

Pekon Hospital Bombing

An airstrike impacting a medical facility and IDP camp allegedly resulted in the injury of civilians

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 27 April 2023

Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** Hsawng Phwe Hospital (ဆောင်းဖွေးဆေးရုံ), Pekon Township (ဖယ်ခုံမြို့နယ်), Shan State (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်), 19.669828, 96.889449
- **Date/Time of Incident:**
 - 25 April 2023 around 1300 local time
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:** Myanmar Air Force (MAF)
- **Summary of Investigation:**
 - On 25 April 2023, reportedly around 1300 local time, there were claims of an airstrike in Pekon that affected a local hospital and a nearby internally-displaced people (IDP) camp.
 - Myanmar Witness verified damage to a medical facility, including damage consistent with an possible air attack.
 - Pro and anti-military media appear to agree that the military attacked the area, however pro-military sources claim that the attack took place due to People's Defence Force (PDF) personnel hiding in the area.
 - Myanmar Witness also verified one injured individual in a nearby IDP camp.

Summary

According to multiple pro-democracy news sources, including [Khit Thit Media](#) and [MeKong News](#), the Myanmar military are alleged to have conducted an airstrike close to Hsawng Phwe Hospital, a medical facility in southern Shan state. The attack allegedly impacted civilians in the area, [injuring](#) three people including a nurse.

[Radio Free Asia](#) has claimed that a military Mi-35 attack helicopter was responsible for the damage, but local Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) [media](#) stated that a fighter jet was used. [People Media](#), a pro-military media outlet, states that the airstrike was conducted because local PDF and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) members were present at this location. Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify this claim, but has verified damage to a medical facility in the area and at least one injured individual in a nearby IDP camp. The attack represents a steady escalation in the use of air power against civilians that has been addressed in the recent report [Eyes on the Skies](#), and is being actively monitored by Myanmar Witness.

Myanmar Witness has been able to verify:

- The location of a damaged medical facility, likely caused by an airstrike after further analysis of the damage caused.
- Medical equipment in the structure, suggesting it was being used as a medical facility.
- The location of a refugee camp nearby.
- The location of at least one person in the refugee camp, an older woman, who sustained injuries to the head.
- Currently unidentified munitions geolocated to the same area of the potential airstrike; one of the munition fragments allegedly located in the area of the attack could be air-delivered, and is likely associated with the incident.
- Myanmar Witness is actively monitoring:
 - Claims that the military were involved in the attack and which groups are specifically implicated - Myanmar Witness has yet to verify user-generated content (UGC) of an aircraft potentially involved. However, the use of aircraft suggests military responsibility, as the only group with access to such military assets.
 - Claims that more than the one individual already identified were injured during the attack.

Investigation Walkthrough

The military are alleged to have attacked an area in Pekon with airstrikes on 25 April 2023, resulting in the destruction of a medical facility and the injury of civilians in a nearby IDP camp.

Geolocations

Myanmar Witness geolocated the area of the alleged airstrike and smoke in the footage uploaded by [MeKong News](#) and [Khit Thit Media](#) (Figures 1 and 2) to around 19.669828, 96.889449.



Figure 1: Geolocation by Myanmar Witness of a medical facility affected by an airstrike to 19.669828, 96.889449. (Source: [MeKong News](#)).



Figure 2: Smoke at the same medical facility, potentially from an airstrike. (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

This structure shows signs of damage to the building consistent with an airstrike, including roof damage, a motorcycle on fire, damaged and overturned vehicles nearby, and heavy damage to the outer walls (Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3: Images showing damage to the structure. (Source: [Moby People Defense Force](#)).



Figure 4: Images showing roof damage at the same site. (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

In one image geolocated by Myanmar Witness (Figure 5), featuring heavy external damage, it is possible to see through the windows of the building and identify what appear to be beds and medical equipment, supporting the claim that this building is a medical facility.

Additional images claimed to be from inside the building, although unable to be geolocated by Myanmar Witness, show damage to medical equipment and roofing material on the floor, consistent with an explosion (Figure 6).

The damage shown in all of these images, particularly the heavy structural damage to the building, would be difficult to achieve using ground forces, giving support to the allegation that this was caused by an airstrike.



Figure 5: Image geolocated to the same area showing what appear to be beds and medical equipment inside the building. (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).



Figure 6: Unconfirmed images of the inside of the building, showing significant damage to roofing and medical equipment. (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

Myanmar Witness also geolocated footage from a source (who has not been identified here for privacy concerns) showing an IDP camp in Pekon, close to the medical facility, which is alleged to have been affected by the same airstrike (Figure 7).

In footage uploaded by [Khit Thit Media](#), claimed to show the aftermath of an airstrike, Myanmar Witness geolocated imagery of an older woman, who appears to have suffered injuries to the head, to the nearby IDP camp at 19.668927, 96.891276 (Figure 8). Myanmar Witness also identified images of a child with injuries to their head in this same post, but these images could not be geolocated.



Figure 7: Geolocation of imagery of the nearby IDP camp (left). Myanmar Witness used Sentinel-2 for more updated satellite imagery (top right, from 22 April 2023) as compared to the Google Earth imagery (bottom right), which had not been updated since an expansion of the camp.



Figure 8: Geolocation of image of a claimed airstrike victim (right) at the IDP camp located at 19.668927, 96.891276. Sentinel Hub imagery (bottom left) was taken from 22 April 2023. [Peakvisor](#) utilised for mountainscape confirmation (top left) (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

Munitions

Myanmar Witness has geolocated footage of a shell being dug up out of the ground next to the medical facility at 19.669768, 96.889202 (Figure 9). According to [Radio Free Asia](#), a Moby PDF member stated that a munition did not go off when it landed at the site, leading Myanmar Witness to believe that the shell shown in UGC images from the site (Figures 10a and 11) is the munition mentioned, as it is being dug up unexploded.

Myanmar Witness is unable at this time to identify the type and calibre of this munition, nor the weapon that uses it. However, Myanmar Witness strongly believes the imagery of the remnant in Figure 10b, allegedly recovered close to the location of the attack, to show part of a large-calibre air-delivered bomb.



Figure 9: Video footage of a munition being dug up next to the hospital (19.669768, 96.889202) (Source: Private).



Figures 10a and 10b: Munition remnants allegedly found at the site of the damaged medical facility (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#) and [Red Peacock News](#)).



Figure 11: Screenshots taken from the video of munitions being dug up (left and middle), as compared to the clear image of the munitions allegedly found at the site (right). These items look similar enough to likely place the munitions images in the location alleged. (Source: Private).

Future Monitoring

This attack on a medical facility in Pekon represents a concerning escalation of violence in Myanmar, particularly given the impact on civilians nearby, and demonstrates a disregard for civilian lives and infrastructure.

The indiscriminate and brutal nature of this event highlights the importance of continued monitoring. Myanmar Witness is continually investigating the conflict in Myanmar, in order to shed light on human rights interferences like this event.

If you have any additional information on this event, or others like it, please upload evidence [via our secure form](#) if safe to do so.

Abbreviations

Internally-displaced people
Karen Nationalities Defense Force
Karrenni National Progressive party
Myanmar Air Force
People's Defence Forces

IDP
KNDF
KNPP
MAF
PDF