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Mu Traw District Situation Update: The Tatmadaw repeatedly fired large numbers of mortars into civilian areas and burned forests in Lu Thaw Township, January 2020 to April 2020





These photos were taken in April 2020, in Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District. These photos show the lands burned by Tatmadaw soldiers in Saw Mu Plaw village tract. Villagers do their hill farming on these lands. Tatmadaw soldiers burned these lands while they were sending rations to their army camp. [Photos: KHRG]

Introduction

This update highlights the situation in six village tracts in Lu Thaw Township between January 2020 and April 2020. It covers human rights information involving the movements and activities of the Tatmadaw, the activities of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)^[5], and the livelihood, education and healthcare situation of civilians.

Tatmadaw bases and battalion numbers

There are 36 Tatmadaw camps based in six village tracts located in northern Lu Thaw Township. These Tatmadaw camps are described below:

In Hkay Poo village tract:

- Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)^[6] #701 is based in Htee Htaw Per and Khaw Daw Hkoh army camps;
- LIB #703 is based in Wah Thoh Hta and Hsa Law Kyoh army camps;
- LIB #705 is based in an unspecified camp near Ao--- village;
- Military Operations Command (MOC)^[7] #4 and Tactical Operations Command (TOC) #2 have headquarters based in Aq---village [which is located in Toungoo [Taw Oo] District, but are conducting operations in and around this village tract]; and
- Strategic Operations Command (SOC) #2 is based near Aj--- village.

In Hpla Hkoh village tract:

- LIB #598 is based in Hter Neh Kyoh, Kya Ghaw Loo, Keh Deh Kyoh, and Wah Hta Kyoh army camps;
- LIB #590 is based in Der Kyoo and Phwa Gaw army camps; and
- LIB #60 is based in Kuh Hkwah Hkoh, Hpla Hkoh and Kaw Thway Kyoh army camps.

In Saw Mu Plaw village tract:

- LIB #124 is based in K'Baw Too and Loh Kaw Kyoh army camps; and
- Infantry Battalion (IB) #30 is based in Hpah Gaw Loo and Wah Klay Too army camps.

In Ler Muh Plaw village tract:

- IB #30 is based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp;
- IB #75, located at the border of Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District and Mu Traw District, is based in K'Ser T'Kwee and Maw Kyaw Hkoh army camps;
- LIB #599 is based in Ler Klay Kyoh, Kaw Way Kyoh and Kyaw Hpoe Hta army camps; and
- an unspecified battalion [number unknown] is based in Doo Htaw army camp.

In Kaw Loo Der and Tay Muh Der village tract areas:

- IB #48 is based in Maw Hpoo and Kyoo Loo army camps;
- LIB #264 is based in P'Haw Hta, Moh Loh Day, Ree Kya Hta, Ler Kyay Daw Hkoh and Thee Mu Hta army camps; and

- Southern Command Headquarters' SOC #3 is also located in this area (exact location unspecified).

In Yeh Muh Plaw village tract:

- LIB #60 is based in Ku Hkoh army camp.

Tatmadaw activities

Between January 2020 and April 2020, the Tatmadaw troops based in northern Lu Thaw Township patrolled and guarded their military road construction. They trespassed into Karen National Union (KNU) [8] territory, fired mortars and burned forests which destroyed civilians' farms.

January 30th 2020

At 8:10 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [battalion number unknown/unspecified] fired six mortars into the farms in Daw Hta in Kuh Day area, Z--- village, Hpla Hkoh village tract.[9] Fortunately, there were no injuries. Four of the mortar shells did not explode and are still lying in the villagers' fields, preventing them from working on their land.

February 3rd 2020

From 10:50 am until 1:30 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers based in Paw Khay Hkoh [SOC #2], Keh Deh Kyoh [LIB #598] and Ku Hkoh [LIB #60] army camps fired 40 mortars into civilians' farms in Z---, X---, W---, A---, C---, E---, G---, I---, K--- and M--- villages, Hpla Hkoh village tract. Although the mortars were fired into farm areas, five of the shells fell close to Z--- village and seven shells fell close to X--- village. Fortunately, there were no injuries. Tatmadaw soldiers patrolled and transported rations by truck from Mu Theh village to Ler Muh Plaw and Hkay Poo village tracts [where their camps are based] and then to other army camps at Khaw Daw Hkoh.

February 5th 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #598] based in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp fired one mortar into Weh Lay Hta Place[10] located in Hpla Hkoh village tract.

February 6th 2020

The Tatmadaw set up outposts along both sides of the road between their camps near Paw Khay Hkoh village, Hkay Poo village tract and in Ku Hkoh, Yeh Muh Plaw village tract for the security of their military road construction. Each of those bases fired mortars into the local villages (O--- and B--- villages). Fortunately, no villagers were injured.

At 11 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #60] based in Ku Hkoh army camp fired seven mortar rounds into Z--- village and seven mortar rounds into X--- village, Hpla Hkoh village tract. As an immediate consequence, 332 villagers from 47 households had to flee into Htee Kler Hta and Kho Hta areas in Yeh Muh Plaw village tract.

February 7th 2020

Tatmadaw troops [battalion number unknown/unspecified] guarding their road construction between Saw Mu Plaw and Hpla Hkoh village tracts burned the bushes and forest along the road. Tatmadaw

soldiers [LIB #60] based in Ku Hkoh [army camp] fired six mortar shells into X--- village, five into Z--- village and one into Mu Nweh Hta area [all these locations are in Hpla Hkoh village tract]. At 2 pm, those same soldiers [LIB #60] fired one more mortar round into Hpaw Klo Hta area.

February 8th 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #60] based in Ku Hkoh army camp fired 15 mortar rounds into X--- village, Hpla Hkoh village tract. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

The Tatmadaw [battalion number unknown/unspecified] also sent more rations and 250 soldiers [by truck] to Hkay Poo village tract where an army camp is based.

At 9 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #598] based in Kya Ghaw Loo, Hpla Hkoh village tract fired four mortar rounds into N--- village [Hpla Hkoh village tract], and then fired one into T'Aye Hta area. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

February 11th 2020

At 10:30 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #598] in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp, Hpla Hkoh village tract fired five mortar shells into Kuh Day area.

At 5:30 pm, those same soldiers [LIB #598] fired 15 more shells into civilians' farms in Mu Nweh Hta and Paw Kloe Hta areas [Hpla Hkoh village tract].

Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #705] based near Ao--- village, Hkay Poo village tract transported rations [by truck] to Khaw Daw Hkoh army camp with 165 soldiers in the morning; only 146 soldiers returned in the afternoon, which means that some soldiers stayed in Khaw Daw Hkoh army camp.

February 13th 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #124] based in K'Baw Too army camp burned the forest in the following areas surrounding S--- and J--- villages: D---, F---, H---, L---, P---, R--- and V--- [Hpla Hkoh village tract]. About 20 villagers' hill farms were burned. The farms were each the width of about five baskets of paddy (about 10 acres of land).[\[11\]](#)

February 14th 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] based in Hpah Gaw Loo army camp in Saw Mu Plaw village tract burned the forest along the side of the road and also fired mortars into villagers' farms. The fire continued to burn through February 15th 2020 until the forest was completely destroyed.

March 22nd 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers [battalion number(s) unknown/unspecified] based in Hpla Hkoh village tract areas fired mortars around Daw Hta areas. Villagers in X--- village [Hpla Hkoh village tract] fled. Some villagers were able to return later.

March 23rd 2020

At 10:30 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #60] based in Ku Hkoh army camp and Hpla Hkoh army camp burned the lands of seven villagers in Lay Ghaw Der, Yeh Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District.

At 11:30 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [LIB #60] based in Ku Hkoh army camp fired 20 mortar rounds in the vicinity of X--- villagers' lands, Hpla Hkoh village tract. At 5:30 pm, villagers had to flee from the village again.

At 1:30 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] based in Wah Klay Too and Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camps burned lands in Yay Ghoh Loh Kyoh Place and Peh Hpoh Day Place located in Saw Mu Plaw and Ler Muh Plaw village tract areas. These lands are owned by villagers from Q--- [Ler Muh Plaw village tract] and T--- [Bu Ah Der village tract]. Paddies are now not growing very well there because of the burning of the lands.

Tatmadaw soldiers from Kaw Thway Kyoh Infantry Battalion (IB #48), based in Maw Hpoo army camp, Tay Muh Der village tract, burned lands owned by seven people from V--- village [Tay Muh Der village tract].

March 26th 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers (LIB #30) based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh burned 55 farmlands in Ler Muh Plaw village tract area, totalling 165 acres.

April 1st 2020

At 7:00 am, Tatmadaw soldiers (LIB #703) based in Hsa Law Kyoh army camp, Hkay Poo village tract area, launched 60 mortars and fired around 1,000 rounds of bullets from small guns around their army camp and close to Y--- villagers' lands. They also burned Y--- villagers' lands located in Hkay Poo village tract.

At 4:45 pm, KNLA security guards in Saw Mu Plaw area confronted Tatmadaw soldiers from IB #30 at Htoh Koh Hta Place, Saw Mu Plaw area. This confrontation triggered a skirmish between them.

After this skirmish, Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] fired a large number of mortar rounds, making villagers fearful to work in their lands.

April 3rd 2020

At 10:30 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [battalion number unknown/unspecified] transported rations to Wah Klay Too army camp along with 100 soldiers.

At 2:40 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers [battalion number unknown/unspecified] burned the lands of five villagers from Az--- in Saw Mu Plaw village tract.

At 4:00 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers (IB #30) based in Wah Klay Too army camp burned land located in T'May Hkee place, Saw Mu Plaw village tract that is owned by Saw^[12] B---, a villager from Ax--- village.

At 4:50 pm, villagers from 25 households living in Plaw Ghaw area, Saw Mu Plaw village tract fled to Blaw Hkee Place for safety.

At 5:50 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] based in Wah Klay Too army camp fired six mortars at Saw Mu Plaw village tract area. One shell exploded close to the villagers' farms. However, there were no civilian casualties.

At the same time [5:50 pm], Tatmadaw soldiers (LIB #598) based in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp fired two mortars at Z--- village area, Hpla Hkoh village tract.

Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #60, based in Ku Hkoh army camp, fired two mortars at X---village area, Hpla Hkoh village tract.

At 8:00 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #598, based in Hter Neh Kyoh army camp, fired mortars at J---village area located in Hpla Hkoh village tract. This triggered fear and caused villagers to flee from their village and sleep in the forest. They went back to their village the next morning.

April 4th 2020

Tatmadaw soldiers from IB #30, who are based in Wah Klay Too army camp, provided security at Saw Nweh Plaw Place, Saw Mu Plaw village tract.

At 8:05 am, Tatmadaw soldiers (IB #30) based in Htaw Mu Pleh Meh army camp fired mortars at Ag---village, Ler Muh Plaw village tract, while they were sending rations to their security guards at Saw Nweh Plaw Place.

At 5:54 pm, the KNLA fired weapons at Hsa Law Kyoh Tatmadaw army camp, Hkay Poo village tract. It is unknown if there were casualties among Tatmadaw soldiers. However, there were no casualties among KNLA soldiers.

At 6:50 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers (LIB #598) based in Hter Neh Kyoh army camp fired one mortar which landed at Hkay Ler Hoo place, Hkay Poo village tract.

At 8:00 pm, the KNLA fired a mortar back at them.

April 5th 2020

At 7:55 am, Tatmadaw soldiers (LIB #703) based in Hsa Law Kyoh army camp fired one mortar shell at villagers' farms in T'May Hkee area, Hkay Poo village tract.

Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp provided security in Doo Htaw place, Ler Muh Plaw village tract, during which time they fired 17 mortars and 10 other types of shells at Htee Ma Duh Plaw area [Ler Muh Plaw village tract].

The KNLA shot back at Tatmadaw soldiers once at Kyeh Hpoh Day Place, Ler Muh Plaw village tract. Then, the KNLA shot back at Tatmadaw soldiers two more times at Htee Mah Duh Plaw area. It is unknown if there were casualties among Tatmadaw soldiers. However, there were no casualties among KNLA soldiers.

April 6th 2020

At 7:40 pm, the KNLA fired at Tatmadaw soldiers at Poh Baw Kwee place, Ler Muh Plaw village tract.

Tatmadaw soldiers (IB #30) based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp provided security at Doo Htaw Place, Ler Muh Plaw village tract area. They fired five mortars at Aw---, where villagers had previously fled. They also fired four mortars at Aa--- [village] and 12 mortars at villagers' farms. [Both these locations are in Ler Muh Plaw village tract.]

At 10:40 pm, Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] fired four [more] mortars at Aw--- and Ac--- villages [Ler Muh Plaw village tract], and seven mortars at Ap--- Place [Ler Muh Plaw village]. There were no villager or KNLA casualties.

The KNLA attacked Tatmadaw soldiers at Day Law Hkoh [place], Ler Muh Plaw village tract.

April 7th 2020

At 8:30 am, the KNLA attacked Tatmadaw soldiers in Kye H Hpo Day, located in Ler Muh Plaw village tract. It is unknown if there were Tatmadaw casualties. However, there were no casualties among KNLA soldiers.

Tatmadaw soldiers [battalion number unknown/unspecified] fired six mortars at Htee Hsee Hta Plaw [Place], Ler Muh Plaw village tract.

At 9:35 am, Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp fired six mortars at Htee Hsee Hta Plaw [Place], Ler Muh Plaw village tract.

After that, Tatmadaw soldiers [battalion number unknown/unspecified] based in Doo Htaw army camp fired three mortars at Yoh Hsee Law Plaw [Place], Ler Muh Plaw village tract; and fired three other mortars at villagers' houses in Ler Muh Plaw village tract.

At the same time, Tatmadaw soldiers [IB #30] based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp fired two mortars at Yoh Hsee Law Plaw [Place] and 12 mortars at T'Ree Plaw [Place]. In total, the Tatmadaw soldiers fired 32 shells from various large weapons.

Instances of shelling by the Tatmadaw in Lu Thaw Township - January 30th to April 7th 2020

Date	Time	Tatmadaw units involved	Number of mortar shells fired	Location of mortar shell fired
January 30th 2020	8:10 am	Unspecified	6	Fired at Daw Hta Place (Z--- village)
February 3rd 2020	Started shelling at 10:50 am and continued until 1:30 pm	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Paw Khay Hkoh [SOC #2], Keh Deh Kyoh [LIB #598] and Ku Hkoh [LIB #60] army camps	40	Fired at civilians' farms in Hpla Hkoh village tract

February 5th 2020	Unspecified	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp [LIB #598]	1	Fired at Lay Hta Place (in Hpla Hkoh village tract)
February 6th 2020	Unspecified	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Hkay Poo village tract and Yeh Muh Plaw village tracts	Unspecified	Fired at O--- and B--- villages
February 6th 2020	11:00 am	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Ku Hkoh army camp [LIB #60]	7	Fired at Z--- village
February 7th 2020	Unspecified and at 2:00 pm	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Ku Hkoh army camp [LIB #60]	13	Fired at X--- village, Z--- village, Mu Nweh Hta area and Hpaw Klo Hta area
February 8th 2020	Unspecified	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Ku Hkoh army camp [LIB #60]	15	Fired at X--- village
-	9:00 pm	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Kya Ghaw Loo [LIB #598]	5	Fired at N--- village and T'Aye Hta area

February 11th 2020	10:30 am	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp [LIB #598]	5	Fired at Kuh Day area
-	5:30 pm	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp [LIB #598]	15	Fired at Mu Nweh Hta and Plaw Kloe Hta areas
February 14th 2020		Tatmadaw soldiers based in Hpah Gaw Loo army camp [IB #30]	Unspecified	Unspecified
March 22nd 2020	Unspecified	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Hpla Hkoh village tract	Unspecified	Fired at Daw Hta area
March 23rd 2020	11:30 am	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Ku Hkoh army camp [LIB #60]	20	Fired at X--- villagers' lands
April 1st 2020	7:00 am	Tatmadaw LIB #703 based in Hsa Law Kyoh army camp	60 mortars and around 1,000 bullets	Fired at Y--- villagers' lands

-	Unspecified time after 4:45 pm	Tatmadaw IB #30 based in Saw Mu Plaw village tract	Unspecified	Fired at Ac--- villagers' lands
April 3rd 2020	5:50 pm	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Wah Klay Too army camp [IB #30]	6	Fired at Saw Mu Plaw village tract area
-	5:50 pm	Tatmadaw LIB #598 based in Keh Deh Kyoh army camp	2	Fired at Z--- village area, Hpla Hkoh village tract
-	Unspecified	Tatmadaw LIB #60 based in Ku Hkoh army camp	2	Fired at X--- village area, Hpla Hkoh village tract
-	8:00 pm	Tatmadaw LIB #598 based in Hter Neh Kyoh army camp	Unspecified	Fired at J--- village area, Hpla Hkoh village tract
April 4th 2020	8:05 am	Tatmadaw IB #30 based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp	Unspecified	Fired at Ag-- village, Ler Muh Plaw village tract
-	6:50 pm	Tatmadaw LIB #598 based in Hter Neh Kyoh army camp	1	Fired at Hkay Ler Hoo Place, Hkay Poo village tract
April 5th 2020	7:55 am	Tatmadaw LIB	1	Fired at

		#703 based in Hsa Law Kyoh army camp		villagers' farms in T'May Hkee area, Hkay Poo village tract
-	Unspecified	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp [IB #30]	27	Fired at Htee Ma Duh Plaw area
April 6th 2020	Unspecified	Tatmadaw IB #30 based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp	21	Fired at Aw--- and Aa--- villages
-	10:40 pm	Unspecified	11	Fired at Aw---, Ac--- and Ae--- [villages]
April 7th 2020	Unspecified	Unspecified	6	Fired at Htee Hsee Hta Plaw, [Place], Ler Muh Plaw village tract
-	9:35 am	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp [IB #30]	6	Fired at Htee Hsee Hta Plaw [Place], Ler Muh Plaw village tract
-	Unspecified time after 9:35 am	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Doo Htaw army camp	6	Fired at Yoh Hsee Law Plaw Place, Ler Muh Plaw village tract

-	Unspecified time after 9:35 am	Tatmadaw soldiers based in Htaw Muh Pleh Meh army camp [IB #30]	14	Fired at Yoh Hsee Law Plaw and T'Ree Plaw [Places]
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Total number of (counted) mortar shells fired and bullets fired

Mortar shells fired = 290 (in addition to an unspecified number fired) Estimated number of bullets fired = 1,000

KNLA situation

KNLA monitors the Tatmadaw soldiers constantly, for the security of civilians. [The killing of a Karen community leader by Tatmadaw soldiers on May 31st 2020 in Lu Thaw Township made it clear that it is necessary for KNLA to take the initiative in ensuring the security of civilians.][13] Whenever civilians in Lu Thaw Township cross a road near Tatmadaw army camps, KNLA soldiers have to guard them and escort them across the road.

Civilians' livelihoods

During the 2019 harvest season, most of the villagers in Lu Thaw Township did not harvest enough paddy as the paddy was damaged by the burning undertaken by the Tatmadaw; and by problems of drought and mice. As a result, civilians faced a number of difficulties in providing food for their families.

Civilians' perspective on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

Most of the civilians living in Lu Thaw Township reported [to KHRG] that the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is for their own [Tatmadaw's] benefit. They stated that villagers can access only a little freedom of movement in order to secure their family livelihoods, and that there will be no benefit for them when they [Tatmadaw] reconstruct their military road. Moreover, the road construction will destroy civilians' farmlands. Therefore, even though they are poor and facing hardship, they have no desire to cooperate with them [Tatmadaw] [in business or by working for them].

Education

Throughout the ceasefire [NCA] period [until recently], no fighting occurred in the community so civilians have been able to run the school and children have been able to go to school as well. However, some students live far away from the school and have to cross the road close to the Tatmadaw army

camps in order to go to and from school, which results in an insecure environment and leads them to feel afraid when going to school.

Healthcare

Most of the illnesses faced by civilians are fever, cough, diarrhoea, stomach ache and joint pain. There are five clinics in different parts of Lu Thaw Township. However, there are insufficient medical supplies, and medical services are also difficult to access because most villagers live far away from the town and the clinics. Therefore, only villagers who live close to the clinics can access clinic services, while other villagers who live far away have to treat their illnesses at home [with herbal and traditional medicines]. Some of them buy medicine from local shops using prescriptions given by the healthcare workers [nurses or medics].