



## Short Update

April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024 / KHRG # 23-397+400+426-D1

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## Taw Oo District Short Update: Shelling, air strikes and house burning by SAC troops, and use of forced navigators by PDF soldiers in Htaw Ta Htoo Township (November to December 2023)

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*This Short Update describes events that occurred in Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District during November and December 2023. On November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2023, State Administration Council (SAC) troops, including Infantry Battalion (IB) #39, conducted indiscriminate shelling and air strikes in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township. On November 18<sup>th</sup> 2023, three soldiers from the People's Defence Force (PDF) forced villagers to be navigators and assaulted them when they refused. These soldiers launched an attack on an SAC army camp from within C---village. In retaliation, SAC soldiers conducted further shelling and house burning against civilians in C---village and other villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, for several weeks during November and December 2023. These attacks caused extensive damage: the shelling damaged at least five villagers' houses and SAC soldiers burned down at least ten villagers' houses.<sup>1</sup>*

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### Shelling, air strikes and house burning by the SAC

On November 16<sup>th</sup> 2023, State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup> soldiers from Infantry Battalion (IB)<sup>3</sup> #39 army camp, based in Lay Maing village, and another [unknown] battalion, based in Kon Nit Maing village, fired mortar shells into many places in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract<sup>4</sup>, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. Lay Maing and Kon Nit Maing army camps are located in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, close to one another. One of the mortars landed and exploded

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in December 2023. It was provided by a community member in Taw Oo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons. The parts in square brackets are explanations added by KHRG.

<sup>2</sup> The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Burma/Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup.

<sup>3</sup> An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

<sup>4</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

near two cows in A--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, owned by a villager, named B---. Many pieces of the mortar shrapnel hit the two cows, killing them.

On November 17<sup>th</sup> 2023, at around 8 am, the SAC conducted an air strike in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. Later that day, at around 7 pm, the SAC conducted another air strike on Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. There were no casualties from these two air strikes.

### **Abuse by PDF soldiers and SAC shelling**

On November 18<sup>th</sup> 2023, three soldiers from the People's Defence Force (PDF)<sup>5</sup>, under the command of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>6</sup> Battalion #5 from Brigade #2, encountered six villagers just outside C--- village. These PDF soldiers, from Thandaung Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District, were drunk at the time, and instructed these villagers, including Saw<sup>7</sup> D--- from C--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, to accompany them as navigators to the SAC prison department in [neighbouring] Lay Maing village, Htaw Ta Htoo Township. However, these six villagers were afraid to go with the soldiers to the prison department so they refused to do what the soldiers asked. Due to this refusal, one of the soldiers beat the villagers with wooden sticks. After this, the six villagers were forced to accompany the soldiers. When they reached the church in [the same] C--- village, one of the soldiers told the villagers: *"If you are afraid to accompany us there, you can go wherever you want to go now"*. Then, the six villagers returned home [in C--- village] and the three soldiers continued their journey.

When the PDF soldiers arrived in front of Saw E---'s house in C--- village, one of them fired an M79 grenade launcher three times into the SAC Infantry Battalion (IB) #39 army camp, which is based in neighbouring Lay Maing village, then they ran away. When the SAC soldiers heard the sound of the M79 grenade launcher, they fired rounds of mortar into C--- village. Due to this shelling, almost all villagers from C--- village immediately fled for their safety. They fled to nearby religious buildings, plantations, farms, the forest, as well as their relatives' houses. As of January 2024, the villagers remained displaced; some villagers have only been able to return temporarily to collect essential supplies, at great risk to their lives.

### **SAC burning of houses and shelling in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract**

On November 19<sup>th</sup> 2023, many SAC soldiers from IB #39 entered C--- village and burned down villagers' houses. The owners of the houses burned by the SAC are Saw F---, Saw G---, Saw H---, Saw I---, Naw<sup>8</sup> J---, Saw K---, Naw L---, Saw M--- and N---.

On the morning of November 20<sup>th</sup> 2023, SAC combined forces, including IB #39, entered C--- village again. The soldiers dug a bunker in the village as their temporary base. After 20 days, on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2023, the SAC combined forces retreated from the village and returned to their army camp. On December 11<sup>th</sup> 2023, at around 6 pm, the SAC soldiers from IB #39 army camp entered C--- village again and they burned down a house owned by a local villager, Saw O---, then returned to their army camp.

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<sup>5</sup> The People's Defence Force (PDF) is an armed resistance established independently as local civilian militias operating across the country. Following the February 1st 2021 military coup and the ongoing brutal violence enacted by the junta, the majority of these groups began working with the National Unity Government (NUG), a body claiming to be the legitimate government of Burma (Myanmar), which then formalised the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

<sup>6</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed (KNLA) wing of the Karen National Union (KNU).

<sup>7</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>8</sup> Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.



These three photos were taken on December 11<sup>th</sup> 2023 in C--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. On November 19<sup>th</sup> 2023, SAC soldiers from IB #39 army camp, based in Lay Maing village, entered C--- village and burned down some of the villagers' houses. These photos show villagers' houses that the SAC burned down. [Photos: KHRG]

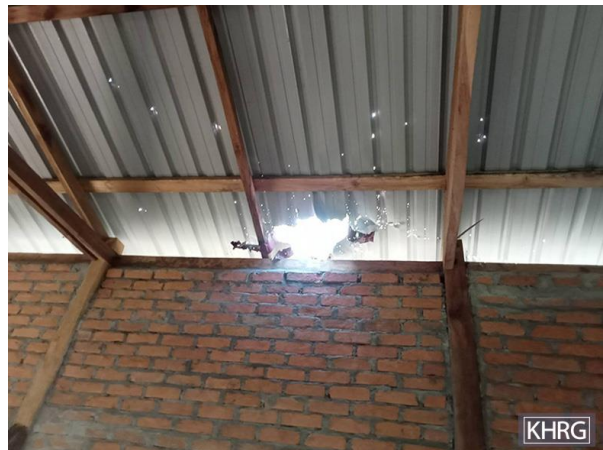
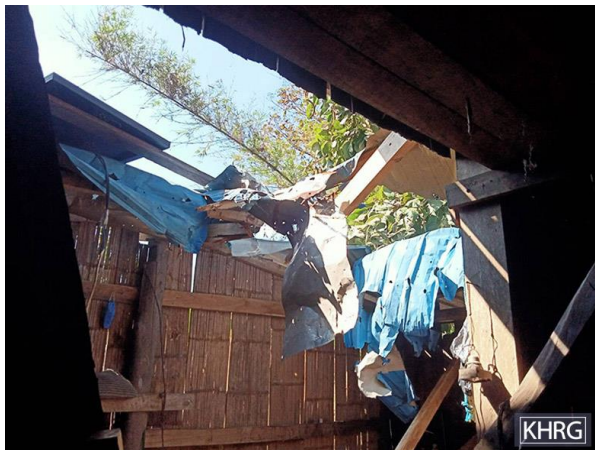
On November 20<sup>th</sup> 2023, SAC soldiers from IB #39 army camp in Lay Maing village and [an unknown] battalion, based in an army camp in Kon Nit Maing (7 Miles) village, [also] fired rounds of mortar into C--- village and surrounding villages. Some mortar shells landed and exploded in villagers' houses in C--- village. The owners of the houses which were hit by mortar shells are Saw P---, Saw Q---, Saw R--- and Saw S---.

On December 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, SAC soldiers from the army camp in Kon Nit Maing village fired rounds of mortar into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. At 3 pm, they fired a round of mortar which hit a tree near Saw T---'s house, in C--- village, and it exploded. At 3:02 pm, they again fired rounds of mortar. This time it hit a pigsty and it exploded. The mortar shrapnel also hit two bamboo trees and the kitchen roof of Saw T---'s house.

Between November 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 and December 4<sup>th</sup> 2023, Police Attack Battalion<sup>9</sup> #11, SAC soldiers from IB #39 based in Lay Maing army camp, and soldiers based in Kon Nit Maing army camp and an army camp in Shel Tho Maing Town fired rounds of mortar into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. These villages are U--- village, V--- village, W--- village, X--- village, Y--- village, Z--- village, Aa--- village, Ab--- village, Ac--- village, Ad--- village and C--- village. In total, the SAC fired 32 rounds of mortar in this incident. No casualties were reported.

On December 10<sup>th</sup> 2023, between 7:04 pm and 9:27 pm, SAC soldiers from Kon Nit Maing army camp fired 13 rounds of mortar into villages in Day Loh Mu Nu village tract. The mortars landed and exploded in Z--- village, Aa--- village, Ab--- village, Ae--- village, Ad--- village, C--- village and other neighbouring villages. There were no casualties reported.

<sup>9</sup> Police Attack Battalions are troops formed of Burma government police officers who conduct joint operations with State Administration Council (SAC) military troops.



These four photos were taken on December 11<sup>th</sup> 2023 in C--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. They show some villagers' houses in C--- village damaged by SAC shelling during November 2023. [Photos: KHRG]

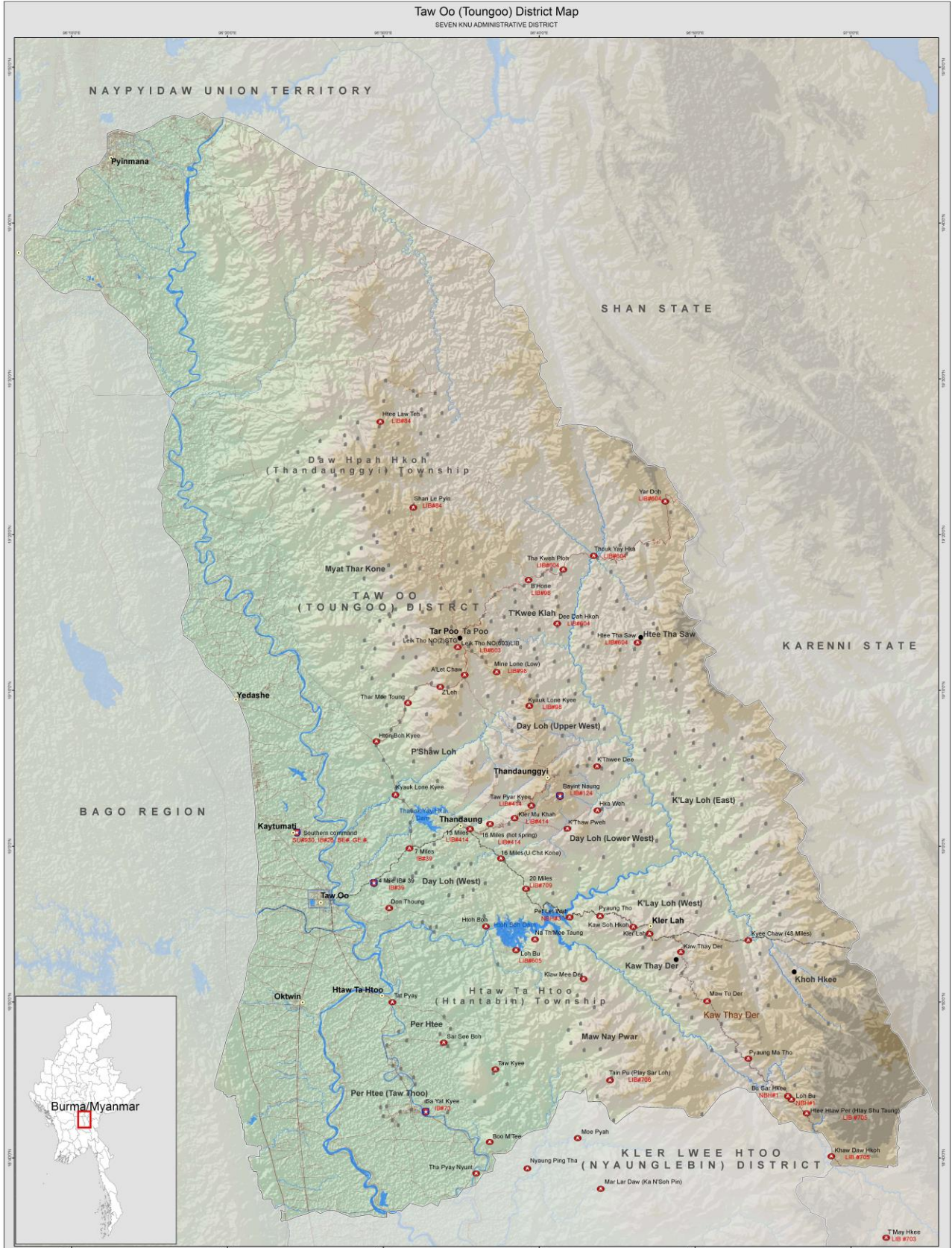
Further background reading on the situation of house burning, shelling and air strikes in Taw Oo District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Taw Oo District Short Update: House burning, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes by the SAC in Htaw Ta Htoo Township \(September to November 2023\)"](#), March 2024
- ["Striking Fear: Impacts of State Administration Council \(SAC\) shelling on villagers' lives in Southeast Burma \(January to October 2023\)"](#), December 2023
- ["Taw Oo District Incident Report: Killings, property destruction, and indiscriminate shelling by the SAC in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township \(July 2023\)"](#), November 2023
- ["Burning Karen State: Retaliatory burning of houses and property against rural civilian communities of Southeast Burma \(2021 and 2022\)"](#), March 2023

### About KHRG

Founded in 1992, Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Burma. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at [www.khr.org](http://www.khr.org).

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District Map  
SEVEN KNU ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT



- Legend**
- Town
  - Village
  - Village tract point
  - Army Base
  - Army Camp
  - Major Road
  - - - Sub-Road
  - Water
  - Kawhoolee Township boundary
  - Kawhoolee District boundary

**Elevation (meter)**

35 - 15	493 - 841
15 - 96	841 - 1,337
96 - 261	1,337 - 2,016
261 - 493	2,016 - 5,711

Map ID: KHRG\_District\_Map\_Taw Oo  
Date: 19-Jul-2022  
Size: 33.11 X 46.8 inches

