



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

November 26, 2015 / KHRG #15-38-S1

Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, March to May 2015

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District between March and May 2015, including violent clashes between armed groups, injury caused by a landmine, and militarisation.

- *On March 10th 2015, fighting broke out between Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #549 and LIB #231, and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) in A--- section, M--- village, lasting for around 30 minutes. KHRG is unable to confirm whether any villagers were injured during the fighting.*
 - *On April 17th 2015, 31-year-old Saw B--- from D--- village was hit by a landmine which was purportedly planted by the DKBA. He sustained injuries to his feet but survived the explosion.*
 - *DKBA Battalion #901 established a new army camp in C--- village on April 25th 2015.*
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Situation Update | Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District (March to May 2015)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in May 2015. It was written by a community member in Dooplaya District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This report was received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including two other situation updates, two incident reports, seven interviews, 194 photographs, and 14 video clips.²

Introduction

This information was documented between March 1st 2015 and May 16th 2015. The information covers activities [undertaken] by the Tatmadaw, DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army], KNU [Karen National Union], and civilians.

Theme

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeast Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast 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.

On March 10th 2015, at 10:30 am, a group of 30 DKBA [soldiers] led by [Tactical Commander General] San Aung³ [were returning home to D--- village and] on their way crossed over [passed through] E--- [village] and arrived at A--- section, in M--- village where there is a pagoda. [Also] on March 10th 2015, at 11:30 am, LIB [Light Infantry Battalion]⁴ #549 [which is] under the control of Military Operations Command [MOC]⁵ #12 from Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik Town] travelled to G-- - village. The soldiers [from LIB #549] were led by Win Tun Aung. On the same day, at 5:00 pm, LIB #231 [which is also] under the control of MOC #12 also came over to G--- [village]. There were 50 of them [soldiers from LIB #231], led by Aung Thu Pyo.

DKBA [Tactical Commander General] San Aung's group opened fire on them [LIB #549 and LIB #231] with D79s [M79s],⁶ therefore they [LIB #549 and LIB #231] opened fire back at them. The fighting broke out in A--- section and continued for around 32 minutes. We [community members] are not certain if the villagers [caught in the middle] were injured or not.

On April 1st 2015, Column #1⁷ of the two columns of Tatmadaw LIB #556, under the control of MOC #13 and led by Deputy Battalion Commander Thet Naing, took control of H--- village [area] and patrolled the village. There were 35 members of the Tatmadaw in the column. Column #2, led by Column Commander Nyain Chan So, took control of the area around I--- village and patrolled the village. There are 35 members of them in Column #2.

They [Tatmadaw soldiers from Column #1 and #2 of LIB #556] observed the situation [in these areas] and photographed former KNU army camps and questioned the villagers about the number of households in the villages and the number of villagers. If they [the villagers] observed armed groups travelling in this [area] they had to inform them [Tatmadaw soldiers]. They [Tatmadaw soldiers] also observed how many mountains and hills there are in the village [areas]. The [2012 preliminary] ceasefire⁸ has taken place; therefore [according to the agreement] they should not wear their uniform in the [villages]. They have been patrolling from K'Lay [village] to Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik Town]. They were patrolling wearing their uniforms and

³ 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. Following the most recent bout of fighting between the Tatmadaw and DKBA along the Asian Highway, in which Bo San Aung and his company "deaf ear" were involved, Bo San Aung has once again been dismissed from the DKBA as a result of his conduct. For recent information on Bo San Aung, see [Two separate clashes between armed actors in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, February 2015](#), KHRG, May 2015 and [DKBA sacks Brigadier General Saw Kyaw Thet and Colonel Saw San Aung](#), Mizzima, July 2015

⁴ Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

⁵ Military Operations Command. Comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each.

⁶ The researcher wrote D79 but was in fact referring to M79s, which are single shot, shoulder fired, break action grenade launchers which fire a 40x46 mm grenade.

⁷ Although the researcher here refers to Column #1 and Column #2 of Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #556, in actuality these are two groups of soldiers from LIB #556 temporarily divided to patrol certain areas, rather than columns in the Tatmadaw military sense of columns as combinations of companies, which move, camp, and fight, with approximately 100-300 soldiers each.

⁸ This refers to the preliminary ceasefire agreement signed on January 12th 2012 between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. However, on October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups and on-going conflicts in ethnic regions, a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the KNU, see "[Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups](#)," Reuters, October 15th 2015. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the preliminary ceasefire, see [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#), KHRG, May 2014.

also brought ammunition with them into [a KNU controlled area]. They patrolled and also stopped in an area [in H--- and I--- villages] which caused problems for us [the villagers].

On April 12th 2015, Column #1 from LIB #556, under the control of MOC #13, led by Deputy Battalion Commander Thet Naing was situated in K'LAY army camp. They had been patrolling in limited [KNU controlled] areas which are in J--- village and K--- village. They went to patrol there [in the limited areas in J--- and K--- village], but they have not returned to their base yet.⁹ There are 50 soldiers in this column.

On April 30th 2015, two Tatmadaw [soldiers] from LIB #556, under the control of MOC #13, entered the KNU controlled [area]. The first [soldier], So Paing Mo, is a company commander and he brought a 9 mm [pistol] gun with him. I [KHRG Community Member] do not know the name and rank of the other Tatmadaw [soldier]. When they got there [KNU controlled area] they were arrested by the KNU. They were questioned by the KNU and asked where they live. They live in K'LAY army camp and the KNU brought them back to this camp. The deputy battalion commander of LIB #556, Thet Naing, said *"We will never [be] satisfied with the way that you [KNU] act."* Therefore, if LIB #556 [continues to] behave like this a problem could occur. We [community members] have already let the leaders [KHRG] know [about the incident].

Civilian situation

On March 10th 2015, fighting broke out [between DKBA and Tatmadaw soldiers] in G--- village and A--- section. The villagers therefore were not able to work on their livelihoods [during the fighting]. The villagers fled to the jungle to sleep. On March 12th 2015 they [the villagers] came back to check [on] the situation in their village and it seemed to be fine so they returned to their village on that day.

One of the villager's names is Saw B----. He lives in D--- village and he is 31 years old. He went to his plantation on April 17th 2015. When he was on his way back to his village he stepped on a landmine at Z--- hilltop. The toes on his left foot were injured. It was a landmine planted by the DKBA,¹⁰ [specifically] [Tactical Commander General] San Aung's group. [Tactical Commander General] San Aung is the leader of the DKBA Battalion [#907].

DKBA activity

In [the past] the DKBA sent their soldiers to Noh Khoh Tee [village], Noh Thay Hpoo [area] and Htee Hseh Ploh [village] to be checkpoint guards. [Now they have] withdrawn all the soldiers from all [of those] checkpoints.

DKBA Battalion #901 established a [new] army camp in C--- village on April 25th 2015. They requested five people each day from L--- village to construct buildings for them. Before they constructed their camp they did not keep in touch [discuss] with [KNU] district administrators and battalion commanders. This battalion [DKBA Battalion #901] is led by Company Commander Saw Htoo Ler and Battalion Sergeant Major Tun Sein.

KNU activity

The leaders of the KNU and their military [Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)] were very active in order to protect the civilians as much as they could.

Conclusion

The activities of the Tatmadaw took place in Kyainseikgyi and Kawkaireik townships. The activities of the KNU, DKBA and the situation of the civilians also took place in Kawkaireik Township. The [detailed] information which is related to these activities has been revealed above.

⁹ As of May 2015.

¹⁰ KHRG is cannot independently verify whether this landmine was indeed planted by the DKBA.

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

- “Forced recruitment of a child soldier by KNLA in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District, October 2015,” (October 2015)
- “Fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers along the Asian Highway displaces villagers in Dooplaya District, July 2015,” (September 2015)
- “Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, April 2014,” (August 2015)
- “Dooplaya Incident Report: Killing case in Win Yay Township, October 2014,” (August 2015)
- “Dooplaya Photo Set: Road construction in Kyainseikgyi and Win Yay townships, November 2014 to January 2015,” (August 2015)

Dooplaya District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)