

Clash in KNLA 7th Brigade Area (April 26, 2018)

According to reports from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) 7th Brigade, the Myanmar Tatmadaw (MT or the Myanmar Army) Military Operation Command 223 ordered LIBs 204, 205, 208 and IB 81 to carry out clearance operation against the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), which has set up a resistance base not far from the Hatkyi Dam site, in the KNLA 7th Brigade Area.

The MT troops' operation was to start on April 22 and end on April 25. The MT command reportedly did not inform the responsible officials of the KNLA 7th Brigade, as required by the terms of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The 7th Brigade troops in the field warned the MT troops not to advance beyond the ceasefire demarcation line, but the MT troops disregarded the warning.

On April 24, two soldiers of the LIB 205 were wounded by landmines near Myapadita village. On April 26, the LIBs 204 and 208 went past the ceasefire demarcation line at 1215 hours and an exchange of fire took place between the KNLA and the MT troops. According to frontline reports, 2 MT soldiers were killed, and 3 landmines exploded. There was no casualty on the side of the 7th Brigade troops.

The KNLA 7th Brigade is in Pa-an District, which is adjacent to and to the south of Papun District. There is speculation that the objective of the MT troops is not only to clear the DKBA in the 7th Brigade Area but to advance into the 5th Brigade Area for further operations.

The MT battalions, coming into the 5th Brigade Area for the repair and upgrade of an old dirt road linking two MT military camps in Luthaw Township, have remained in the area since early March and taken up prepared positions on high ground. They fire heavy weapons into abandoned villages and farms from time to time to scare the villagers from returning to their farms and villages. The displaced persons from the nearby villages reportedly have now numbered more than 2,500.

Abbreviations: KNLA = Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU); MT = Myanmar Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army); LIB. = Light Infantry Battalion (usually a 500-man army unit, but nowadays one MT battalion has only about 120 men.); IB = Infantry Battalion Bde. = Brigade (usually a 4-battalion army unit); MOC = Military Operation Command.

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