

A month of violence in Moe Bye

Clashes leave religious buildings and civilian property destroyed, thousands displaced and many casualties

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 21 September 2023

WARNING: GRAPHIC. This report contains graphic imagery and links to graphic imagery shared online. While efforts have been made to blur details, the report contains information which some readers may find distressing.

Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** Moe Bye town (မိုးဗွဲမြို့), Pekon township (ဖယ်ခုံမြို့နယ်), border of Shan state (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်) and Kayah state (ကယားပြည်နယ်) [19.744369, 97.093033].
- **Date/Time of Incident:**
 - Multiple incidents between 19 May 2023 and 16 June 2023
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:**
 - Myanmar Military
 - LIB 333, under the 14th Military Operations Command (MOC-14)
 - Light Infantry Division (LID) 66, LID 55
 - Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 422
 - Infantry Battalion (IB) 54
 - Myanmar Air Force (MAF)
 - Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF)
 - Moe Bye People's Defence Force (MBPDF)
- **Summary of Investigation:**
 - Myanmar Witness has identified, documented, and where possible verified, local media reports and UGC related to clashes between the Myanmar military and the PDF joint forces along the Shan-Kayah border between 23 May 2023 to 30 June 2023.
 - Although many claims could not be verified, Myanmar Witness has geolocated imagery indicating damage to civilian property (homes and vehicles), religious buildings (a monastery and a church), and the displacement of civilians.

- Myanmar Witness has documented claims of civilian casualties and identified related UGC. Although the images could not be geolocated, the images were analysed using reverse image search and by cross-referencing the images with other UGC and claims online. Myanmar Witness believes that at least 19 individuals were killed in the Moe Bye area during the clashes, two of which were children.
- Myanmar Witness has documented claims related to a number of different Myanmar military units and identified UGC which purport to show badges, munitions, aircraft, and weapons (including guns with weapons IDs). This supports claims of Myanmar military presence in the area.
- Myanmar Witness geolocated a Myanmar military base within shelling distance from Moe Bye town and identified UGC showing remnants of 120mm mortar rounds allegedly in Moe Bye.
- Myanmar Witness also analysed UGC showing a K-8 trainer and light attack jet which is capable of carrying out airstrikes, allegedly taken in the Moe Bye area.

Executive Summary

Since the coup in February 2021, Kayah (Karenni) state has been a site of resistance to the State Administrative Council's (SAC) rule. By May 2021, protests had transformed into armed resistance and the area has seen frequent clashes between the Myanmar military (the SAC's forces) and local defence forces (as previously documented by Myanmar Witness). Moe Bye town which sits on the border of Kayah and Shan states — a strategically significant location due to its transport links and location between Nay Pyi Taw and the Thai border — has been the site of multiple clashes since the coup.

In this report, Myanmar Witness has identified, documented, and where possible verified, local media reports and UGC related to clashes between the Myanmar military and the PDF joint forces along the Shan-Kayah border between 23 May 2023 to 30 June 2023. Although Myanmar Witness could not verify all allegations of events in the vicinity within the investigative timeframe, due to limited UGC and verifiable information, it was possible to geolocate imagery indicating damage to civilian property (homes and vehicles) and religious buildings (a monastery and a church), and the displacement of civilians.

As well as causing mass displacement, the clashes reportedly led to the deaths of 26 civilians and multiple Myanmar military personnel. Myanmar Witness has documented all claims and identified related UGC in an attempt to verify the casualties. Although the images could not be geolocated, the images were analysed using reverse image search and by cross-referencing the images with other UGC and claims online. As a result, Myanmar Witness believes that at least 19 individuals were killed in the Moe Bye area during the clashes, two of which were children. Two women were also reportedly raped, however, this could not be independently verified by Myanmar Witness. These findings have been provided in a table along with the associated UGC (warning graphic).

During the investigative timeframe, the [MBPDF](#) and [KNDF](#) claimed that the Myanmar military attacked Moe Bye town with heavy weapons and that the Myanmar Air Force (MAF) used airstrikes during the clashes. Myanmar Witness has documented claims related to a number of different Myanmar military units and identified UGC which purport to show badges, munitions, aircraft, and weapons (including guns with weapons IDs linking them to specific battalions). This supports claims of Myanmar military presence in the area.

Additionally, Myanmar Witness geolocated a Myanmar military base within shelling distance from Moe Bye town and identified UGC showing remnants of 120mm mortar rounds allegedly in Moe Bye. Myanmar Witness has frequently documented the use of 120mm mortar rounds by the Myanmar military in its [reports](#). Myanmar Witness also analysed UGC showing a K-8 trainer and light attack jet which is capable of carrying out airstrikes, allegedly taken in the Moe Bye area.

Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor and document the escalation of conflict between the Myanmar military and resistance forces, such as the PDF and KNDF.

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Background and Context

Since the SAC took power in the February 2021 coup, Kayah (also known as Karenni) state has been the site of protests. While they started peacefully, an armed resistance began to emerge in May 2021. On 31 May 2021, the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), an anti-SAC resistance group, was [officially formed](#) and operated in coordination with multiple local People's Defence Forces (PDF) within Kayah state and bordering Shan state, including Moe Bye and Pekon.

The areas of Moe Bye, Pekon and Pinlaung have been the site of fierce fighting due to their proximity to the SAC's stronghold, Nay Pyi Taw (102 km as the crow flies). Additionally, the main road connecting Nay Pyi Taw and the Thai border stretches through this area, making it an important route for trade and transportation. Since the coup, the SAC has sought to maintain control of the area due to its strategic importance, resulting in an escalation of conflict between local resistance forces and the Myanmar military. According to [Radio Free Asia](#) (RFA), as the Myanmar military could not maintain control on the ground with ground troops, they have resorted to airstrikes and artillery bombing.

RFA [reported](#) that the Myanmar military launched a new offensive in Pinlaung in February 2023. Myanmar Witness published a report which investigated a deadly "[Airstrike and massacre in Pinlaung](#)" which took place in March 2023. The troops reportedly continued on towards Moe Bye and clashes took place between the Myanmar military and local resistance forces in May and June 2023. On 24 May 2023, the Myanmar military launched an [offensive](#) on the Shan - Karenni (ရှမ်း-ကရင်နီ) border resulting in a series of [clashes](#) in and around Moe Bye.

Methodology

Myanmar Witness follows a methodology of digital preservation and rigorous, replicable analysis. Digital evidence is collected and archived in a secure database and preserved with hashing to confirm authenticity and prevent tampering.



Myanmar Witness applies a four-tier classification system to describe the extent to which footage has been independently verified by Myanmar Witness. This is as follows:

- **Fully verified:** Footage independently geolocated and chronolocated by Myanmar Witness.
- **Verified:** Footage has been geolocated by Myanmar Witness. Other sources concur on the time and date of the footage, with no evidence following to suggest that the footage was taken earlier or later. However, it has not been possible for Myanmar Witness to independently chrono-locate the footage.

- **Unverified / Under investigation:** Myanmar Witness has not been able to geolocate or chronolocate footage at the present time.
- **Inauthentic:** The geolocation and chronolocation process has shown the location or timing of the footage to be inaccurate.

For the avoidance of doubt, this verification system only refers to Myanmar Witness' ability to independently geolocate or chronolocate footage. Incidents marked as unverified may still be substantiated by multiple eyewitness reports. Sources are cross-referenced in this report to indicate where this is the case.

This report contains images showing how footage has been geolocated. In these images, white lines are used to represent the left and right arcs of vision. Coloured boxes show how landmarks or distinguishing details in each piece of footage or data correspond with each other. Geolocation is conducted using a varied array of open-source online tools such as Google Earth to match satellite imagery with visual features identified in the footage or images. Geolocations are cross-checked and peer-reviewed before they are credited as verified.

Chronolocation is typically conducted by analysing UGC timestamps to determine hard-end limits for the possible time frame. This is followed with contextual analysis, for example comparing against known indicators such as events or clocks visible, weather, and shadows. Shadow angle is determined after geolocation and its orientation is used to determine the position of the sun and thus time. Chronolocation is included as specifically as possible without incorrectly attributing time to account for limitations with some of these methods.

If dealing with unverified information, such as witness testimony or outside reporting, Myanmar Witness has made known that these inclusions are claims and have not been independently verified by Myanmar Witness. Following ethical standards, Myanmar Witness has obscured identifying information about individuals involved, censored private information and images where appropriate, removed links to private individual accounts and archived said information securely. Where appropriate, Myanmar Witness has also blurred or excluded graphic imagery.

Limitations

The information obtained by Myanmar Witness comes from an area of ongoing conflict so it is assumed that there is a selection bias, due to factors including fear of repercussions for uploading, unavailability of information from official sources and availability, or lack thereof, the internet. Myanmar Witness strives to eliminate as much of this bias as possible by using both focused and broad search terms in multiple languages across open sources as well as identifying media from multiple sources, such as pro and anti-SAC news and social media.

Gender Analysis

While no female victims have been independently verified by Myanmar Witness in this case, there are claims that among the individuals killed during this incident, some were women and children. Additionally, Myanmar Witness identified claims that two of the women reportedly killed were also raped by Myanmar military personnel.

Location Map

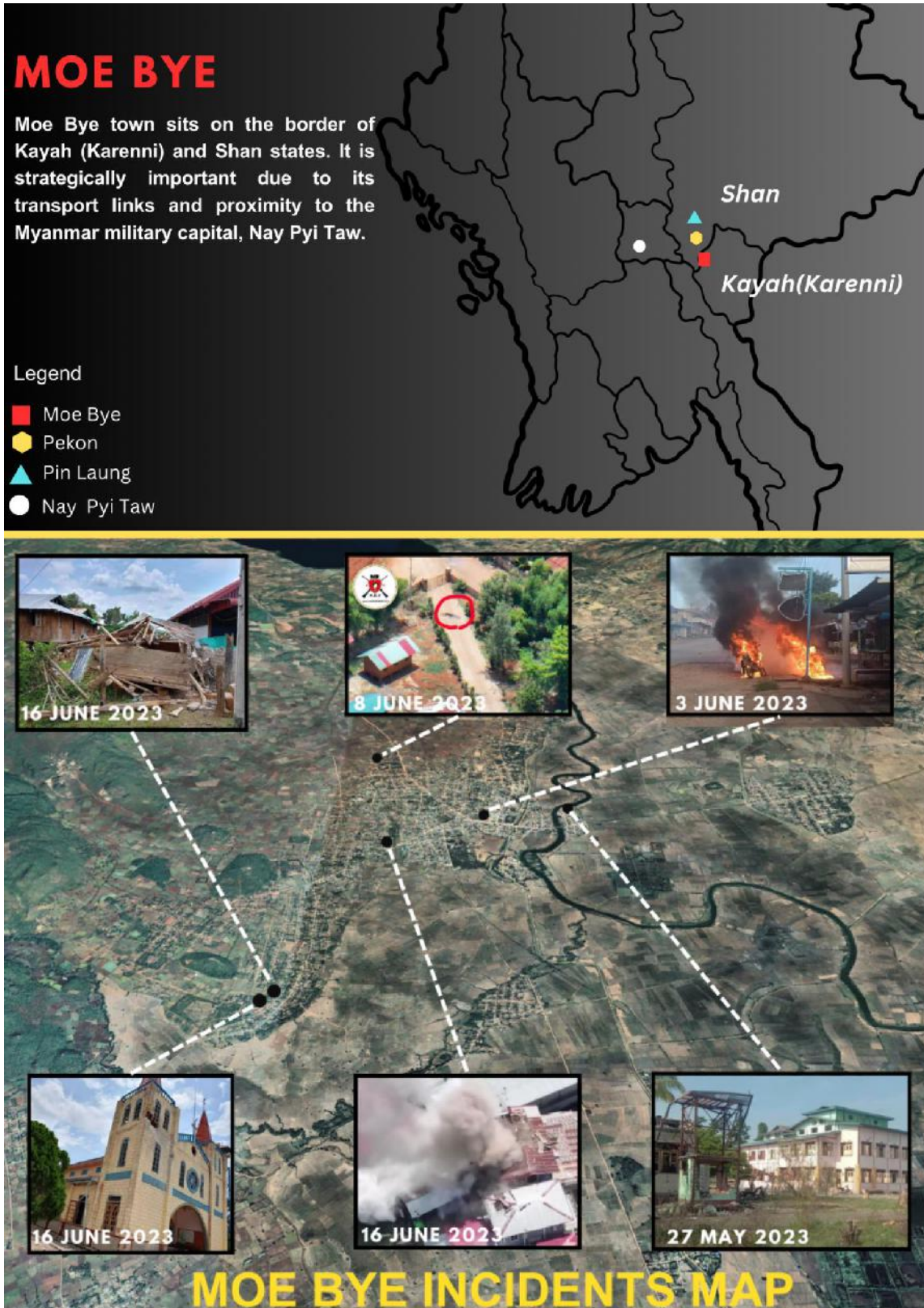


Figure 1: A map showing all the incidents investigated by Myanmar Witness between 19 May and 16 June 2023 at Moe Bye Town.

Timeline of Events

Timeline of reported events by Myanmar Witness

19 MAY 2023

Karenni's Voice reported that a 21-year-old girl was injured due to artillery shelling in Moe Bye town.

23 MAY 2023

A MAF airstrike allegedly hit an IDP camp in Moe Bye, destroying two houses.

27 MAY 2023

Heavy clashes reportedly broke out between the Myanmar Military and KNDF/PDF joint forces. Airstrikes and shelling were reported, resulting in damage to a monastery and houses. Myanmar Witness verified the damage to the monastery. A 3-and-a-half-year-old girl was reportedly killed by the shelling.

28 - 29 MAY 2023

A MAF Airstrike reportedly hit an IDP camp in western Moe Bye, injuring four people and damaging three houses. Allegedly an 11-year-old girl was killed and another 11-year-old girl was injured by shelling from LIB 422 artillery base.

1 JUNE 2023

MAF airstrikes reportedly hit five places in Moe Bye, including the Kayan New Land Party checkpoint gate.

3 JUNE 2023

Shelling from LIB 422 artillery base allegedly killed one civilian, injured two more and set two motorcycles alight. Myanmar Witness geolocated the burnt motorcycles.

5 JUNE 2023

It was claimed a 10-year-old boy was killed by the heavy weapons and electricity and phone lines were disrupted.

6 - 8 JUNE 2023

Two women were reportedly raped and killed. Myanmar Witness geolocated another dead body to the compound of Ledi Monastery.

14 - 15 JUNE 2023

A MAF airstrike reportedly hit an IDP camp in Moe Bye. Myanmar Witness analysed images purporting to show the munitions at the scene.

16 JUNE 2023

Heavy clashes were reported in Moe Bye. Shelling allegedly hit St.Peter church and nearby houses. Myanmar Witness geolocated images of the damage.

The investigation walkthrough

Myanmar Witness identified, documented, and where possible verified, local media reports and UGC related to clashes between the Myanmar military and the KNDF along the Shan-Kayah border between 23 May 2023 to 30 June 2023.

Violent [clashes](#) were reported in Moe Bye during May and June, causing damage to civilian property and religious buildings, and the displacement of civilians. The [MBPDF](#) and [KNDF](#) claimed that the Myanmar military attacked with heavy weapons and that the Myanmar Air Force (MAF) used airstrikes during the clashes. Multiple media sources claimed that shelling came from the LIB 422 artillery base (discussed in the section on perpetrators).

RFA [reported](#) that 28 civilians were killed and more than 20 were injured in Moe Bye between 25 May 2023 and 4 July 2023. It is also [claimed](#) that two women were killed and raped by Myanmar military personnel during the clashes in Moe Bye town. On 4 July 2023, RFA [reported](#) that the Myanmar military was occupying the downtown area of Moe Bye and only a few people remained in the town, the rest had fled to safety.

Myanmar Witness could not fully verify all of these individual events or the perpetrators due to limited UGC and verifiable information. However, footage analysed by Myanmar Witness shows damage to property and civilians seeking refuge in a nearby forest. This is consistent with the locations where clashes were reported. The following section covers the destruction of vehicles and buildings, including a monastery, motorbikes, a church and homes. Next, the report covers the victims of these events, followed by information related to potential perpetrators.

The destruction of vehicles and buildings

1. Nyaung Wynn Monastery Airstrike

The Nyaung Wynn monastery was [reportedly](#) hit by a MAF airstrike on 27 May 2023. Myanmar Witness was unable to identify UGC showing a MAF plane in the vicinity, however, footage released on Facebook purporting to show damage consistent with an airstrike was analysed and geolocated. Satellite imagery analysis confirms that the site was damaged on 27 May 2023.

Moe Bye News released [footage](#) on Facebook allegedly showing the aftermath of the airstrike. Analysis reveals damage to the monastery that is consistent with the damage caused by an airstrike. It was hit in the middle of the compound and the impact also affected nearby buildings. Myanmar Witness geolocated the footage, confirming that the footage was taken at the Nyaung Wynn Monastery [19.746260, 97.100321] see Figure 2.



Figure 2: Geolocation of the damage to the Nyaung Wynn monastery in Moe Bye at 19.746260, 97.100321 (source: [Moby News](#))

To chronolocate the incident, Myanmar Witness analysed Sentinel satellite imagery over the days before and after the alleged airstrike to identify when the monastery was damaged. This process [confirmed](#) that the monastery was damaged on 27 May 2023, corroborating claims made by local media. As seen in Figure 3, using sentinel’s urban false colour mode, there is a visible change in colour at the monastery site on 27 May 2023, indicating damage.

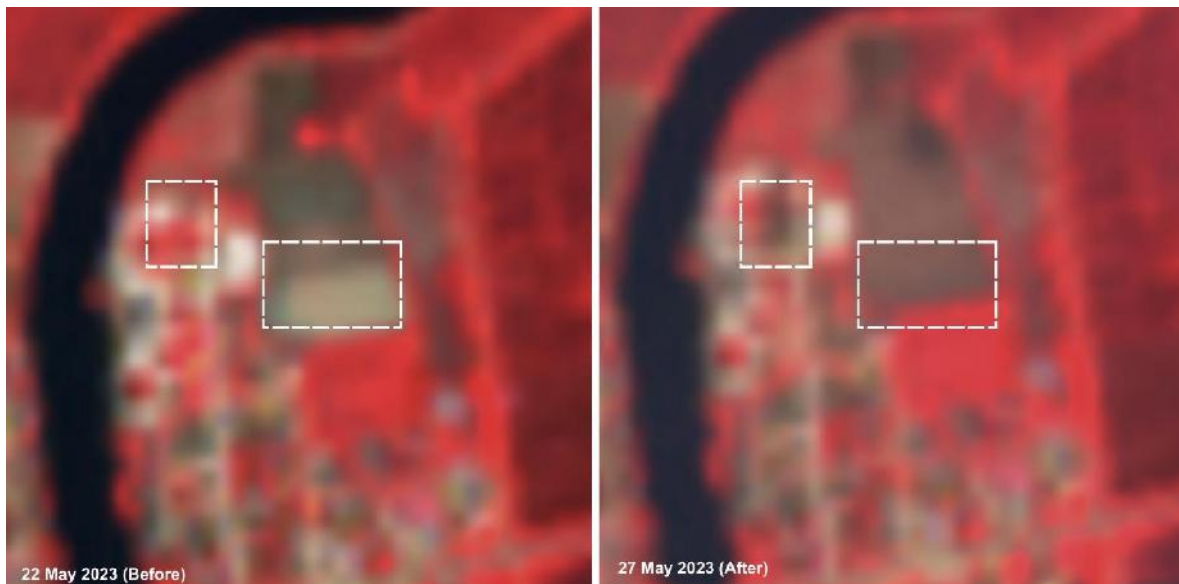


Figure 3: The visible destruction of the monastery between [22 May 2023](#) [left] and [27 May 2023](#) [right] using Sentinel Urban False Colour.

2. Burning motorcycles near Moe Bye Market

Footage released by the [People's Spring](#) Facebook page, allegedly taken on 3 June 2023, shows motorcycles engulfed in flames. Myanmar Witness geolocated the [footage](#) to a location near the Moe Bye market (Figure 4) and a small petrol station. Two civilians were [reportedly](#) injured as they were fueling their motorcycles when the area was hit by heavy weapons on 3 June 2023.

The [Karenni's Voice](#) Facebook page released CCTV video footage in which Myanmar Witness geolocated to a nearby street (Figure 4). In the footage, an explosion is visible. The video then jumps, and motorcycles can be seen engulfed in flames. The video appears to be stitched together; this makes verification of the incident difficult. Karenni's Voice may be presenting this as a 'before' and 'after' by removing the middle of the video, or this could be two separate videos stitched together. Karenni's Voice reported that the motorbikes caught alight following shelling, which they claim came from the LIB 422 base, located 3.5 km away from the incident. Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify this. Additionally, due to a lack of UGC or additional information (such as visible shadows for shadow analysis), Myanmar Witness was unable to chronolocate the incident.

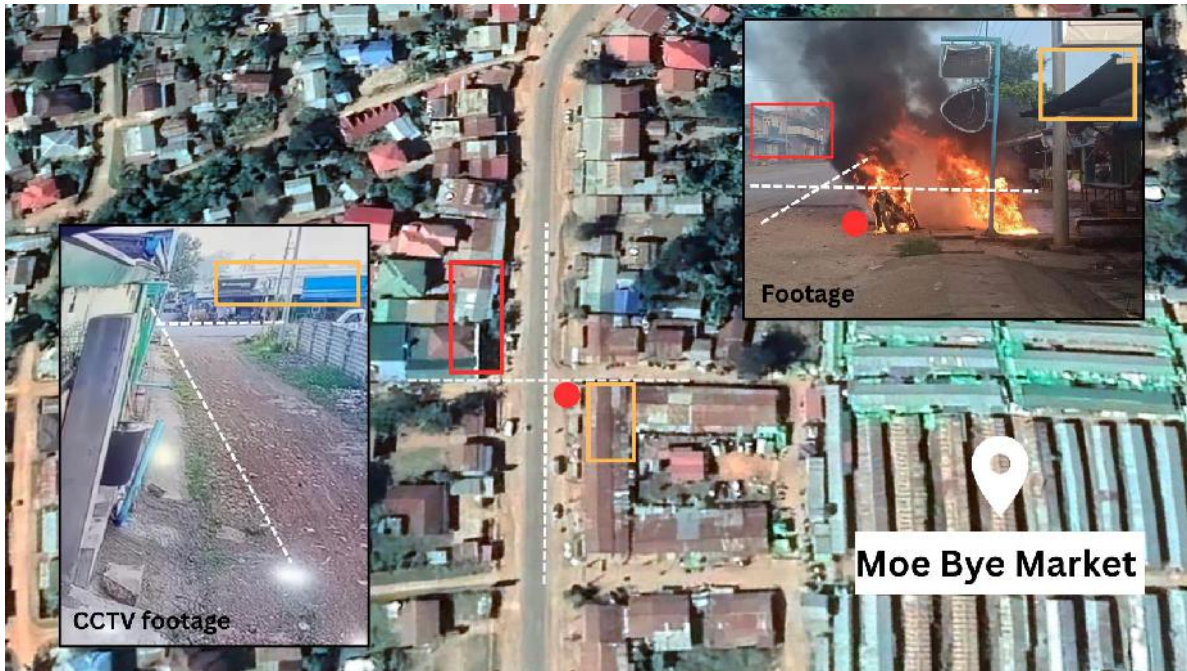


Figure 4: Geolocation of burning motorcycles [19.744533, 97.092933] near Moe Bye Market compared with the Karenni Voice’s [CCTV footage](#) and Image uploaded via [People’s Spring](#).

3. Damage to St. Peter’s church

During the clashes, the western tower of St Peter’s Church appears to have been damaged. Shan News uploaded [imagery](#) of the church on Facebook, which Myanmar Witness geolocated to 19.754840, 97.082055. It is [alleged](#) that this damage happened on 16 June 2023 (Figure 5). Myanmar Witness cannot verify the date the church was damaged, however, no claims have been identified which suggest that the church was damaged prior to this date.

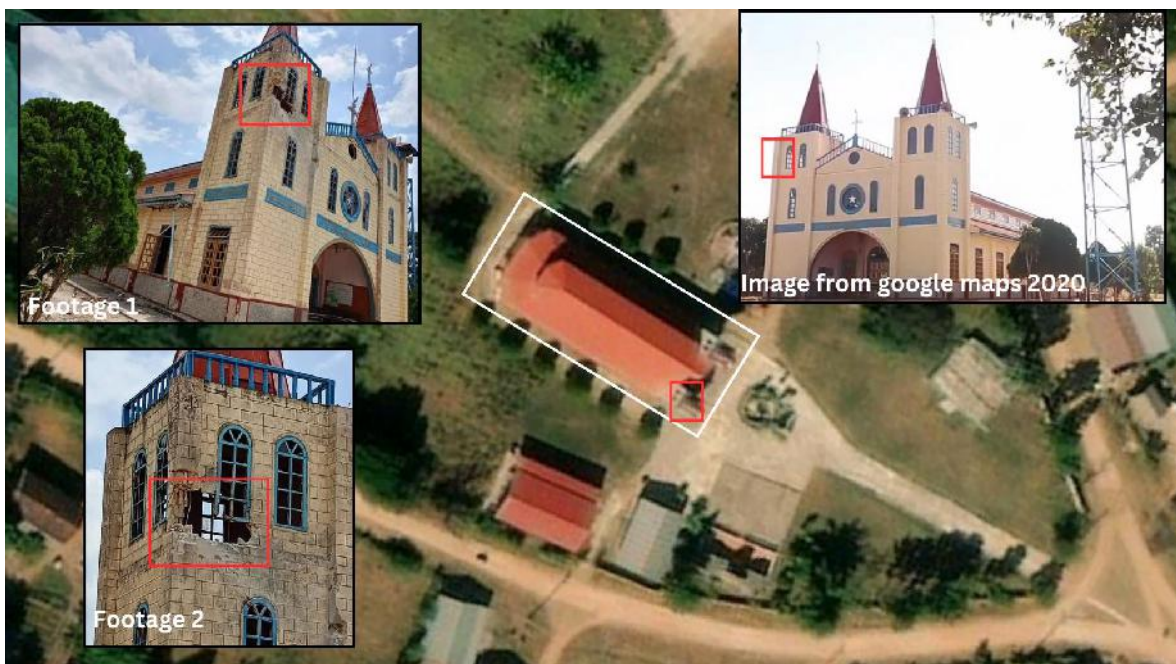


Figure 5: Geolocation of the damaged St. Peter church from Moe Bye at 19.718911, 97.076949 compared with the church picture uploaded in [Google Maps](#) 2020, the Satellite Pro imagery credited to ESRI (source: [SHAN News \(Burmese Version\)](#)).

4. Destroyed homes

According to MBPDF, on 16 June 2023, around 0600 local time, [a clash](#) between Myanmar military forces and PDF joint forces began and civilian houses were attacked by airstrikes and artillery. Both the [MBPDF](#) and [KNDF-UAV](#) released drone videos showing ordnance-hitting buildings and damage to structures. Myanmar Witness geolocated the footage showing damage to the town and civilian homes released by [MBPDF](#) and [Shan News](#) to Moe Bye town (specifically: 19.719835, 97.077906 and 19.739617, 97.084340). This confirms that buildings in the town were damaged during the investigative timeframe.



Figure 6: Geolocation of civilian houses hit by the artillery around 19.719835, 97.077906 (Source: [SHAN News \(Burmese Version\)](#)).



Figure 7: Geolocation of the damages to the civilians' houses at 19.719835, 97.077906 (Source: [SHAN News \(Burmese Version\)](#) & [MBPDF လင်းယုန်တပ်ခွဲ-ထောက်ပံ့](#)).



Figure 8: Geolocation of the civilian's house hit by shelling at 19.739617, 97.084340 (Source: [KNDF - UAV Department](#)).

Victims and Displacement

Myanmar Witness identified and documented claims made by local media and within UGC that 26 civilians had been killed in the Moe Bye area between 19 May 2023 and 16 June 2023. Myanmar Witness counted 19 different deceased individuals (identified by their clothing and unique features) reportedly associated with the clashes within UGC uploaded online. Although

the images could not be geolocated, the images were analysed using reverse image search and by cross-referencing the images with other UGC and claims online. As a result, Myanmar Witness believes that these 19 individuals were killed in the Moe Bye area. While Myanmar Witness was unable to confirm if each person killed was a civilian, they were all wearing mufti, rather than military fatigues or clothing associated with specific resistance groups. Information associated with the UGC suggests the deceased aged between three years old and 60 years old. Imagery allegedly shows an individual who was killed between 6 and 8 June 2023 was geolocated to the Ledi Monastery compound in Moe Bye town (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Geolocation of the civilian's dead body at 19.754840, 97.082055 (source: [Moby People Defence Force](#))

Among the deceased, Myanmar Witness documented claims that two female children were killed and discovered associated imagery. Karenni's voice [reported](#) that a three-and-a-half-year-old was killed by heavy artillery after several clashes on 27 May 2023. According to the [Karenni Human Rights Group](#), the other girl was 11 years old and was killed by a Myanmar military shell in Moe Bye town on 29 May 2023.

The [Free Burma Rangers](#) reported that two adult sisters and their father were shot in the head by the Myanmar Military on 8 June 2023. They also reported that the two women's bodies showed signs of torture and rape. Myanmar Witness created a table summarising the data collected related to civilian deaths. civilian death count provided with the UGC contents collected through social media.

Information on deceased individuals (May - June 2023)

WARNING: Graphic links

| No. | Claimed Date | Victims ID | Cause of Death | Related media claims and UGC | Age | Gender |
|-----|--------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--|---------|---------|
| 1 | 22 May | U Ohn Myint | Gunshot | Media report with video and imagery | 60 | Male |
| 2 | 27 May | Unidentified | Shelling | Media report with imagery | 3.5 | Female |
| 3 | 27 May | Unidentified | Gunshot, Airstrike | Media report but no images available | Unknown | Unknown |
| 4 | 27 May | Unidentified | Gunshot, Airstrike | Media report but no images available | Unknown | Unknown |
| 5 | 27 May | Unidentified | Gunshot, Airstrike | Media report but no images available | Unknown | Unknown |
| 6 | 27 May | Unidentified | Gunshot, Airstrike | Media report but no images available | Unknown | Unknown |
| 7 | 29 May | Unidentified | Shelling | Media report with imagery | 11 | Female |
| 8 | 3 June | Ko Aung Kyaw Phyo | Shelling | Media report with imagery | 22 | Male |
| 9 | 5 June | Unidentified | Shelling | Media report but no images available | 10 | Male |
| 10 | 6 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | 18 | Male |
| 11 | 6 June | Unidentified | Shelling | Media report with imagery | 39 | Male |
| 12 | 6 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Male |
| 13 | 7 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Male |
| 14 | 7 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Male |
| 15 | 8 June | Ma Maw Maw Oo | Gunshot after being raped | Media report with imagery | 31 | Female |
| 16 | 8 June | Ma Theingi Oo | Gunshot after being raped | Media report with imagery | 29 | Female |
| 17 | 8 June | U Aye Win | Gunshot | Media report with | 57 | Male |

| | | | | | | |
|----|----------|--------------|----------|--|---------|---------|
| | | Oo | | imagery | | |
| 18 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 19 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 20 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 21 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 22 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 23 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 24 | 6-8 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report with imagery | Unknown | Unknown |
| 25 | 14 June | Unidentified | Gunshot | Media report but no images available | Unknown | Male |
| 26 | 16 June | Unidentified | Shelling | Media report but no images available | Unknown | Female |

Myanmar Witness also identified claims that civilians were injured during the clashes, particularly by shelling, between 19 May and 16 June 2023. For example, [Karenni's Voice](#) reported that a 21-year-old woman was injured by shelling on 19 May 2023 while standing in front of her home. MBPDF [stated](#) that on 27 May 2023, four civilians were injured by Myanmar military shelling and on 28 May 2023, four civilians were injured when the MAF allegedly hit an IDP camp in western Moe Bye with airstrikes. On 29 May 2023, an 11-year-old girl's hands were [allegedly](#) injured as a result of Myanmar military shelling. Karenni's Voice also [reported](#) that two IDPs were injured on 15 June 2023 when the Myanmar military attacked villages close to Moe Bye with artillery and airstrikes. On 16 June 2023, two civilians were [reportedly](#) injured following heavy shelling by the Myanmar military.

[Mekong News](#) reported that nearly 30,000 people from Moe Bye fled the area due to the heavy fighting between the Myanmar military and PDFs. Myanmar Witness geolocated imagery posted online by [Karenni's Voice](#), which purports to show IDPs fleeing Moe Bye. The individuals captured in the image were moving towards the mountains west of Moe Bye (Figure 10). This is consistent with claims made online about IDP movements. For the safety of those fleeing, the geolocation and coordinates have not been included in this report (available on request).



Figure 10: Imagery of civilians leaving the Moe Bye area (source: [Karenni Voice](#)).

Alleged Perpetrator(s) and munitions

Myanmar Witness investigated claims of both Myanmar military and resistance forces' (PDF and KNDF) presence during the investigative timeframe. Most reports of civilian deaths or injuries identified Myanmar military shelling or MAF airstrikes as the cause (for example, see the table above).

Shelling and the LIB 422 Artillery Base

On 15 June 2023, [Karenni's Voice](#) posted a series of images allegedly from Moe Bye, including images of munitions (Figure 11). The munition highlighted in the yellow box in the figure below is a 120mm mortar round. Myanmar Witness has frequently documented the use of 120mm mortar rounds by the Myanmar military in its [reports](#). The size and shape of the tail fins and the circular marks on the primer are consistent with locally produced 120mm mortar rounds (Figure 12).



Figure 11: Fragments of a 120mm mortar round allegedly found in Moe Bye (source: [Karenni's Voice](#)).



Figure 12: [Left and middle] Fragments of 120mm mortar rounds allegedly found in Moe Bye compared with [Right] fragments of 120mm mortar rounds previously documented and collected by Myanmar Witness (source left: [Karenni's Voice](#); source middle: [Karenni's Voice](#); source right top and right bottom: sources archived by Myanmar Witness and redacted due to privacy concerns).

The KNDF [reported](#) that the Myanmar military's LIB 422 artillery base was responsible for most of the shelling on Moe Bye town. While this could not be verified given the limited UGC, Myanmar Witness identified and verified the location of the LIB base, located on a hill next to the Moe Bye Dam. The average distance that a 120mm mortar round can travel (MA6 model) is approximately 6250 to 8500 metres. The LIB 422 base is approximately 6000 metres from Moe Bye town, making it within shelling range. As a result, the shelling could have come from the LIB 422 base (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Location of LIB 422 Artillery Base, Moe Bye [19.775316, 97.085538].

Myanmar Witness also identified and geolocated a [drone video](#) posted on Facebook by the KNDF, which shows artillery hitting a house [19.739617, 97.08434]. A whistling sound can be heard before the round hits the building. The lack of sound from jet engines or rotors seems to suggest that the explosion is caused by an artillery round or drone attack. Individuals wearing military fatigues can be seen leaving the building after the explosion. The KNDF claimed that the attack was launched from the LIB 422 artillery base and that the shelling hit a location where Myanmar military troops were stationed, leaving some injured. A PDF Facebook page also posted a video, captured by a [drone](#), and claimed that the Myanmar Military had shelled Moe Bye town on 16 June, hitting a location where Myanmar military troops were stationed.

Myanmar Witness was unable to verify whether the individuals in the [KNDF](#) video were Myanmar military troops. Additionally, Myanmar Witness was unable to verify whether the explosion was the result of Myanmar military shelling or a drone attack (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Individuals wearing military fatigues can be seen leaving the building after the explosion (source: [KNDF](#) - UAV Department).

LIB 333 and MOC-14

On 5 June 2023, it was reported that there had been several clashes between Myanmar Military personnel — who were stationed within Moe Bye — and joint PDF forces. Moe Bye PDF forces [reported](#) that they captured an MA-2 rifle from the Myanmar Military (Figure 15). This report was accompanied by a [video](#), in which an MA2 rifle is visible. Myanmar Witness analysed the rifle sticker number ('333 1/7') and compared it with an internal database of weapons IDs (Figure 15). The weapon sticker reveals which battalion the weapon belongs to. This analysis revealed that the weapon in the video originally belonged to LIB 333 under the 14th Military Operations Command (MOC-14). However, it is not possible to definitively determine whether the weapon had been in the hands of this particular unit when it was confiscated.



Figure 15: Image of the rifle from Myanmar Military occupied by PDF allegedly in Moe Bye on 5 June 2023 (Source: မိုးမြဲ ပြည်သူ့ကာကွယ်ရေးတပ် ကျွဲချို/ထောက်ပံ့)

Additionally, Myanmar Witness has analysed the small arms depicted in the imagery and can confirm it is an MA-2 Mk.II, according to the Myanmar Witness [Small Arms Guide](#) (Figure 16).

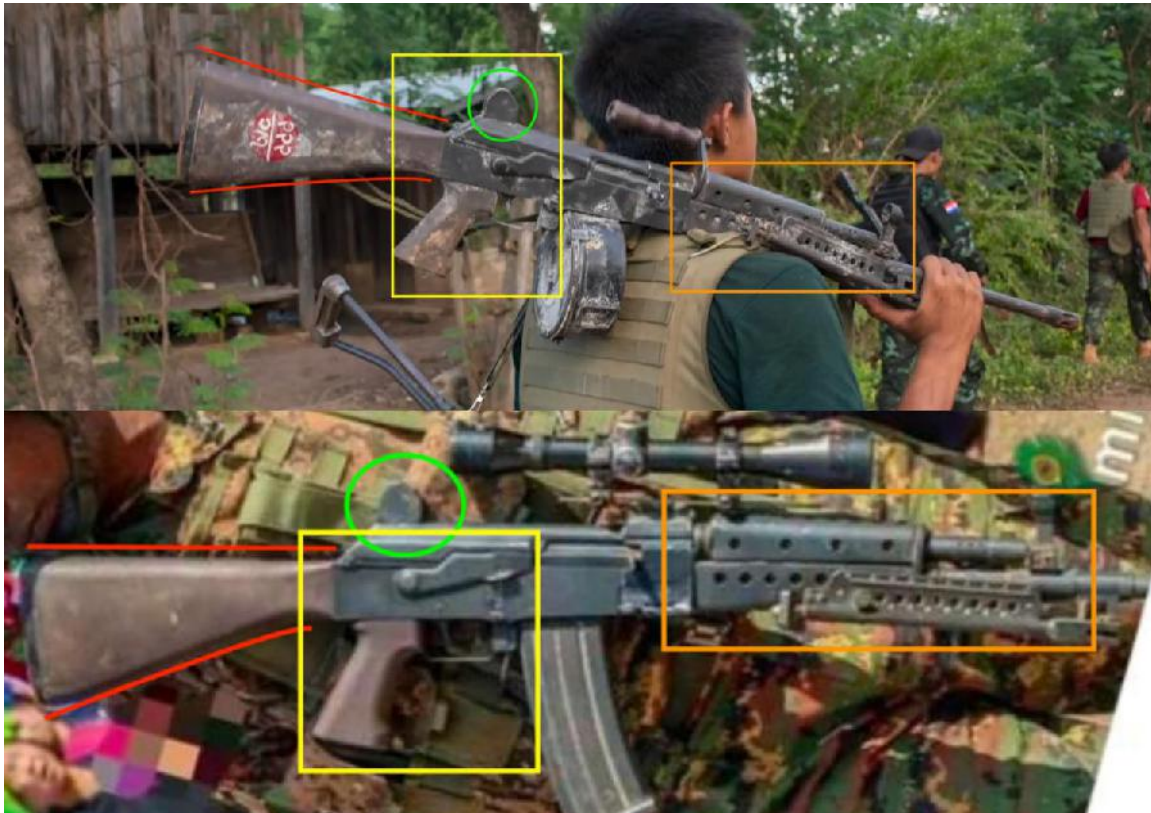


Figure 16: The comrade from Karenni forces carried the arm on the shoulder identified as MA-2 Mk. II

Other battalions and divisions

On 27 April 2023, [Shan News Agency](#) reported a clash between the Myanmar military and PDF joint forces near Nyaung Wynn village where at least 20 Myanmar military personnel from LID 66 were killed, two were captured alive, and military equipment and uniforms were seized. Additionally, on 26 June 2023, the [Southern Shan Local Revolution Union](#) reported that KNDF and MBPDF found an LID 66 uniform in the Karenni area. Myanmar Witness examined images of the uniform and can confirm that the uniform had a LID 66 badge (Figure 17). While this could corroborate claims that the LID 66 were active in the area, the images were not geolocatable.



Figure 17: LID 66 badges seen on uniforms reportedly found in Karenni state (source: [Southern Shan Local Revolution Union](#) and [SHAN news](#)).

On 31 July 2023, Khit Thit Media [reported](#) clashes between Myanmar military troops and local PDF near Loi Kaw and Moe Bye. Joint PDF forces [claimed](#) that at least 20 Myanmar military personnel were killed and that they confiscated weapons and ammunition, including MA-1, MA-2, and MA-3. Myanmar Witness has examined images released alongside these claims (Figure 18); the weapons originally belonged to LIB117, and IB94 under LID 55. However, it is not possible to definitively determine whether the weapons had been in the hands of these particular units when they were confiscated.



Figure 18: Weapons ID suggest LIB117, IB 4 under LID 55 (source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

Aircraft and munitions

On 27 May 2023, [Mekong News](#) reported intense clashes between the Myanmar military and PDF joint forces, after the PDF attacked a Myanmar military camp located along the Moe Bye, Pi Kinn Road. [Mekong News](#) released a video of a military aircraft allegedly within the Moe Bye area which Myanmar Witness believes is a [K-8 trainer and light attack jet](#) (Figure 19).

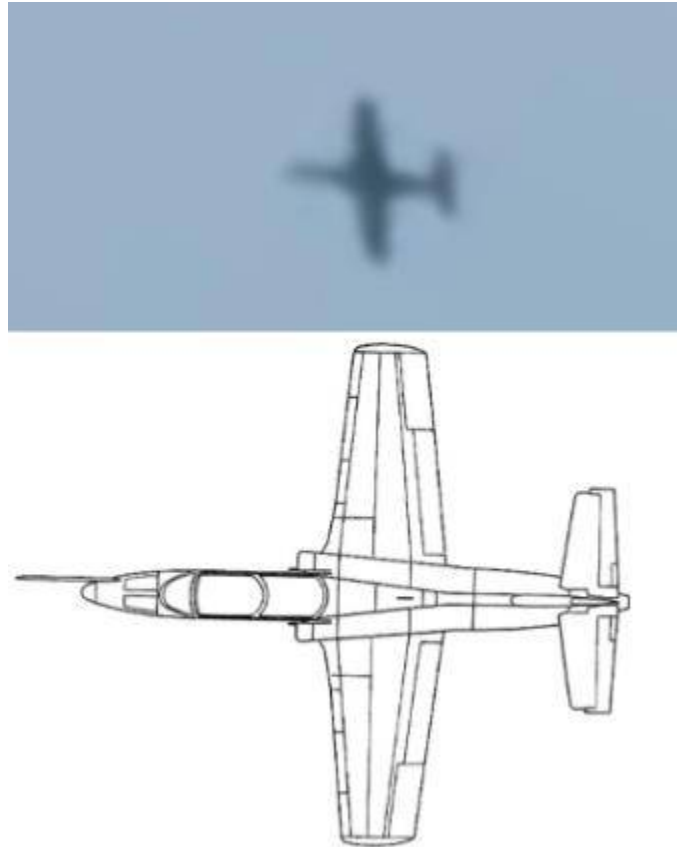


Figure 19: Screenshot showing a K-8 jet flying over Moe Bye according to a video allegedly taken on 27 May 2023 (source: [Mekong News](#)).

On 15 June 2023, Karenni's Voice [reported](#) that villages around the Moe Bye area were attacked by MAF airstrikes and shelling, and they released a number of images purporting to show munition remnants (Figure 20). Given the presence of suspension lugs on the remnant (highlighted in the green box), a large metal sheet – likely representing half of the cargo section – and a small bomb with fixed tail fins without suspension lugs, Myanmar Witness believes that these remnants could be from a cluster bomb delivered by an aircraft. Myanmar Witness has found reports of similar remnants in other cases.

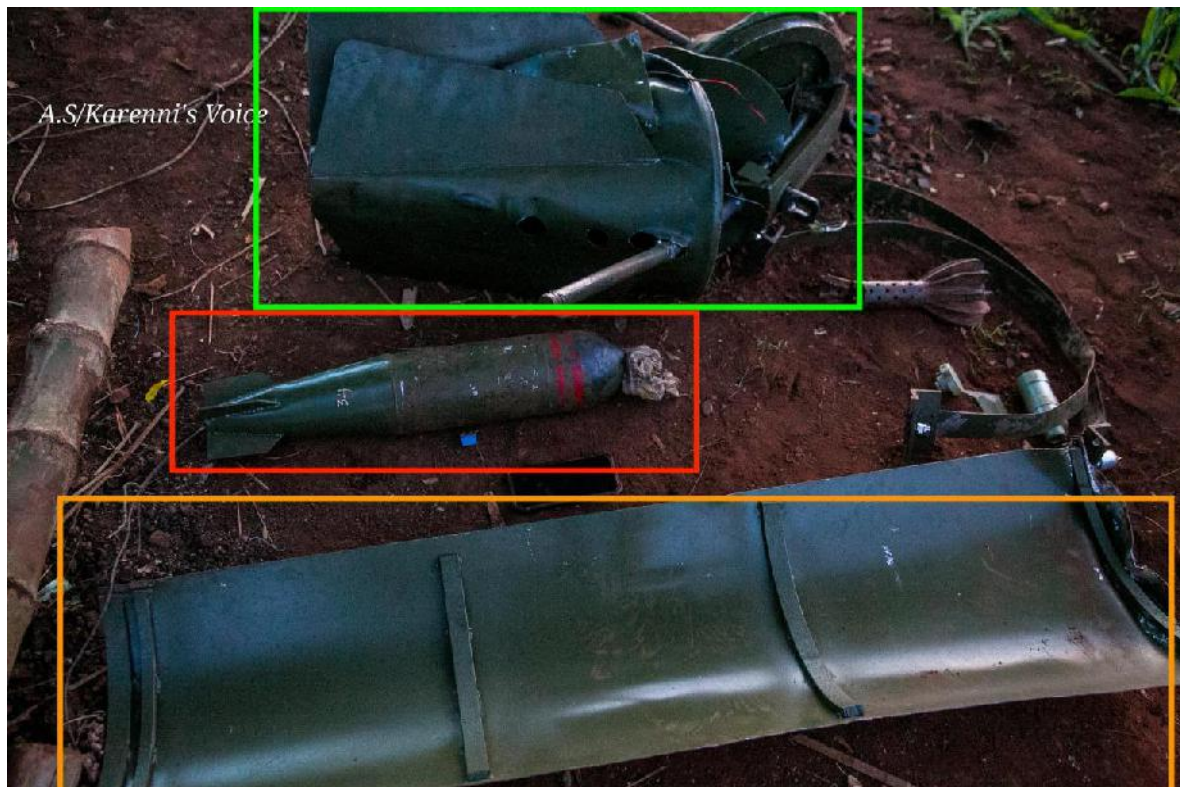


Figure 20: The claimed remnants from the attacks on villages in Moe Bye. The remnants in the boxes have been identified as being delivered by aircraft (source: [Karenni's Voice](#)).

Conclusion

Since the coup, Moe Bye has been a site of repeated conflict due to its strategic location. Myanmar Witness has identified, documented, and where possible verified, local media reports and UGC related to clashes between the Myanmar military and the PDF joint forces along the Shan-Kayah border, particularly in Moe Bye, between 23 May 2023 and 30 June 2023.

This report provides examples of the impact of the conflict, through the verification of damage to civilian property (homes and vehicles) and religious buildings (a monastery and a church). Additionally, reports related to civilian displacement, injury and deaths are also of great concern to Myanmar Witness. Two women were reportedly raped, and two children were among the 26 civilians reportedly killed. While not all incidents reported could be verified, this report has sought to document allegations related to the conflict's impact on civilians.

Myanmar Witness has documented claims related to a number of different Myanmar military units and identified UGC which purport to show Myanmar military badges, munitions, aircraft and weapons. This supports claims of Myanmar's military presence in the area. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor claims of Myanmar military presence in the area in order to confirm which battalions were involved in the clashes.

List of Abbreviations

- State Administration Council - SAC
- Myanmar Air Force - MAF
- Light Infantry Division - LID
- Light Infantry Battalion - LIB
- Infantry Battalion - IB
- Karenni Nationalities Defence Force - KNDF
- Moe bye People Defence Force - MBPDF
- People Defence Force - PDF
- Internally Displaced Persons - IDPs
- User-Generated Content - UGC

Further Reading

- [Airstrike in Kayah State](#) by Myanmar Witness
- [Airstrike and Massacre in Pinlaung](#) by Myanmar Witness
- [Pekon Hospital Bombing](#) by Myanmar Witness
- [Resurgence of Violence in Moe Bye](#) by Myanmar Witness
- [Moso Village Christmas Eve Killings](#) by Myanmar Witness