

A map of Southeast Myanmar is shown, with the landmass filled with a dense pattern of white rice grains. The map is set against a light beige, textured background. The title text is overlaid on the map.

Scenario Plan

SOUTHEAST MYANMAR

CONFIDENTIAL - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

JANUARY
2025

Contents

3	Executive Summary
4	Context
5	Key Stakeholders
8	Scenario 1: Fighting Continues at Pace
8	Analysis
9	Impact
11	Scenario 2: SAC Loses Areas in the South
11	Analysis
12	Impact
15	Scenario 3: SAC Steps Up Attacks
15	Analysis
16	Impact
18	Sub-Scenarios
18	Fighting Surges Again in Karenni State
19	Inter-EAO Tensions Rise

Executive Summary

This Scenario Plan presents southeast Myanmar-based context projections for the purposes of response planning and strategy. At present, it appears that the most likely scenario over the next 6–12 months is one in which fighting continues at pace across the southeast, driving humanitarian needs upward. Other possible scenarios include the State Administration Council (SAC) losing territory in the far south or launching an intensified offensive in the southeast, but these are of only moderate likelihood. Within any of these possibilities, sub-scenarios that may arise include a resurgence of fighting in Karenni State and increased tensions between armed actors.

While this Scenario Plan provides general guidance, responders may make adaptations to suit the needs, priorities, and strategies of their respective organisations.

Context

Across southeast Myanmar, there has been considerable ebb and flow since the coup, in terms of both the intensity of violence and the momentum of particular actors. In Karenni State, for example, resistance actors launched a wave of attacks — not the first time since the coup — in November 2023, shortly after the start of Operation 1027 to the north in Shan State. Karenni actors launched Operation [1111](#) (and Operation [1107](#)) to rout the SAC and gain territory across the state, with a major focus on driving SAC forces from Loikaw, the capital. These groups appeared to score major successes: in early June 2024, a Loikaw town resident [told](#) media that resistance actors controlled half of the town; and in March, the KNDF [claimed](#) that the SAC had been cleared from 90 per cent of the state. However, over the course of 2024 the SAC retook control of much of Loikaw, half of nearby Demoso town, and the one major roadway through the state. Most rural parts of Karenni State remain free of SAC presence, but urban areas — particularly those along the main north-south corridor through the state — have seen a resurgence in SAC troops, and much of Loikaw city remains [destroyed](#) and [depopulated](#).

In Karen State, fighting has been ongoing since the coup (and long beforehand), and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) has made slow but continued gains against the SAC. In particular, the KNLA has routed the SAC from many rural areas of Karen State — and Eastern Bago Region — and the Karen National Union (KNU) has been able to shore up its governance in many of these places when conditions permit. Though tensions and at least low levels of violence have been constant, a major shift occurred in late 2023, when KNLA-led fighters began attacking SAC positions in towns along the Asia Highway. Up to that point, fighting had been widespread but the KNLA had largely avoided attacks in towns on the highway, the main conduit for both civilian and military transport between Yangon and the Thai border. Attacks around [Kawkareik](#) town were followed by attacks around [Myawaddy](#) town, where the KNLA appeared to briefly gain control after overrunning the SAC's last [base](#) there, but then lost it less than two weeks later when the SAC [retook](#) its base. The area between Kawkareik and Myawaddy has been a continued hotspot, with SAC launching airstrikes and its troops — including the so-called [Aung Zeya](#) column, long held up in the Dawna Mountain Range — terrorising civilians with frequent attacks. Civilian transport has been shut down along the highway since late 2023.

In Mon State, there has been less armed opposition to the SAC since the coup, as the New Mon State Party (NMSP) — the largest armed and governance actor in the state — has not taken a strong stance against the SAC. However, smaller resistance groups, sometimes in tandem with the KNLA, have attacked SAC positions, and the SAC has engaged in detentions and abuses against civilians. A major shift occurred in early 2024, when the NMSP-Anti [Military] Dictatorship (NMSP-AD) split from the NMSP, [announced](#) that it would oppose the SAC by force, and reportedly began operating — with former troops of the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA), the armed wing of the NMSP — in Mawlamyine District. After members of the group [overran](#) an SAC police station in Kawkareik Township in March 2024, the SAC conducted airstrikes in nearby Kyaikmaraw Township, [destroying](#) 300 houses and displacing thousands of people. A potentially major shift occurred in January 2024, when four Mon

armed actors — the NMSP-AD, Mon Liberation Army (MLA), Mon State Defense Force (MSDF), and Mon State Revolutionary Force (MSRF) — [agreed](#) to cooperate and [formed](#) a joint column.

Tanintharyi Region has seen continued fighting since the coup, shifting from location to location and varying in intensity. In 2024, armed resistance activity in the region has grown markedly, with People's Defence Forces (PDFs) [claiming](#) to control parts of the main north-south highway between Mawlamyine and Kawthoung, and violence appreciably [increasing](#) around Dawei, the largest urban area. Although the KNLA's Brigade 4 operates across Tanintharyi Region, it has been less active in opposing the SAC — though it has regularly [cooperated with](#) and supported smaller PDF groups doing so. Meanwhile, SAC troops have targeted people (and families of people) they allegedly believed to be associated with resistance actors. Across southeast Myanmar — but particularly in Tanintharyi and Bago regions and Mon State, where the SAC has greater access to civilian populations — communities have also been affected by the SAC's recruitment drive.

Humanitarian needs have continued to rise throughout the southeast, particularly as fighting expanded and began more often occurring around urban areas, and barriers to the provision of assistance — including SAC restrictions on aid, more general restrictions on movement, road closures, and the physical insecurity that comes with widespread fighting and militarisation — have made it difficult for response actors to meet these needs. According to UNHCR, as of [6 January 2025](#), there were 133,400 IDPs in Karenni State, 224,600 in Karen State, 89,200 in Mon State, 208,000 in Tanintharyi Region, and 211,600 in Eastern Bago Region. In addition, people have fled northward into Shan State from Karenni State, and eastward from Karenni, Karen, and Mon states into Thailand. Despite the challenges of providing assistance under such conditions, local groups, religious institutions, and EAO-linked actors such as the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People have provided assistance for hundreds of thousands of people.

Key Stakeholders

The largest stakeholder in the southeast (and across Myanmar) is the SAC. In the southeast, the SAC maintains its Southeast Command headquarters in Mawlamyine city, as well as large bases in Loikaw, Hpa-An, Myawaddy, Ye, Dawei, and Myeik. It has long had troops dispersed throughout the southeast, and it is currently engaged in a nationwide conscription effort, but it has also lost numerous military positions and its administrative structures are highly degraded (particularly in Karen and Karenni states, but also to a lesser extent in Bago Region). For example, according to the KNU, as of 28 March the SAC had been completely [eradicated](#) from Hpapun town, and as of January 2025 the KNLA continued to [chip away](#) at SAC bases elsewhere in the township. Over the course of 2024, KNLA-led actors also overran SAC bases in [Hlaingbwe](#), [Myawaddy](#), [Kyainseikgyi](#), and other townships of Karen State.

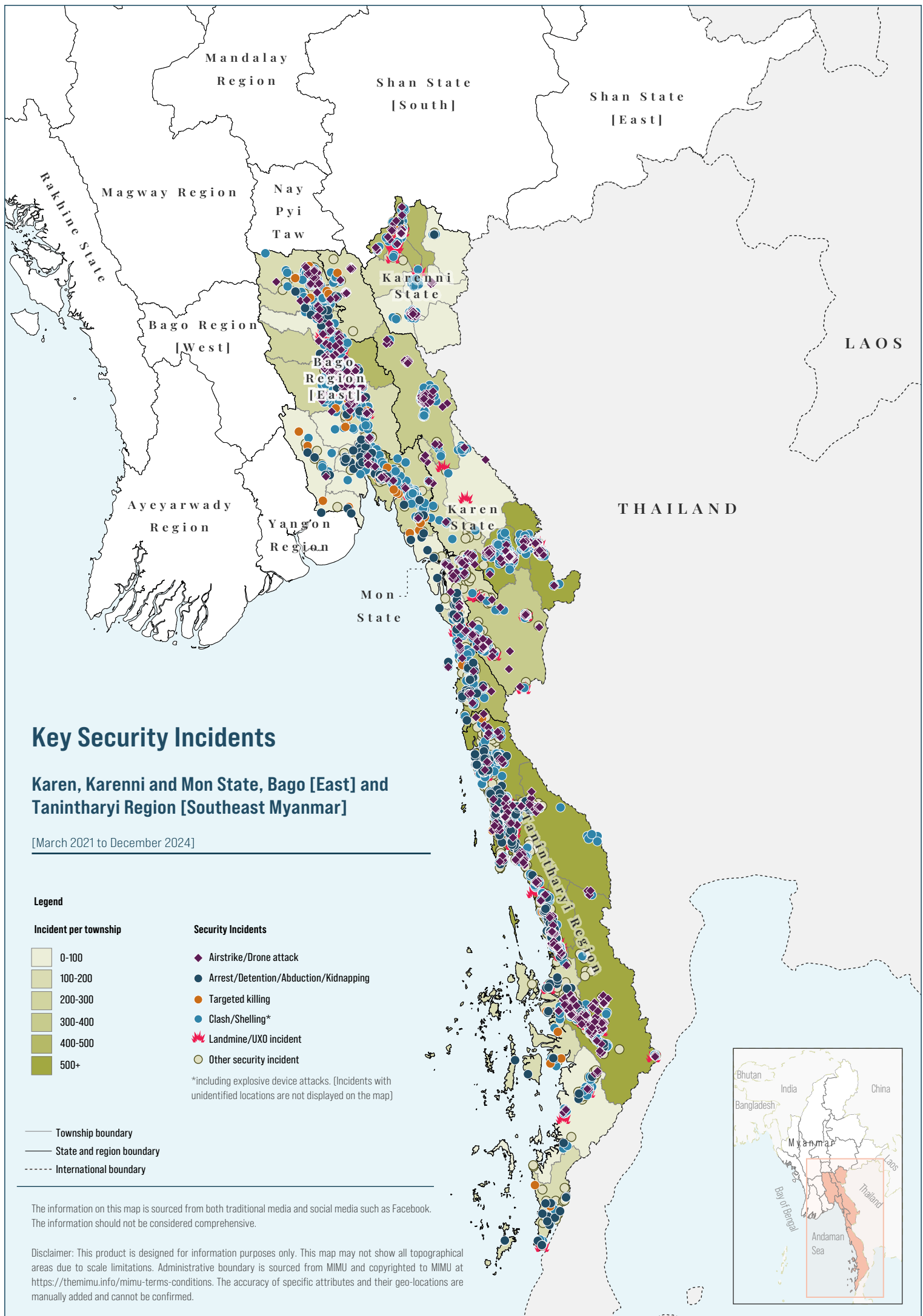
The KNU and its armed wing, the KNLA, have influence and personnel spread across KNU-defined Karen State, which covers Myanmar government-defined Karen State and Tanintharyi Region, as well as parts of government-defined Mon State, Bago Region, and Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory. The KNU is Myanmar's oldest EAO, and it has built out its governance over the past seven decades; since long before the coup, it has been the only provider of education, healthcare, and land administration in areas not under the control of the Myanmar military, for example. While multiple groups — the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA),

KNU-KNLA-Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC), and Kawthoolei Army (KTLA) — have splintered off from the KNU or KNLA, these have remained smaller and less influential than the KNU. Likewise, while several resistance groups have been formed since the coup and operated in the southeast (often with training and other support from the KNLA), these groups have generally been led by the KNLA — or, when acting alone, presumably had at least tacit support from the KNLA — when launching attacks on the SAC. The major exception is the KTLA.

The Karen KNA/BGF units came into being in 2011, when they split off from the DKBA and became subsumed, according to the then-government's BGF scheme, under the Myanmar military chain of command. Since that time, the Karen KNA/BGF units have often acted at odds with the KNLA, either fighting KNLA troops directly or facilitating attacks or defences by the military. KNA/BGF leader Saw Chit Thu has leveraged his relationship with the military to develop several gambling hubs in Karen State's Myawaddy Township, which have come under increasing international [scrutiny](#) for its reported hosting of international scam operations. In January 2024, Chit Thu [announced](#) that the Karen BGFs would no longer accept salaries or materials from the SAC, and in March [said](#) that the BGF was converting itself into the KNA. However, it is unclear whether the KNA/BGF will move closer to the KNU, continue to cooperate with the SAC, or try to occupy some middle ground; it appeared to play both sides in April 2024, by apparently allowing the KNLA to overrun the SAC's last base around Myawaddy town but then assisting the SAC in retaking it, and it has engaged in large-scale [recruitment](#) in recent months.

In Mon State, the most powerful actors are the NMSP and its armed wing, the MNLA. The NMSP is an Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signatory that has not fought either alongside or against the SAC since the coup in 2021. However, in early 2024, reportedly under increasing internal and popular pressure to resist the SAC by force, a sizable chunk of the NMSP [split off](#) to form the NMSP-AD, taking with it a sizable chunk of the MNLA. The NMSP-AD reportedly operates in Mawlamyine District, where the MNLA is now said to be operating entirely under the NMSP-AD's direction. Because much of Mon State is also considered by the KNU to be part of Karen State, administrative territory was already overlapping, and the more militarily-active NMSP-AD could overlap with the KNLA in its operational area.

In Karenni State, the most powerful armed actors are the Karenni Army (KA) — the armed wing of the Karenni National Progress Party (KNPP) — and the KNDF, a post-coup resistance group operating under the leadership of the KA (though now larger than the KA). However, there are also PDFs and other resistance actors, which often act in tandem with the KNDF. Two other EAOs — the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) and Kayan New Land Party (KNLP) — have also reportedly worked with these resistance groups, though they have maintained a lower profile since the coup. The Karenni Interim Executive Council (KIEC), a fledgling governance mechanism created after the coup, has attempted to centralise governance in the state, but both its reach and its buy-in from ethnic minorities in the state remain unclear — as does its ability to operate in practice amid continued widespread fighting in the state.



Scenario 1: Fighting Continues at Pace

LIKELIHOOD: 






In this scenario, fighting continues across the southeast over the next 6-12 months, though it may shift from location to location, and may intensify or ebb according to the season. Nonetheless, it continues with particular intensity in Tanintharyi Region, and in Karenni State, where the SAC's resurgence around Loikaw and Demoso is undoing hard-fought resistance gains. Karenni actors in Karenni State, the NMSP-AD and new "Rehmonnya Joint Column" in Mon State, and KNLA-led actors in the rest of the southeast, continue to attack SAC positions and attempt to "liberate" more areas from SAC military presence or control. In some locations, SAC troops surrender or flee, but in the majority of cases they fight to hold their positions, with the assistance of artillery fire and airstrikes that end up damaging civilian areas and harming civilians. As EAOs and resistance actors beat back the SAC from more rural areas, increasingly the loci of fighting are larger towns and cities such as Loikaw, Demoso, Myawaddy, Kawkareik, Thaton, Bilin, and Ye, and along major roadways such as Union Road No.8 in Tanintharyi Region. Rural areas see the slow disappearance of SAC troops, but continue to be bombarded by SAC aircraft, preventing any return to normalcy. Civilians' moral support for EAOs — and, to a lesser extent, smaller resistance groups — and opposition to the SAC continues, despite continued hardship. Meanwhile, the shut-down of the Asia Highway through Karen State means that civilians must continue to use alternative routes for transport and travel, impeding their ability to seek safety and acquire basic necessities.

Analysis

The likelihood of this scenario is based on patterns between the coup and now. Neither the SAC nor any EAO or resistance actor has shown that it is close to stopping — or even slowing — efforts to gain territory, or to engaging in dialogue that could lead to some sort of cease-fire agreement. In fact, an agreement like this is difficult to foresee, given numerous actors' dismissal of the NCA process and widespread perceptions that the SAC lacks genuine interest in finding a negotiated solution. Particularly given SAC losses during Operation 1027, as well as southeastern actors' successes in beating back the SAC from long-held positions, groups fighting the SAC in the southeast appear unlikely to stop pushing for the capture of additional territory. While the SAC has shown an inability to adapt to changing conditions (for example, by trying to cut its losses through dialogue and compromise), it has also seemingly been unable to stop its continued loss of positions across the southeast — even if such losses are slow and result in casualties on both sides.

The possibility exists that the status quo could be disrupted by a major intensification by the SAC or some EAO. For example, if the SAC is able to harness its conscription efforts and shift troops from elsewhere in the country, it could fortify its existing positions in the southeast in a way that would seriously undermine efforts by EAOs and resistance groups; it has already done so in Loikaw, but it too early to tell whether this will be continued elsewhere in Karenni State or other parts of the southeast. Likewise, a series of attacks by EAOs and smaller resistance actors — as when the KNLA and aligned groups removed SAC troops around Myawaddy town — could be a turning point; while this appeared to happen in Myawaddy, it was undermined when SAC troops retook the IB 275 base and KNLA troops withdrew from the town. The recent moves by Mon State resistance actors to coordinate efforts could create such an effect. However, there is little indication that the situation has significantly changed (outside Loikaw), or that there will be meaningful shifts in power dynamics in the near future.

Impact

Humanitarian Needs				
Displacement	Food security	Protection	Livelihoods	Health
				
In this scenario, displacement would likely continue to increase as fighting continues across the southeast, and fighting and instability would prevent hundreds of thousands of displaced people from returning home.	Food security would likely continue to degrade in this scenario, as fighting disrupts both agricultural activities and trade. Civilians across the southeast would likely become increasingly dependent on assistance for access to food.	Protection concerns would likely continue to worsen in this scenario, and not only because of continued exposure to armed actors. The SAC's conscription efforts would increase threats to civilians in areas with SAC administration, and more fleeing civilians would be exposed to threats from smaller armed actors operating in small pockets of the southeast.	Livelihoods would likely continue to worsen in this scenario, as agricultural activities are undermined by displacement (at least intermittently), the threat of violence, and the proliferation of explosive ordnance. Other economic activity would also likely be undermined by disruptions to trade and travel, including closure of the Thai border crossing.	Access to healthcare, and health outcomes, would likely worsen in this scenario, as fighting and other unstable conditions worsen civilians' health, the few healthcare access points are destroyed or threatened with bombardment, and barriers to travel prevent access.
Key Takeaways Humanitarian needs would likely continue to rise in this scenario, at roughly the pace seen since the coup — and notably rise in Tanintharyi Region. The same factors that have increased humanitarian needs up to this point would persist, and continued fighting would mean an ever-larger number of people affected by them.				

Humanitarian Support			
Permissions	Administrative risk	Physical access	Market functionality
The SAC would likely continue to deny access to international responders. Local responders are already generally operating without travel permissions, and therefore would likely see little change in the SAC's allowance of their activities.	Administrative risk is unlikely to change, as international responders are not permitted to work with local partners or directly implement activities, and must circumvent 'official' rules in order to be effective.	Physical access is likely to stay the same, or slightly degrade, as roads across the southeast are affected by fighting, intermittently shut down, or too dangerous to pass. Even for local responders, access is likely to be impeded by the danger associated with movement of staff and transportation of goods amid high levels of armed violence.	Market functionality is likely to further decrease, as movement and transportation become more difficult. As traders are forced to rely on smaller, slower roads (along which they are likely 'taxed' by armed actors), the cost of goods increases, though there may be significant fluctuation from location to location and week to week.
Key Takeaways <p>This scenario would likely further diminish — but not eliminate — local responders' ability to reach IDPs and other vulnerable populations. Needs increase and prices increase, but local responders are generally still able to get aid to hard-to-reach locations. The access and administrative situation for international responders stays the same, but the cost of aid increases and documentation is likely to worsen.</p>			

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Prepare to respond to sporadic and cyclical displacement due to ongoing armed violence in rural areas, with the understanding that durable solutions remain out of reach;
- Scale up funding in order to maximise the impact of existing access, and increase cash-based assistance to offset the rising costs of goods and the destruction of livelihoods;
- Be aware that transportation of food, NFIs, and other relief supplies, will remain challenging;
- Plan to source supplies from local markets, but be aware that budgets and/or targets may need to be adjusted to respond to high and increasing cost of goods;
- Continue to work with local civil society to the greatest extent possible in order to mitigate access challenges, including interruptions to travel and transportation related to restrictions, armed violence, poor infrastructure, and weather;
- Support local partners and other civil society actors in navigating the security concerns and pressures that arise from shifting areas of control; and
- Closely monitor contextual developments and consult frequently with local staff and partners to ensure conflict sensitivity best practices are adapted to shifting realities on the ground.

Scenario 2: SAC Loses Areas in the South

LIKELIHOOD: 

In this scenario, EAOs and smaller resistance actors increase their attacks on the SAC in Tanintharyi Region and southern Mon State over the next 6-12 months, making major gains in rural areas and possibly smaller towns. The SAC retains its strongholds of Mawlamyine, Dawei, and Myeik, and it is able to send troops to defend these towns and launch raids outside of them, but it is increasingly confined to urban areas and the one main roadway from Mawlamyine to Kawthoung. Even along the road, its free passage is disrupted by frequent attacks, but it is able to punch through, enabling it to reinforce smaller positions under attack on the road.

Life for civilians in this part of the country comes to more closely resemble that in northwest Myanmar: SAC raids become more frequent; tens of thousands of villagers are displaced; thousands of houses are razed; agricultural land is destroyed, or is otherwise left untended because people have fled. Many people who flee their homes end up in urban areas, in make-shift IDP camps, or along the Thai border. While many people continue to oppose the SAC and support resistance to it, life becomes increasingly challenging for them amid livelihood challenges and frequent displacement. In addition to other abuses so frequently resulting from the presence of armed actors in civilian areas, the incidence of forcible recruitment and extortion (particularly at checkpoints) increases.

Analysis

Resistance to the SAC has steadily increased in this part of Myanmar: in Tanintharyi Region, by PDFs, sometimes with KNLA support; and in southern Mon State, by PDFs and the NMSP-AD, again sometimes with the support of the KNLA. In Tanintharyi Region, resistance activity has particularly ramped up along the highway between Dawei and Ye, and further presence of resistance actors and removal of SAC troops here would allow for a weakening of the SAC's ability to access or attack points farther south by road. In Mon State, the NMSP-AD has been slowly advancing its own goals against the SAC, and it and others are likely to only further ramp up attacks in light of the SAC's recent [diktat](#) that local administrators assemble "People's Security and Anti-Terrorism Teams" and the recent efforts by several resistance actors in the state to [unify](#) (or at least coordinate) their efforts against the SAC; while a lack of unity among smaller actors here since the coup has hampered resistance efforts, recent developments could lead to change. Because land transport in this part of the country is constrained to a few roads, there are multiple choke points at which resistance forces could hinder the SAC's ability to reinforce troops, allowing them to attack other areas more easily.

On the other hand, the SAC has multiple incentives to resist such attacks strongly, and it has multiple tools at its disposal for constraining resistance activity. The SAC is likely intent on maintaining control — to the extent possible — over roadways, urban areas, profitable enterprises, and military assets (naval in Dawei/Yebyu, air force in Myeik) in southern Myanmar. By virtue of these same military assets, it also has the capacity to inflict widespread destruction of civilian areas, which could undermine popular support for resistance activities and help it to flush out resistance actors. In particular, the presence of its air force base in Myeik would allow it to carry out bombing sorties in much of Tanintharyi Region, and the proximity of so much of Tanintharyi to the coast (and the existence of multiple riverways) means that the SAC can reach many areas with destructive artillery strikes. This has already been [seen](#) to some extent, and — particularly if the SAC were to relocate ships from Rakhine State to Tanintharyi Region — could be significantly increased in the face of a more dire threat.

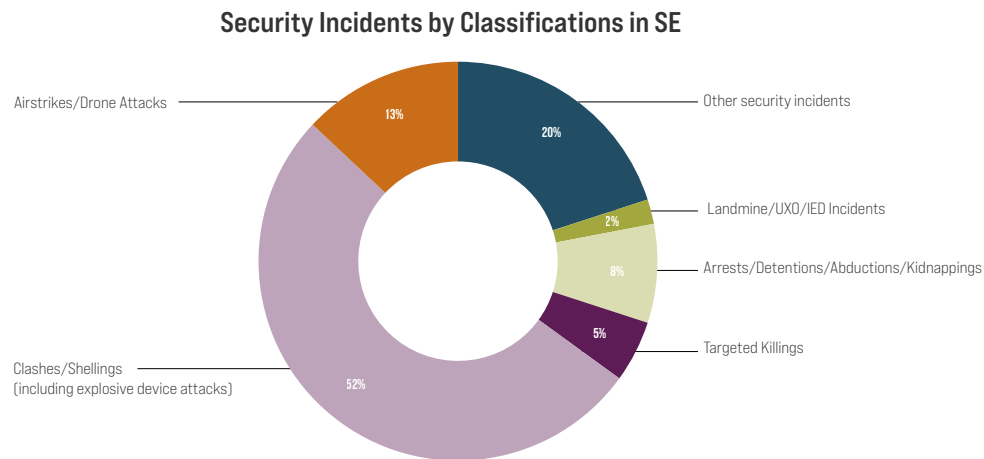
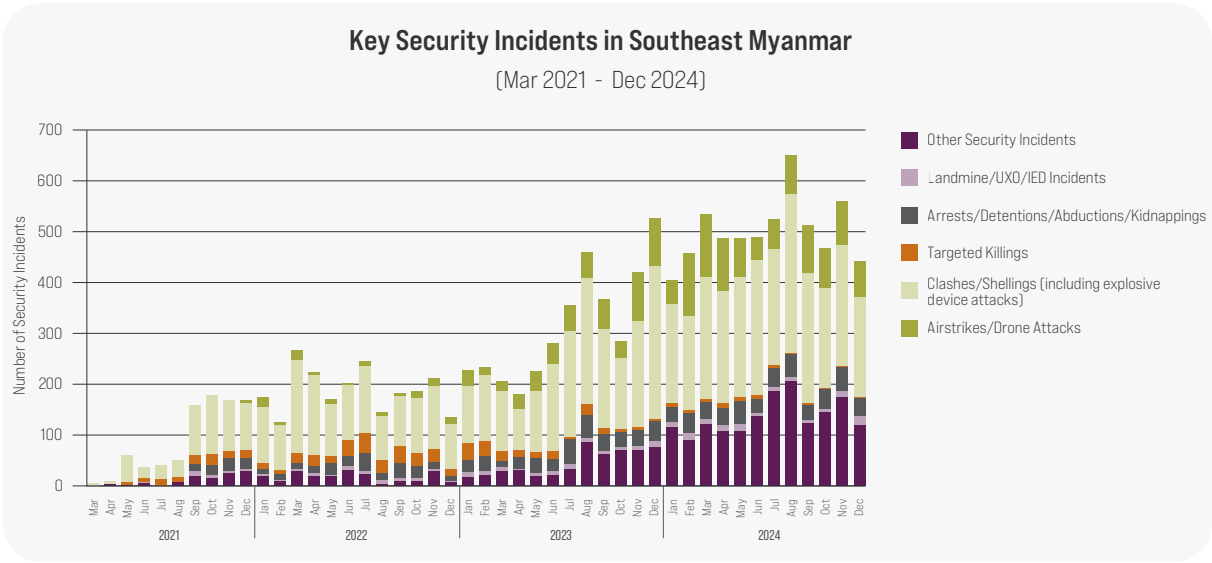
Impact

Humanitarian Needs				
Displacement	Food security	Protection	Livelihoods	Health
Displacement would likely worsen as fighting and troop movement continue and airstrikes, artillery fire, and violent raids empty villages and towns of their residents. Many IDPs would be unable to return home.	Food security would likely worsen, with fewer people able to produce, move, or afford food items. While trade from Thailand could benefit villagers along the mountainous border, this would likely have minimal benefits closer to the coast.	Protection concerns would likely remain high for civilians, who would face constant threats of death, injury, detention, forced recruitment, and extortion.	Livelihood opportunities would likely continue to diminish; farming and fishing would become increasingly different, and poor support networks could render displaced populations unable to sustain themselves.	Health outcomes would likely worsen. More people would likely be affected physically, mentally, or emotionally by fighting and displacement, and healthcare from KNU- and NUG-related actors would be undermined, if not destroyed.
Key Takeaways Living conditions would continue to deteriorate on the whole in this scenario in Tanintharyi Region and southern Mon State, as fighting and SAC attacks undermine production, trade, social support capacity, and health and other infrastructure. Local resources would diminish at the same time that displacement and overall humanitarian needs continued to rise.				

Humanitarian Support			
Permissions	Administrative risk	Physical access	Market functionality
The SAC would likely continue to deny permissions for international response actors, and to crack down on local civil society and response actors. In the absence of permissions, humanitarian groups would carry out relief activities unofficially, but increased SAC presence would likely hinder their ability to do so.	Administrative risks would likely remain the same. International responders would not be permitted to work with local partners or directly implement activities, meaning that they must circumvent 'official' rules in order to be effective.	Physical access would likely continue to degrade, especially for international organisations working from larger, SAC-controlled towns such as Mawlamyine or Dawei. Roadblocks and insecurity would likely limit the ability of humanitarian actors to reach people in need.	Markets would likely continue to function in both urban and rural areas, allowing access to essential goods for communities living nearby. However, increased militarisation and continued attacks in urban areas and along roadways, would hinder the accessibility of such markets.
Key Takeaways Markets would likely remain functional, and local response organisations would likely remain able to address the needs of at least some people in need. However, SAC roadblocks, overt restrictions on humanitarian response, and crackdowns on civil society actors would mean that international organisations must rely on partnerships with local actors to have an impact.			

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Assess the feasibility of direct implementation in areas under SAC control, while also working through local partners;
- Develop partnerships with local responders and CSOs in Mon State and Tanintharyi Region, including newer organisations with less experience and capacity;
- Anticipate the need to increase engagement with EAO- and NUG-linked actors and develop strategies to navigate tensions that may arise as multiple actors compete for control;
- Support local partners in conducting localised needs assessments with IDPs and other communities, in order to gauge the scope of needs and respond accordingly;
- Increase funding to support a large number of people displaced, and support local partners in conducting needs assessments, including in situation where IDPs are dispersed across villages and remote areas;
- Support the construction and operation of healthcare centres to address the needs of large numbers of people injured by previous fighting, among other health concerns;
- Provide technical and financial support to emergent actors' governance, coordination, and cooperation efforts, including by investing in development of good governance practices; and
- Provide technical and financial support for emergent actors' efforts to comply with IHL and IHRL norms, including with respect to civilians and soldiers who surrender or defect.



Scenario 3: SAC Steps Up Attacks

LIKELIHOOD: 

In this scenario, the SAC makes a more concerted effort to take positions lost across the southeast, drawing on its conscription efforts, as well as troops and weapons from elsewhere in Myanmar. It shifts manpower, artillery, and other weaponry into the southeast, and then uses main roads to re-establish its presence in more territory, albeit suffering losses from frequent attacks on convoys as it does so. It aids its re-expansion efforts through the frequent use of airstrikes (and drone attacks), particularly in villages near roadways and towns, and in locations where it perceives resistance actors to be located. In the face of a greater imbalance of arms, EAO-led attacks rely more on drone strikes and hit-and-run tactics, resulting in SAC troop losses but limited effectiveness in stopping SAC movement. While SAC expansion may be limited to particular parts of the southeast, it is more likely to occur in Karenni State and neighbouring parts of Southern Shan State — where the SAC has more recently regained greater control — than farther south.

As more SAC troops enter the region, urban areas and transport corridors are the first places to become increasingly securitised, meaning that some economic activity can take place but civilians in these places are highly restricted — and at risk of detention or other punishment. More civilians flee from urban to rural areas, but they may be displaced multiple times as the SAC tries to expand a buffer zone around the areas in which it has — or retakes — control.

Analysis

It is possible that the SAC could intensify its efforts to keep a grip on southeast Myanmar, including by shifting troops from those other states, as it has recently done in northern Karenni State. In effect, this would be an effort to cut losses by removing troops and materiel from areas where there have already been major losses and into those areas where the fighting is still ongoing. Despite recent losses of positions in the southeast, and continued fighting there, the SAC still retains a presence in most urban areas, and still retains the ability to use the largest roadways, albeit while taking losses along the way.

However, there is little so far to indicate that it will employ such a strategy beyond Loikaw, where it likely had specific interests (e.g. the proximity to Nay Pyi Taw) that motivated a recent offensive. Though it has agreed to a temporary ceasefire in Northern Shan State, it has generally not given up on any front nationwide; the exceptional ceasefire agreement in Northern Shan State appeared to come after the SAC tried and was largely unable to retake territory, including because of road destruction and much more significant firepower from the Three Brotherhood Alliance. The SAC continues to fight intensely in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states, as well as across northwest Myanmar. Accordingly, it is relatively unlikely to reallocate additional resources to the southeast in a way that would allow it to significantly change the intensity of its operations there.

Impact

Humanitarian Needs				
Displacement	Food security	Protection	Livelihoods	Health
Displacement would likely worsen as fighting and troop movement continue and airstrikes, artillery fire, and violent raids empty villages and towns of their residents. Many IDPs would be unable to return home.	Food security would likely worsen, due to fewer people being able to produce, move, or afford essential food items. While movement of food items across the Thai border could help to fill some gaps, this would likely have minimal benefits across the wider area.	Protection concerns would likely remain high for civilians, who would face constant threats of death, injury, detention, torture, and forced labour by SAC troops. As SAC presence grows, more civilians would also face the threat of conscription.	Livelihood opportunities would likely continue to diminish; displaced populations would be unable to sustain themselves, and insecurity of people and property would hamper people's ability to conduct agricultural activities.	Health outcomes would likely worsen. More people would likely be affected physically, mentally, or emotionally by fighting and displacement, and local health institutions would be even more strained – where they have not been destroyed.
Key Takeaways Living conditions would continue to deteriorate on the whole in this scenario, as fighting and SAC attacks undermine production, trade, social support capacity, and health and other infrastructure. Local resources would diminish at the same time that displacement and overall humanitarian needs continued to rise.				

Humanitarian Support			
Permissions	Administrative risk	Physical access	Market functionality
The SAC would likely continue to deny permissions for international response actors, and to crack down on local civil society and response actors. In the absence of permissions, humanitarian groups would carry out relief activities unofficially, but increased SAC presence would likely hinder their ability to do so.	Administrative risks would likely remain the same. International responders would not be permitted to work with local partners or directly implement activities, meaning that they must circumvent 'official' rules in order to be effective.	Physical access would likely continue to degrade, especially for international organisations working from larger, SAC-controlled towns. Roads would likely continue to be blocked and/or made insecure by the threat of attacks, limiting the ability of humanitarian actors to reach people in need.	Markets would likely continue to function, allowing access to essential goods for communities living nearby. However, increased militarisation by the SAC, as well as continued attacks on the SAC in urban areas and along major roadways, would hinder the operation of markets accessible to larger numbers of people.
Key Takeaways Markets would likely remain functional, and local response organisations would likely remain able to address the needs of at least some people in need. However, SAC roadblocks, overt restrictions on humanitarian response, and crackdowns on civil society actors would mean that international organisations must rely on partnerships with local actors to have an impact.			

In this scenario, many of the same concerns are present, and many of the same recommendations hold, from Scenario 1. However, in light of the potential loss of access to additional transport routes and urban staging and administrative areas,

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Preposition aid, to the greatest extent possible, in cities and towns in anticipation of waves of displacement from rural to urban areas;
- Reduce administrative burdens (e.g. reporting requirements) and increase flexibility, allowing local partners to quickly adapt programs to respond to needs as they arise;
- Shift to remote, zero-visibility modalities where not already existing; and
- Engage with local authorities in border-adjacent areas of Thailand, where possible, to facilitate the flow of assistance from the border inward.

Sub-Scenarios

Fighting Surges Again in Karenni State

LIKELIHOOD: 

In this sub-scenario, the SAC renewed push southward from Southern Shan State into Karenni State spurs a resurgence of fighting in the state between it and Karenni resistance groups. The renewed presence of SAC troops in and around Loikaw and Demoso towns following hard-fought resistance gains since November 2023 spurs the KNDF and aligned actors to regroup and attack again, both to establish greater control in these areas and to prevent SAC troops from retaking territory in the south and east of the state. Frequent resistance attacks on the road south from Demoso to Hpasawng are able to hinder but not stop SAC convoys, resulting in the continued inability of any actor to establish firm control near the road.

Loikaw and Demoso towns remain largely empty, as civilians take shelter in areas in which Karenni actors are able to provide services and food is more readily available. Meanwhile, IDP camps in Demoso Township and neighbouring parts of Southern Shan State see the arrival of even more people fleeing areas affected by fighting, though IDPs may attempt to continue livelihood activities by moving back and forth between camps and their areas of origin. Eastern Karenni State remains relatively stable, though occasional SAC airstrikes disrupt agricultural activities and daily life.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Strengthen cooperation with, and support for, local partners operating in the state, including those operating from adjacent states and from Thailand;
- Increase support for the Karenni Interim Executive Council (IEC) and other governance and resistance actors providing education, healthcare, and other services;
- Increase financial and agricultural support for people living in areas of the state less affected by fighting, where livelihood activities can be more reliably carried out and where IDPs are more likely to be taking shelter;
- Increase funding to support a large number of people displaced, and support local partners in conducting needs assessments, including in situation where IDPs are dispersed across villages and remote areas;
- Be aware that transportation and procurement are likely to remain difficult, irregular, and difficult to document; and
- Adjust administrative requirements accordingly.

Inter-EAO Tensions Rise

LIKELIHOOD: 

In this sub-scenario, tensions rise between armed actors operating in southeast Myanmar, following on from recent skirmishes between the KNLA and [KTLA](#), and between the NMSP and [DKBA](#). As well, while there is precedent for [cooperation](#) between the KNLA and NMSP-AD, there remains the potential for tensions between the two, particularly if reduced SAC presence allows space for their interests to diverge; large parts of Mon State fall within KNU-defined Thaton and Doooplaya districts (and therefore within the operational areas of KNLA brigades 1 and 6). The overlap between administrations, and multiple groups' armed presence, allows for abuses by actors associated with one group against people more closely aligned with another — which could increase tensions between the two armed actors. Even in the absence of such abuses, territorial disputes, miscommunications, or misunderstanding could lead to small fights. Such tensions could make it more difficult for local response actors to coordinate in delivering goods and services, and could pose barriers to civilian travel and the transport of goods.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN SOUTHEAST MYANMAR SHOULD:

- Closely examine all programmes and partners to ensure conflict and context sensitivity remains central to all interventions in the southeast;
- Exercise heightened vigilance with respect to inclusion and monitor for any potential new discrimination or exclusion on the basis of ethnicity or other factors within programmes;
- Closely monitor local partner interactions and affiliations to understand the socio-political context of partner portfolios;
- Increase understanding, among response actors, of inter-group dynamics, which are prone to fluctuation;
- Implement social cohesion programming to mitigate ethnic tensions where possible; and
- Support local partners and other civil society actors in navigating the security concerns and pressures that arise from shifting areas of armed actor control.

Scenario Plan

SOUTHEAST MYANMAR

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