

Myanmar Alert: Thai Border Area Clashes: Eastern Myanmar

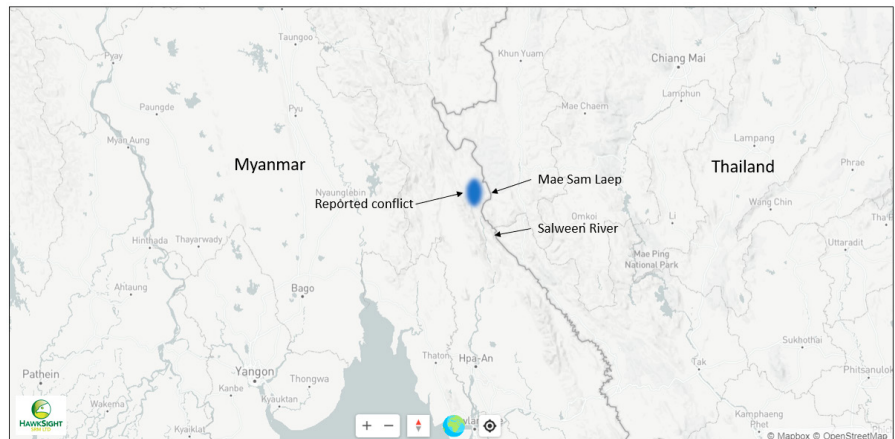
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Fighting on Thai - Myanmar border will continue, likely triggering more refugees and posing limited cross-border risk from indirect fire.

OVERVIEW

Clashes between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Tatmadaw close to the Thai border have intensified in recent days with the KNU reporting on 27 April that it had occupied and burned down a Tatmadaw outpost in the vicinity of Thaw Le Hta (see map right – blue area).

While this is far from the first time that the KNU have attacked an isolated Tatmadaw position, the last 24-hours has seen the most significant fighting since the 01 February military coup. Explosions and gunfire were heard across the border and the reported casualties include a Thai national, although the exact location where they were wounded is currently unclear.



ANALYSIS

The KNU has used both the protests triggered by the coup and the more recent ASEAN meeting - when Junta leaders agreed to tone down violence – to step up their campaign in the hope of generating greater international attention. The reported Thai casualty highlights the growing (though still limited) risk from indirect fire on both sides of the border.

PREDICTION

- The Tatmadaw will likely respond to their latest losses with further air and artillery strikes, likely exacerbating the existing IDP situation.
- The Tatmadaw will likely also use the intensified fighting to justify delaying existing commitments to release prisoners and maintain dialogue.
- The KNU look set to continue their campaign of attacks against isolated Tatmadaw positions – and may also step-up ambushes, increasing the threat from mine/IED and small arms fire on roads in the area. Indeed, their propaganda/recruitment videos are now being embedded in international media reports, which will likely encourage further action.
- The Thai authorities are credibly reported to have pushed back refugees trying to cross the border and this trend will likely continue in the absence of international media in the area because of security restrictions and the COVID-19 pandemic.

MITIGATION

- Increase situational awareness around the Thai-Myanmar border area.
- Consider further limiting any road movement in the area.
- Carry (and wear) personal protective equipment if indirect fire is reported/expected.

You may be interested in: [Myanmar Situation Report](#)

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