You can kill the revolution ; you can't kill the revolution " Consolidation of three lines in #Mandalay , MyaTaung family , PhaYarGyi family and Mandalay university students' group , uniformly marched on Sep 27 . #FreezePaymentsToJunta #Sep27Coup #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar https://t.co/GojEqwmd4u" / Twitter](#)

<sup>92</sup> Notable atrocities in September were 'clearance operations' by Tatmadaw forces in Gangaw, Magway Region and Kalay, Sagaing Region as well as extensive violence against civilians in Thantlang, Chin State. The NUG submitted detailed accounts of these atrocities to the United Nations.

<sup>93</sup> One of the points in ASEAN's Five Point Consensus for Myanmar is "constructive dialogue." See [Chairman's Statement on ALM - 24 April 2021 - 5pm \(asean.org\)](#)

<sup>94</sup> One could even argue that a policy of self-defense goes back to 15 March 2021. As reported by Exera, CRPH had announced that people have the right to self-defend if attacked. It also urged each ward and township to develop their self-defence strategy, collect 'defence tools', and start self-defence training processes.

<sup>95</sup> [Myanmar's Shadow Government Issues State of Emergency, Declares War on Junta — Radio Free Asia \(rfa.org\)](#)

<sup>96</sup> As the rainy season concludes, attacks on Tatmadaw forces will likely increase in areas that have been relatively quiet -- notably Bago and Ayeyarwady Regions. These Regions saw a proliferation of self-defense groups over the past several months.

<sup>97</sup> [Military announces a "goodwill" cease-fire with EAOs | Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight](#)

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<sup>98</sup> Multiple rounds of ceasefires were signed in both Kayah and Chin States over May and June. These ceasefires inevitably collapsed when the Tatmadaw broke the terms, usually by sending in reinforcements.

<sup>99</sup> Most generally the Tatmadaw kept sending in reinforcements regardless of the ceasefire terms to stop.

<sup>100</sup> There have been some groups of soldiers leaving, however. For instance, and per *Exera* reporting, in Kani Township (Sagaing Region), media reported that 16 soldiers from the Tatmadaw's 365th Light Infantry Battalion deserted on 13 September. On 15 September, 7 soldiers from Mawyawaddy Navy Base (Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region) defected to resistance groups. For a good analysis of the Tatmadaw and the prospects for defections and desertions, see [Finding fault lines within the Tatmadaw | Frontier Myanmar](#)

<sup>101</sup> For a more detailed description of the People's Embrace program, see [2,000 Myanmar Junta Soldiers and Police Join Civil Disobedience Movement \(irrawaddy.com\)](#)

<sup>102</sup> See, [Hundreds of Myanmar Junta Security Personnel Defect Over Past Two Weeks — Radio Free Asia \(rfa.org\)](#). Furthermore, U Naing Htoo Aung, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Defence-NUG, said that 453 soldiers and police contacted them to join the CDM within 2 weeks after the Acting President declared a state of emergency in the country. [Spring Revolution Daily News for 25 September 2021 | Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight](#)

<sup>103</sup> These were in: Hpakant Township (Kachin State), Kyainseikgyi Township (Karen State), Thayetchaung Township (Tanintharyi Region), and Yesagyo Township (Magway Region).

<sup>104</sup> [\(11\) Nicholas on Twitter: "Local media report that fascist TMD forward operation base near Thantlang, Chin, have been evacuated by helicopters yesterday. only 8 soldiers are believed to be in the base. This comes aft TMD vowed to "crush" CDFs within 2 weeks. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar https://t.co/mTFSXnUPVt" / Twitter](#)

<sup>105</sup> This is incredibly difficult to track but is more of a norm for conflicts around the world than large-scale, outright defections or desertions. For a comparative example, see [How the Taliban did it: Inside the 'operational art' of its military victory - Atlantic Council](#). As noted in the article, "The collapse of the Afghan security forces was a result of operational-level isolation."

<sup>106</sup> See [The necrometrics of Myanmar's spreading war - Asia Times](#)

<sup>107</sup> Kachin State was also active at the time, but otherwise the country was generally stable. An important consideration in this regard is the 'strategic depth' of the Tatmadaw. In simplest terms, in times past the Tatmadaw always had stable 'core' areas from which to consistently recruit. It is hard to pin numbers to current recruitment, but multiple reports make credible arguments that the Tatmadaw is at a historic low in its ability to recruit new personnel. Hence, the Tatmadaw is resorting to the assorted tactics to compensate, described in this paper and others.

<sup>108</sup> For an interesting video of a PDF graduation ceremony for the NUG's Southern Command, see [\(12\) NICHOLAS on Twitter: "#VIDEO: The National Unity Government \(@NUGMyanmar\) 's People's Defense Forces \(#PDF\) Southern Regional Military Command \(15\) weekly graduation ceremony was held in a liberated area. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar #Sep21Coups #RefugeesNeedHelp #UN RecognizeNUG https://t.co/7LAS6uCuBt" / Twitter](#)