



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Two separate clashes between armed actors in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, February 2015

This News Bulletin describes two separate clashes which occurred in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District in February 2015. The first incident occurred between the Border Guard Force (BGF) and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) which led to the death of a KNLA soldier during the conflict. Following this incident, an investigation was commissioned by the Unity Committee for Karen Armed Groups (UCKAG), which found both sides culpable for the conflict. The second incident occurred between the BGF and the Tatmadaw versus the former Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) Bo San Aung's group which led to the death of one of Bo San Aung's soldiers, two soldiers from the BGF and one soldier from the Tatmadaw. Villagers were caught in between the clashes and report being worried about what will happen in the future.¹

On March 5th 2015, a KHRG staff member met with a female A--- villager and documented the recent clashes between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and a Border Guard Force (BGF)² which occurred on February 28th 2015 in between Meh Htaw Th'Lay and Ta Bluh Hkoh Hkee villages, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District.

According to the A--- villager, BGF Battalion #1022 extended more camps in KNLA controlled areas in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, after the preliminary ceasefire³ was signed between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar government in January 2012.

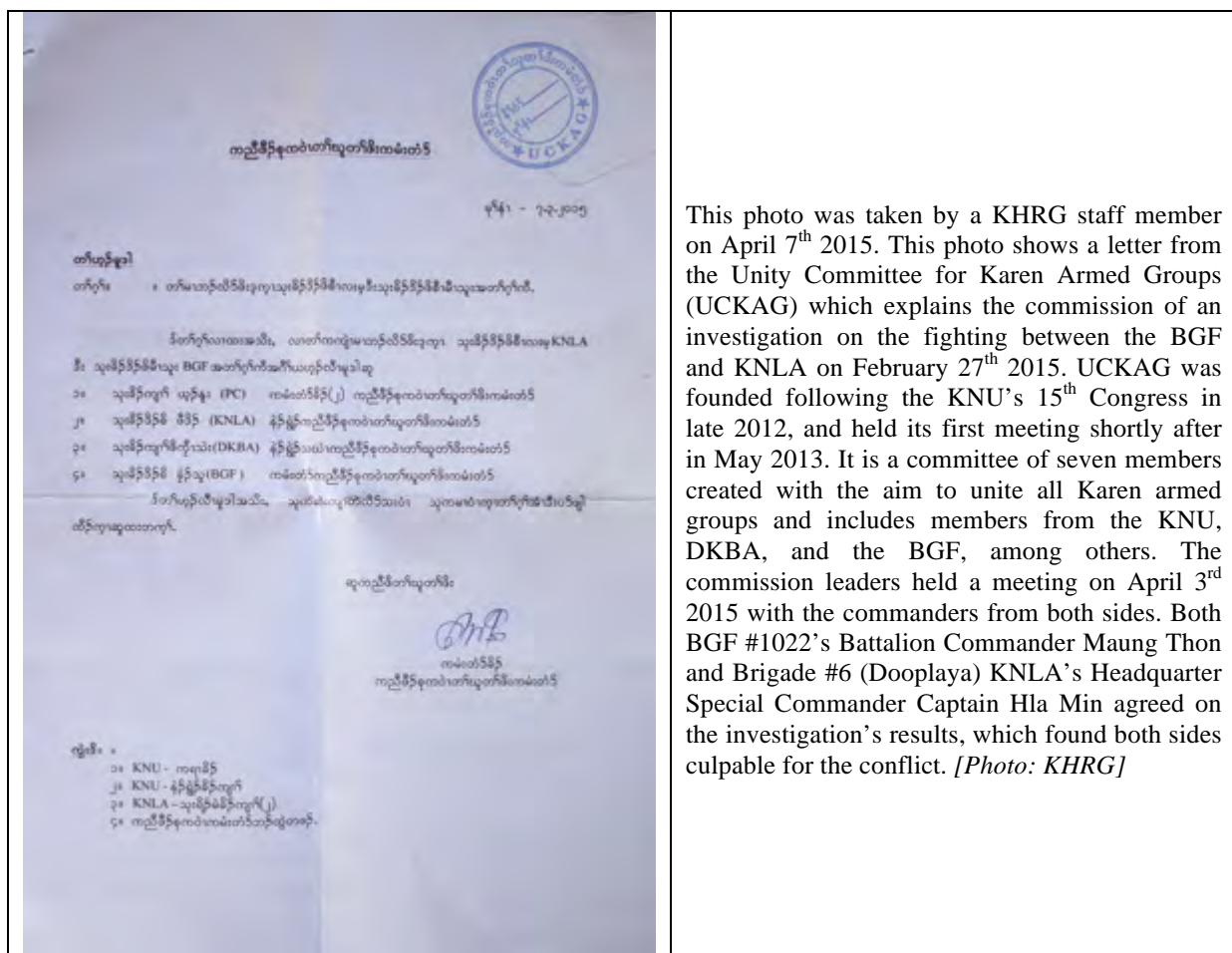
¹ This News Bulletin was written by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Hpa-an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma/Myanmar, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's website.

² Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

³ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the KNU Stakeholder webpage on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014.

She added, since the ceasefire was signed, the Tatamdaw's BGF Battalion #1022, led by Battalion Commander Maung Thon, extended two small camps nearby Myawaddy Town, controlled by the commander of Brigade #6's (Dooطلا District) KNLA Headquarters Special Command Captain Hla Min.

On January 30th 2015, BGF Battalion #1022 built a new camp but was ordered by Special Command Captain Hla Min to withdraw and KNLA soldiers burnt down the camp after the BGF left. On February 27th 2015, a villager reported to Special Command Captain Hla Min that the BGF had returned and was rebuilding their camp. Afterwards, Special Command Captain Hla Min ordered his soldiers to go and tell the BGF to withdraw. On that day, at around 6 pm, a group of KNLA soldiers went to the BGF camp to tell them to withdraw. On their way, before they could reach the BGF camp, they were ambushed by BGF soldiers. One KNLA soldier was shot and killed at the scene, another one was injured by the BGF soldiers and one of the BGF soldiers was injured in return.



A KHRG community member from Kawkareik Township also reported that on February 27th 2015, in the early morning around 5 am, fighting occurred between BGF and Tatmadaw battalions from Kyaikdon Town and former DKBA⁴ Commander Bo San Aung's group⁵ in B---

⁴ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma/Myanmar at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "[Inside the DKBA](#)," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from

section, in C--- village, Kawkareik Township. The Tatmadaw and BGF captured one soldier of *Bo San Aung's* group, who is 18 years old, in possession of one rocket propelled grenade (RPG) and five regular grenades. Villagers who witnessed the Tatmadaw and BGF arrest him said, *"They captured that soldier and he was beaten by the Tatmadaw and BGF before they killed him."* According to the KHRG community member, the BGF ordered C--- villagers to bury the dead soldier's body. The villagers also reported that a bullet hit a shop nearby the fighting area but no villagers were injured and they could not identify which group fired it.

On the same day at around 11 am, the fighting started again in D--- section, C--- village. According to the KHRG community member who went to collect the information in the area, two BGF soldiers and one Tatmadaw soldier were killed during the fighting.

The next day on February 28th 2015, at around 5 am, the fighting occurred again in the same D--- section, C--- village. During the fighting, the BGF and Tatmadaw shelled over 10 mortars into E--- village where *Bo San Aung* and his soldiers were located. Half of the mortars were found unexploded. *Bo San Aung's* group also shelled back three mortars at the Tatmadaw and BGF in D--- section, C--- village, where villagers said two exploded and one did not. According to the KHRG community member, none of the villagers were injured during the attack because the incident occurred far enough away from villagers' houses to prevent any injuries.



those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁵ Tactical Commander General Saw San Aung, commonly known as *Bo San Aung*, from DKBA Battalion #907, was relieved of his position in the beginning of 2015 after fighting broke out between his battalion and Tatmadaw troops. Acting independently, he formed his own armed group with approximately 70-80 soldiers. In April 2015, *Bo San Aung* was accepted back into the DKBA after discussions with the DKBA's top leaders.

The above photos were taken by a KHRG researcher in C--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District on March 2nd 2015. These photos show the mortars which did not explode during the clash between the BGF and Tatmadaw battalions from Kyaikdon Town and former DKBA Commander *Bo San Aung's* group. The top-left photo shows the unexploded mortar at the scene that was fired by the DKBA. The top-right shows the unexploded mortar that was fired by Tatmadaw soldiers. The bottom-left photo depicts both mortars after they were collected by the village leaders. The bottom-right photo shows the damage to a villager's shop door after being hit by bullets. The shop owner said that the bullets almost hit him and his family members. The owner closed down the shop because they were afraid of the fighting, however they re-opened two days later. The shop owner did not know which armed actor's bullets hit his shop door. The villagers in the area report being scared of what will happen in the future. *[Photos: KHRG]*

BGF and Tatmadaw soldiers killed:

Mg Aye Lwin – BGF (shot in the left side of the head)

Eh Doo – BGF Platoon Commander (shot in the neck)

Myint Win – Tatmadaw Platoon Second in Command

Further background reading on the situation in Dooplaya District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- “Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, March 2015,” (April 2015)
 - “The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkareik Town road construction threatens villagers' livelihoods,” (March 2015)
 - “Dooplaya Interview: Maung A---, August 2014,” (February 2015)
 - “Ongoing Militarisation of Southeastern Burma/Myanmar, Since the January 2012 Ceasefire Agreement Between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar Government,” (February 2015)
- “Dooplaya Photo Set: Land confiscation in Kawkareik and Kyainseikgyi Townships, December 2013 to September 2014,” (February 2015)

Dooplaya District



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