



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

April 10, 2015 / KHRG #15-6-NB1

Home guards attacked by Tatmadaw in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District, February 2015

This News Bulletin describes a recent attack that occurred in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District in February 2015 by Tatmadaw soldiers against six home guards. As the home guards, a locally organised group whose objective is to protect civilians, were going to check on a rations convoy sent by the Tatmadaw through KNU controlled area they were ambushed by Tatmadaw soldiers. One home guard was killed at the scene while a second home guard was injured. According to a KHRG community member who met with the home guards, the Tatmadaw are only allowed to travel 50 yards away from their vehicle road. This incident occurred 200 yards away from that same road.¹

On February 27th 2015, a home guard² was shot dead on Kee Kaw Loo Hill in Hkay Poo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District. The individual was part of a home guard group that had been locally organised to protect civilians in the area. He, along with five other home guards, was attacked by Tatmadaw soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)³ #584 of Military Operation Command (MOC)⁴ #20 when on route to check on Tatmadaw vehicles that were transporting rations through KNU controlled area to Tatmadaw frontline camps.

At around 10:15 am the six home guards were shot at by Tatmadaw soldiers who were providing security for the convoy. According to a KHRG researcher, the home guards did not think that they would be attacked by the Tatmadaw because the convoy was passing through KNU controlled area. It is well known that, according to representatives from the

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 redesigned Website.

² 'Home guard' or *gher der* groups have been organised locally in parts of northern Karen State to address Tatmadaw operations targeting civilians and the resulting acute food insecurity. Villagers interviewed by KHRG have reported that *gher der* were established with the objective of providing security for communities of civilians in hiding, particularly when those communities engage in food production or procurement activities, and when other modes of protection are unavailable. For more on the *gher der* see: "[Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State](#)," KHRG, August 2010.

³ 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.

⁴ Military Operations Command. Comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each.

Tatmadaw and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), both have agreed that the Tatmadaw are not allowed to go more than 50 yards from the vehicle road. In exchange, the KNLA's soldiers would allow them to travel through this area without any harassment. However, the place where the home guards were attacked was 200 yards from the vehicle road.

One home guard, Saw K---, died in the attack. He was 25 years old and lived in H--- village, Hkay Poo village tract, Lu Taw Township, Hpapun District. His wife, Naw P---, is now a widow with four children. Saw D---, another home guard involved in the attack, was injured during the shooting. He is 24 years old and lives in E--- village, Hkay Poo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District. The bullet hit his chest and passed through his left arm.

According to a KHRG community member, the Tatmadaw had told the local KNLA commanders that they would transport only food, while in reality they were also transporting ammunitions. The convoy of 12 vehicles had set out from Nay Pyi Taw⁵ on February 26th for their frontline camps in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District. Ten trucks carried food and ammunitions, one truck carried fuel, and one bulldozer accompanied the convoy to repair the road along the way.

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

- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, October to November 2014," (April 2015)
- "Tatmadaw artillery fire directed at villagers working on hill field farms in Hpapun District, February 2015," (March 2015)
- "Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2013," (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)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, October 2014," (February 2015)

⁵ *Nay Pyi Taw* is the capital city of Burma/Myanmar. In 2005 the military regime moved the capital from Rangoon to a greenfield at its present location, 320 kilometers (200 miles) north of the city. See "[Nay Pyi Taw now less of a ghost town](#)," *Bangkok Post*, December 11th 2013.

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)