

# Shwegu Township under fire

Fires, airstrikes and mass displacement reported in 13 villages

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 10 JULY 2023

## Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** 13 villages in Shwegu township (ရွှေကူ မြို့နယ်), Kachin state (ကချင်ပြည်နယ်)
  - Man Wein (မံဝိန်း) village [24.137754, 96.738591]
  - Si Thar (စီသာ) village [24.128808, 96.745465]
  - Man Nar (မံနား) village [24.126390, 96.745613]
  - Tone Kauk (တုံးကောက်) village [24.136419, 96.753562]
  - Si Thaung (စီသောင်) village [24.107611, 96.746033]
  - Man Hkar (မံခါး) village [24.117149, 96.737877]
  - Si Maw (စီမော်) village [24.136141, 96.719658]
  - Hing Kawng (ဟိန်ကောင်) village [24.131099, 96.724823]
  - Si Mu Gyi (စီမူကြီး) village [24.153250, 96.739304]
  - Si Mu Lay (စီမူလေး) village [24.149589, 96.732140]
  - Nam Lang (နန်လန်) village [24.157110, 96.719063]
  - Nawng Let Gyi (နောင်လက်ကြီး) village [24.162870, 96.723030]
  - Moe Kint (မိုးကင့်) village [24.131803, 96.711720]
- **Date/Time of Incident:**
  - 24 March 2023 - 11 April 2023
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:**
  - Light Infantry Division (LID) 88
    - Infantry Battalion (IB) 10, IB 77 under LID 88
  - Myanmar Air Force (MAF)
  - Kachin Independence Army (KIA)

- Shwegu People's Defense Force (PDF)
- **Summary of Investigation:**
  - Shwegu township is an area of known resistance and site of clashes between the local Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Shwegu People's Defense Force (PDF), and the military.
  - Multiple incidents were reported by social media users and local media in Shwegu between the end of March and mid-April including airstrikes, destruction of a medical facility, and ground battles.
  - Myanmar Witness has fully verified damage and destruction to structures in five villages through the geolocation of user-generated content (UGC).
  - Myanmar Witness partially verified fires in several other villages in Shwegu township between 24 March 2023 and 11 April 2023.
  - Myanmar Witness also investigated claims that these attacks have resulted in the death and displacement of civilians in the township but have been unable to verify these occurrences.

## Executive Summary

On 24 March 2023, it was alleged that Myanmar military forces clashed with KIA and PDF joint forces in Shwegu township, Kachin state. As a result of these clashes, which continued from 25 March 2023 to 11 April 2023, multiple villages - 13 were identified by Myanmar Witness - suffered air and ground attacks from the Myanmar military resulting in fires and the destruction of housing. Some villages experienced multiple fires within this time period.

Myanmar Witness verified, through geolocation and chronolocation of UGC and FIRMS data, fires in 13 villages in Shwegu township between 24 March and 11 April 2023. Media sources [reported](#) that 12 villages were affected during the clashes, but Myanmar Witness has also identified fires in Moe Kint village. This could indicate that 13 villages were affected..

Additionally, Myanmar Witness geolocated an alleged airstrike in Si Thar village; a site that the Shwegu PDF claimed the military had attacked. Myanmar Witness has geolocated additional footage which purports to show a medical facility having suffered damage akin to an airstrike attack in Si Thar village, suggesting that civilian infrastructure has been affected by the clashes in Shwegu. Myanmar Witness has identified content that indicates the presence of Myanmar military troops during and/or before the fires in Shwegu and around the affected area. Their presence was determined by cross-referencing location information from pro-Security Administration Council (SAC) media channels and social media claims related to SAC personnel presence and operations in the area.

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## Background and Context

Shwegu has [experienced](#) clashes between the military, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and local PDF since the military coup in February 2021. By June 2021, [Myanmar Peace Monitor](#) reported that roughly 6,000 civilians had fled from 42 locations in Mansi and Shwegu townships, Kachin state, due to clashes in the area. The Shwegu region borders three notably important conflict areas in Myanmar: Sagaing (part of the 'dry zone'), Kachin, and Shan (Figure 1).

Prior to the coup, Kachin was an area of prolonged internal conflict. Ethnic armed organisations have long sought autonomy over the state and control over its natural resources. Since the coup, the KIA has been one of the ethnic armed organisations [actively supporting](#) the development of armed resistance in the dry zone, such as Sagaing and Magway. In these areas, fighting between the PDF and the military is ongoing, with repeated claims that the military is targeting communities in areas of suspected PDF activity. Attacks impacting civilians have become more commonly reported and investigated by Myanmar Witness. For example, Myanmar Witness investigated an [airstrike on a concert](#) which reportedly killed over 80 people.



Figure 1: Shwegu township in relation to the three bordering regions of Sagaing, Kachin, and Shan. (Map created by Myanmar Witness).

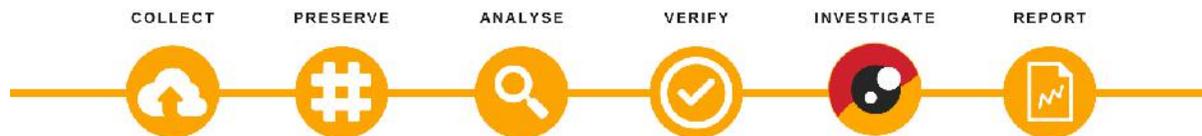
Multiple media organisations have reported on the destruction in Shwegu between 24 March 2023 and 11 April 2023. [Civilian houses](#) in Nam Lang village were allegedly destroyed due to clashes between local defence forces and the military on 24 March 2023. On 25 March, [BBC Burma](#) reported that airstrikes had taken place in the villages of Nam Lang, Man Wein and Si Thaug. On 30 March 2023, [Khit Thit Media](#) reported that the SAC cut the internet and phone connections in Shwegu township. The military has historically used internet shutdowns to quell opposition,

notably since taking power in [February 2021](#) and — as Myanmar Witness has previously reported on — during the following months of [anti-military protest](#). However, platforms such as Netblocks, OONI and IODA, which often report on communications blackouts, provide no indication that there was an internet shutdown, preventing Myanmar Witness from verifying these claims. Nevertheless, there is relatively little UGC associated with the fires in Shwegu, supporting the notion that some form of restriction on communication systems was in place.

Since 30 March 2023 — when it is alleged that the military cut the internet connection — several villages were reportedly attacked by the military using airstrikes and arson, including: [Man Wein](#), [Si Thar](#), [Tone Kauk](#), [Si Thaung](#), [Man Hkar](#), [Si Maw](#), [Nam Lang](#), and [Nawng Let Gyi](#). The media generally report clashes in 12 villages in Shwegu, which resulted in fires. Myanmar Witness has partially verified fires in a further six villages using low-resolution satellite imagery analysis and FIRMS: [Man Nar](#), [Hing Kawng](#), [Si Mu Gyi](#), [Si Mu Lay](#), and [Moe Kint](#).

## 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 the 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 in order to account for limitations with some of these methods. FIRMS and Sentinel are also utilised in the case of this investigation to attribute specific fires to dates where it has not been possible to chronolocate imagery.

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.

### Clustered data

Myanmar Witness began this investigation by identifying a cluster of fires in the Myanmar Witness fire monitoring data. Myanmar Witness observes, in many investigations, that some cases of fires happened in close proximity to one another over a period of days and online claims would occasionally suggest these fires were caused by the same group of military as one another (for example, a group of soldiers moving between multiple villages). Due to this, Myanmar Witness established 'clusters' to draw together data for analysis purposes and identify possibly interrelated separate FIRE numbers.

These 'clusters' were established when fire incidents occurred within 10 km and 3 days of another fire. The parameters are also a fairly short travelling distance within the timeframe which could capture patterns of individuals or groups responsible for fires - potentially the military - moving around the area. Gephi was used to identify and visually display the cluster of 13 villages in Shwegu township which had fires close together within a short timeframe.

## 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, of the internet - which has also restricted the amount of media available to be verified by Myanmar Witness. Myanmar Witness strives to eliminate as much of this bias as possible by using both focussed and broad search terms in multiple languages across open sources as well as identifying media from multiple sources, such as pro and anti-regime news and social media.

During this investigation, Myanmar Witness found a limited amount of UGC. The reportedly prolonged internet shutdown in the area could explain the lack of UGC identified in relation to the fires. Other factors, such as the reported fleeing of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the area, and safety concerns, could further explain a lack of associated UGC. As a result, Myanmar Witness has utilised open-source tools such as satellite imagery and FIRMS to partially verify the occurrence of fires in Shwegu township between 24 March 2023 and 11 April 2023.

While Myanmar Witness was able to verify the presence of fires in 13 villages using FIRMS, the process of geolocating UGC in order to corroborate FIRMS data and thus, enable verification, was only possible in three of the villages. Therefore, only three villages were given ‘fully verified’ status.

There are multiple claims of airstrikes, but Myanmar Witness could not collect geolocatable images within the timeframe investigated. Images of munitions surfaced, allegedly from Si Thaung village; however, the footage could not be geolocated by Myanmar Witness. Additionally, footage of IDP’s fleeing Shwegu could not be verified by Myanmar Witness at this time.

Myanmar Witness was unable to verify with confidence the actors responsible for the destruction or those involved in clashes. Information related to the actors was posted online by local media and social media users. Online sources claim that the MAF and LID 88 were responsible for the airstrikes and fires, respectively. Care has been taken to expressly state when information collected within this report represents a claim or allegation, in comparison to verified information.

# Location Map

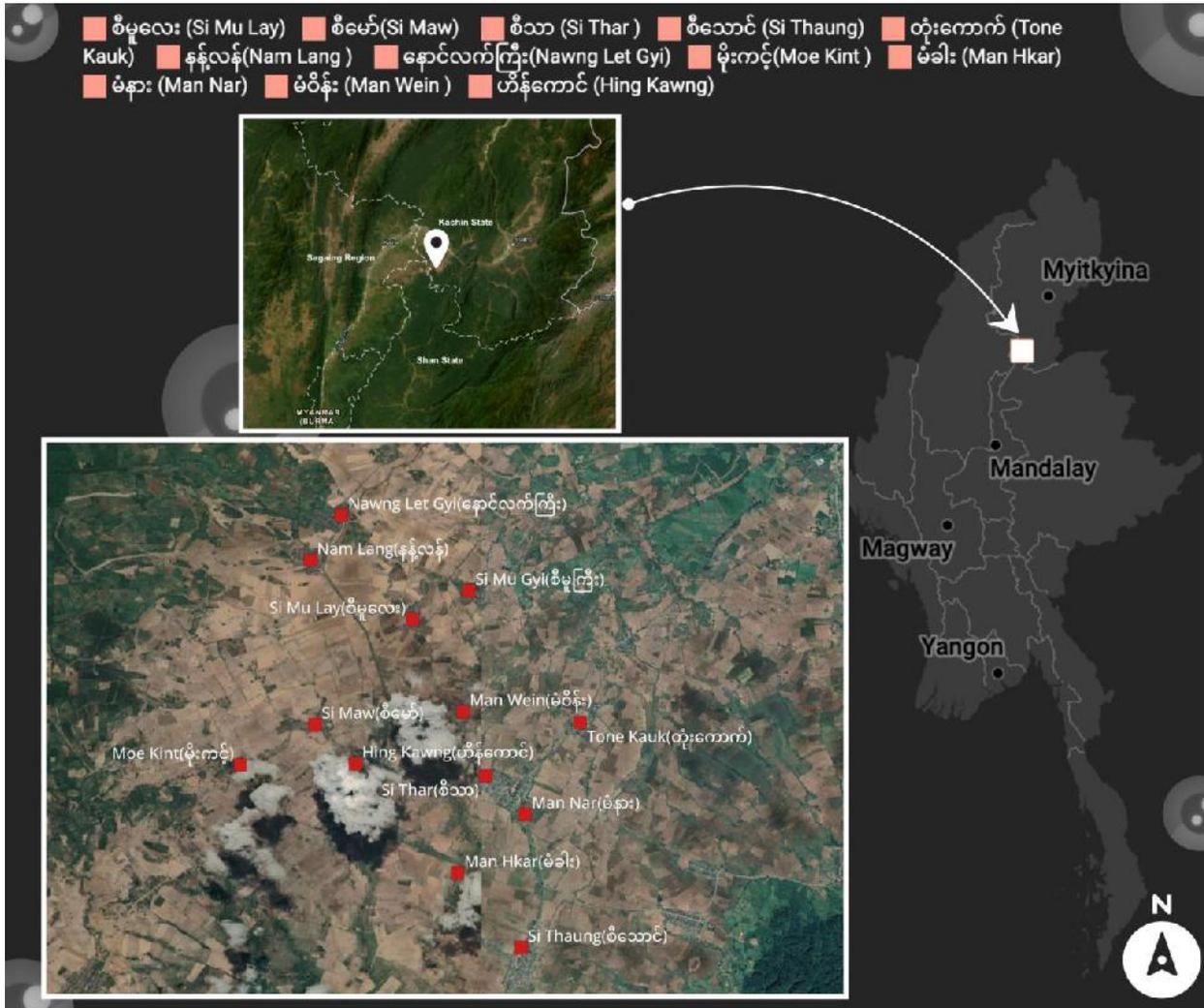


Figure 2: Map of verified fires in 13 villages in Shwegu during 24 March and 11 April 2023. Created with Datawrapper.

# Timeline of event

Timeline of events by Myanmar Witness

### 24 MARCH 2023

Clashes between the Myanmar military and joint KIA and PDF forces reported by the media.  
Fires reported in Nam Lang village.

### 29 MARCH 2023

Fires reported in Nam Lang, Nawng Let Gyi, and Si Mu Lay villages. MW verified fires in Nam Lang village. Over 30 civilians were allegedly arrested by the Myanmar military.

### 5 APRIL 2023

Myanmar military reportedly set Si Thar, Si Mu Gyi, and Si Mu Lay villages on fire. MW geolocated fire damage in Si Thar village, including damage to a medical facility at 24.128808, 96.745465.

### 8 APRIL 2023

MAF Airstrike allegedly hit Man Hkar and Si Thar villages. 10 civilians were reportedly arrested by the Myanmar military and killed. MW could not independently verify these claims.

**At least 21 separate clashes between the Myanmar military and KIA/PDF forces were reported by pro-military media MRTV between 23 March and 8 April 2023.**



**Myanmar Witness**

We collect evidence of human rights incidents in Myanmar to hold those responsible to account.

### 25 MARCH 2023

An airstrike allegedly hit Si Thaug and Man Wein villages. Myanmar Witness (MW) geolocated evidence of damage in Si Thaug village.

### 30 MARCH 2023

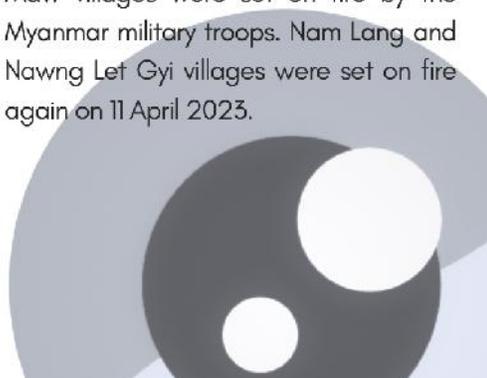
The MAF allegedly attacked Man Wein and Si Mu Lay villages. MW geolocated destruction in Man Wein village.

### 6 & 7 APRIL 2023

Khit Thit Media claimed that four fighter jets from Myitkyina Airport attacked Si Thaug and Tone Kauk villages. FIRMS detected multiple heat signatures in Si Thar, Man Nar and Tone Kauk village on 7 April 2023.

### 10 & 11 APRIL 2023

Mizzima reported that more than 100 houses in Si Thaug, Mankha, and Si Maw villages were set on fire by the Myanmar military troops. Nam Lang and Nawng Let Gyi villages were set on fire again on 11 April 2023.



## Myanmar Witness was able to verify:

- At least 13 villages suffered fire damage between 24 March and 11 April 2023.
  - The destruction of the villages was verified through the use of Sentinel satellite imagery.
  - The possible dates of fires were identified through FIRMS, which indicated that some villages may have been attacked multiple times.
- Four villages were badly affected by fire. The damage and destruction, as shown by UGC, was geolocated to: Si Thaug, Man Wein, Si Thar, and Nawng Let Gyi villages. Some structural damage was also verified in Man Nar village allegedly due to airstrikes.
- A building in Si Thar, allegedly a medical facility, was badly damaged during the timeframe investigated.

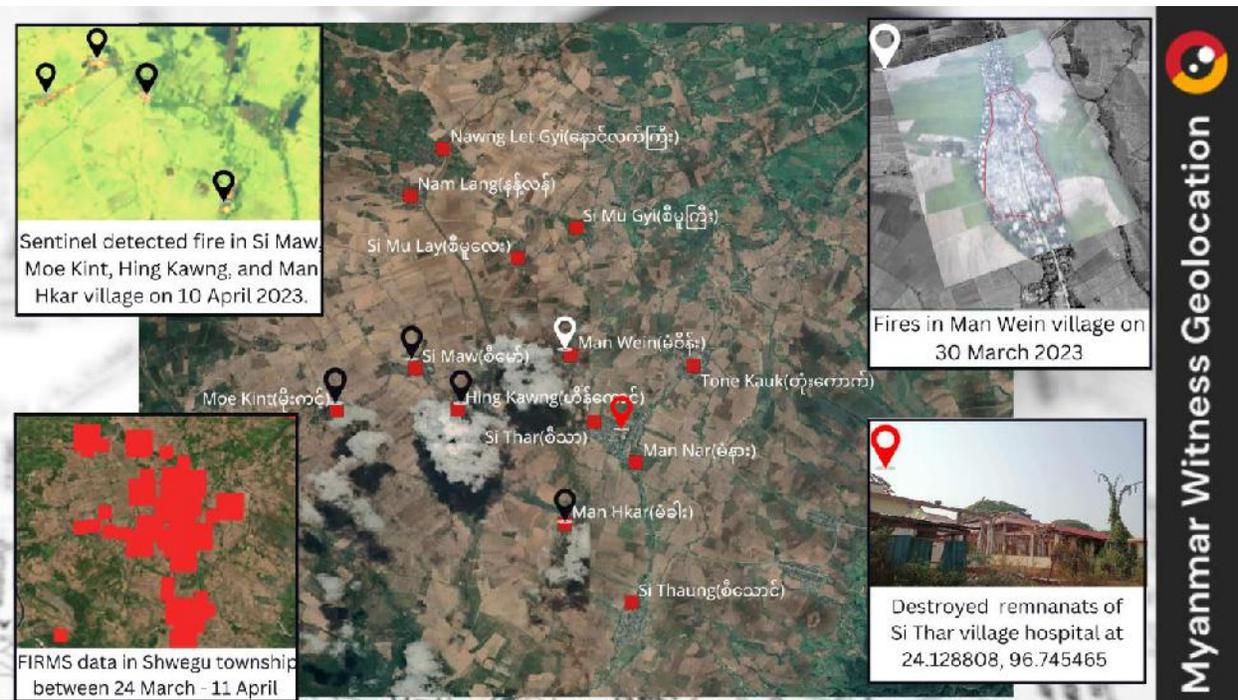


Figure 3: Graphic of incidents in Shwegu from 24 March - 11 April 2023. Sentinel and FIRMS were used to confirm locations and dates for 13 separate villages experiencing fires. Myanmar Witness geolocated damage to an alleged medical facility in Si Thar (red marker) and huge destruction in Man Wein (white marker), as well as several instances of active fires on the days alleged on Sentinel (black markers) (source of bottom right image: [People Defense Force - Shwegu](#)).

## The investigation walkthrough

Myanmar Witness identified a cluster of fires in Shwegu township using the Myanmar Witness fire database, which were then verified using FIRMS and Sentinel. Following this, Myanmar Witness conducted an investigation to identify related UGC and reports via social media channels and official media sources, which led to further verification of the impact of the fires and destruction in five of the villages.

Myanmar Witness cannot verify the exact number of houses destroyed due to the limited UGC and information. Multiple media sources claimed that the military were the single perpetrator responsible for the fires, setting them intentionally throughout the clashes with the KIA and PDF in the area. Myanmar Witness has been unable to verify these claims. Despite this, Myanmar Witness confirmed that fire incidents in Shwegu township were consistent with the locations where clashes between the military, KIA, and PDF were reported.

The following section will provide information related to fires in the 13 villages. Fire incidents in five villages were classified as 'fully verified' as Myanmar Witness was able to identify and geolocate UGC associated with the fires and the destruction they caused (as per Myanmar Witness' methodology). Incidents in the remaining villages were 'partially verified' using FIRMS and Sentinel data. Despite the verification of fire incidents and the resultant destruction, in all cases there is no evidence to conclusively say that the military was responsible.

Lastly, the impact of the fires and clashes in the township was investigated, including the displacement and deaths of individuals.

## Verification of fire incidents via FIRMS and Sentinel

Between [24 March and 11 April 2023](#), FIRMS registered fires in 13 villages in Shwegu, consistent with the dates of the fires reported on social media (Figure 4).

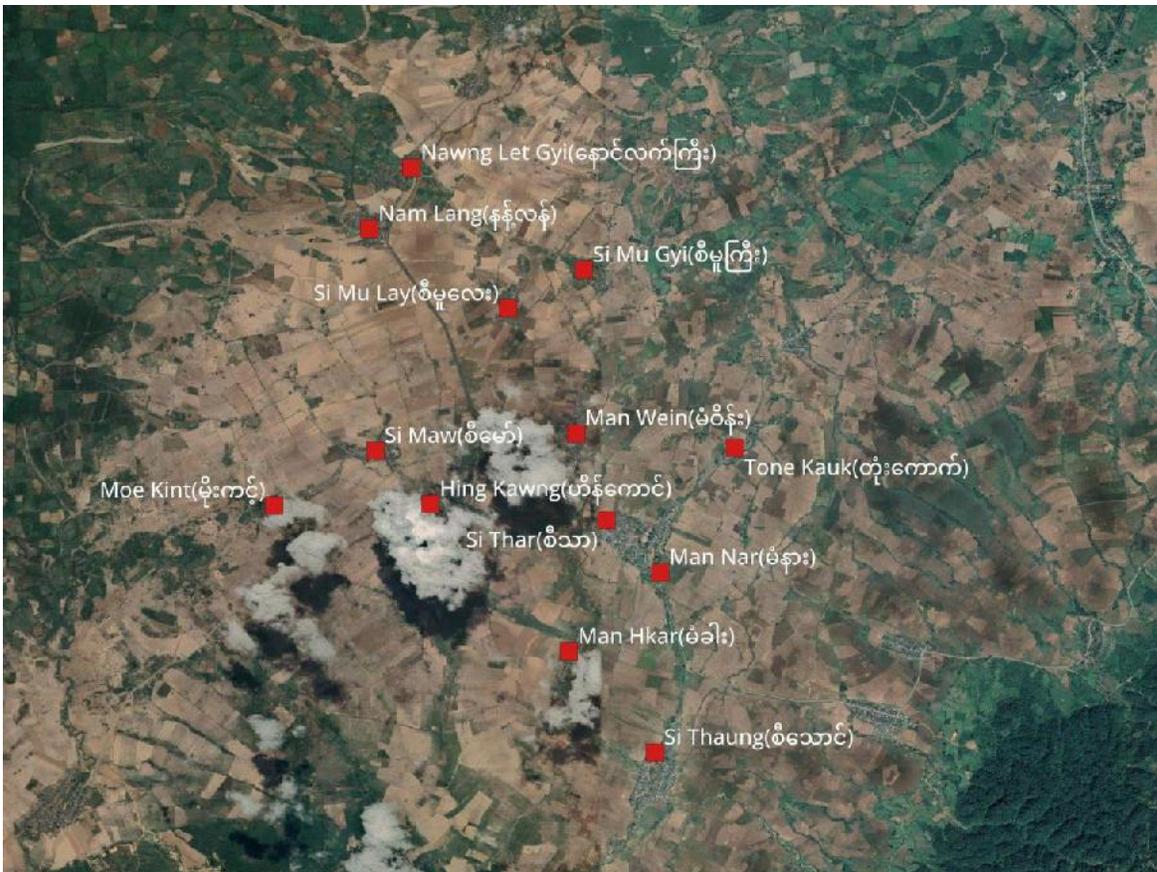
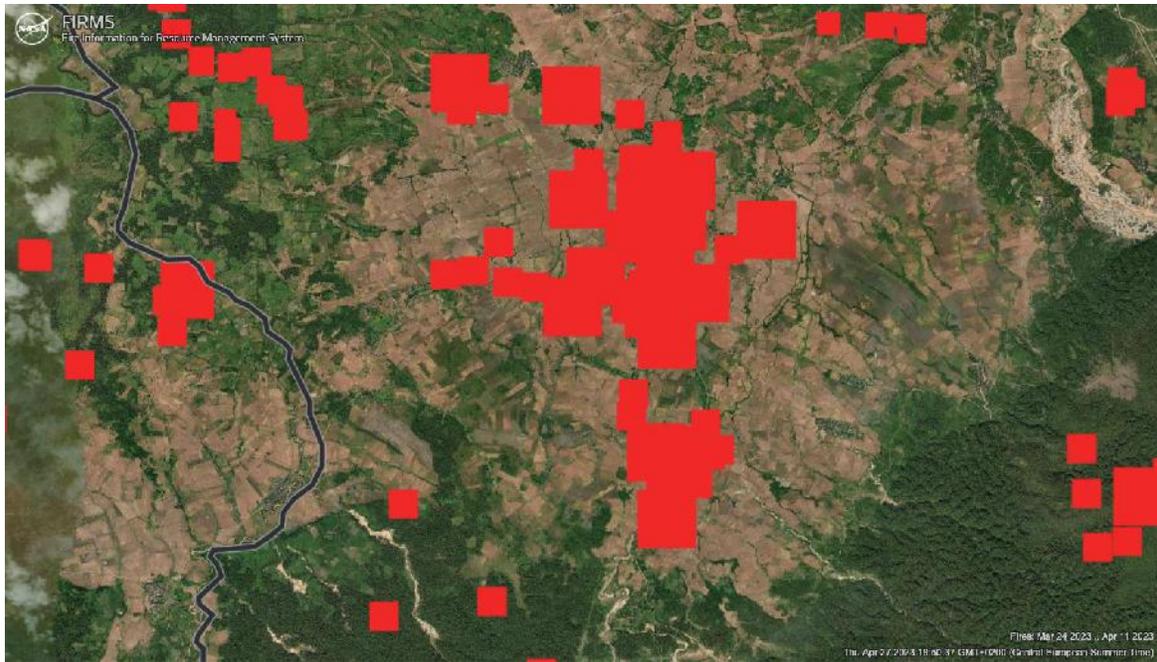


Figure 4: [FIRMS](#) identified fires in 13 villages in Shwegu (top). Mapped by Myanmar Witness (bottom, Google Earth), between 24 March and 11 April 2023.

Myanmar Witness analysed satellite imagery from these locations and confirmed that the 13 villages had suffered from fire damage. Satellite imagery from [20 April 2023](#) (nine days after the clashes reportedly ended) demonstrates destruction in each village, some of which is considerable.

Despite there being no related UGC of Si Maw, Hing Kawng, and Man Nar from 10 April 2023 to allow for the further verification of fires through geolocation, Myanmar Witness identified parts of these villages which appear to have active fires at the time when Sentinel satellite imagery was taken. This can be seen using Sentinel’s false colour filter on [10 April 2023](#) (Figure 7).

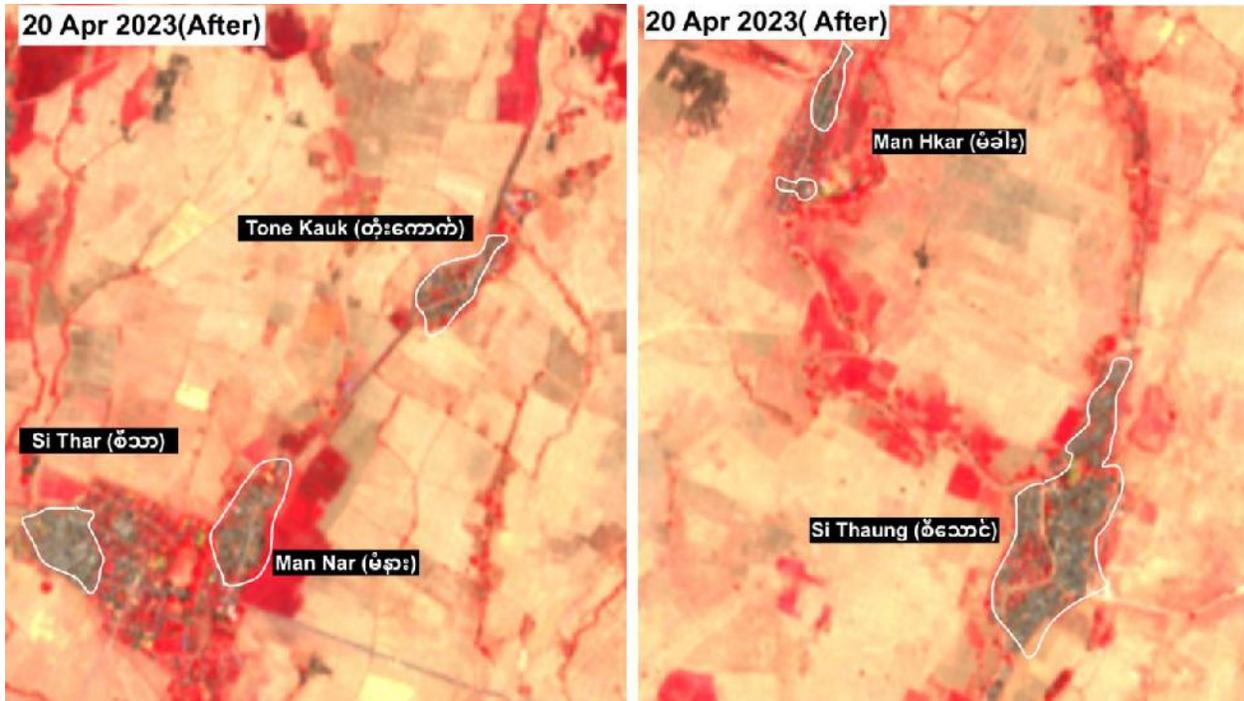


Figure 5: The visible destruction in [Si Thar](#), [Tone Kauk](#), [Man Nar](#), [Man Hkar](#), and [Si Thaung](#) as of 20 April 2023, using Sentinel Urban False Colour.



Figure 6: The visible destruction in [Man Wein](#), [Si Mu Gyi](#), [Si Mu Lay](#), [Si Maw](#), [Moe Kint](#), [Hing Kawng](#), [Nam Lang](#), and [Nawng Let Gyi](#) as of 20 April 2023 using Sentinel Urban False Colour.

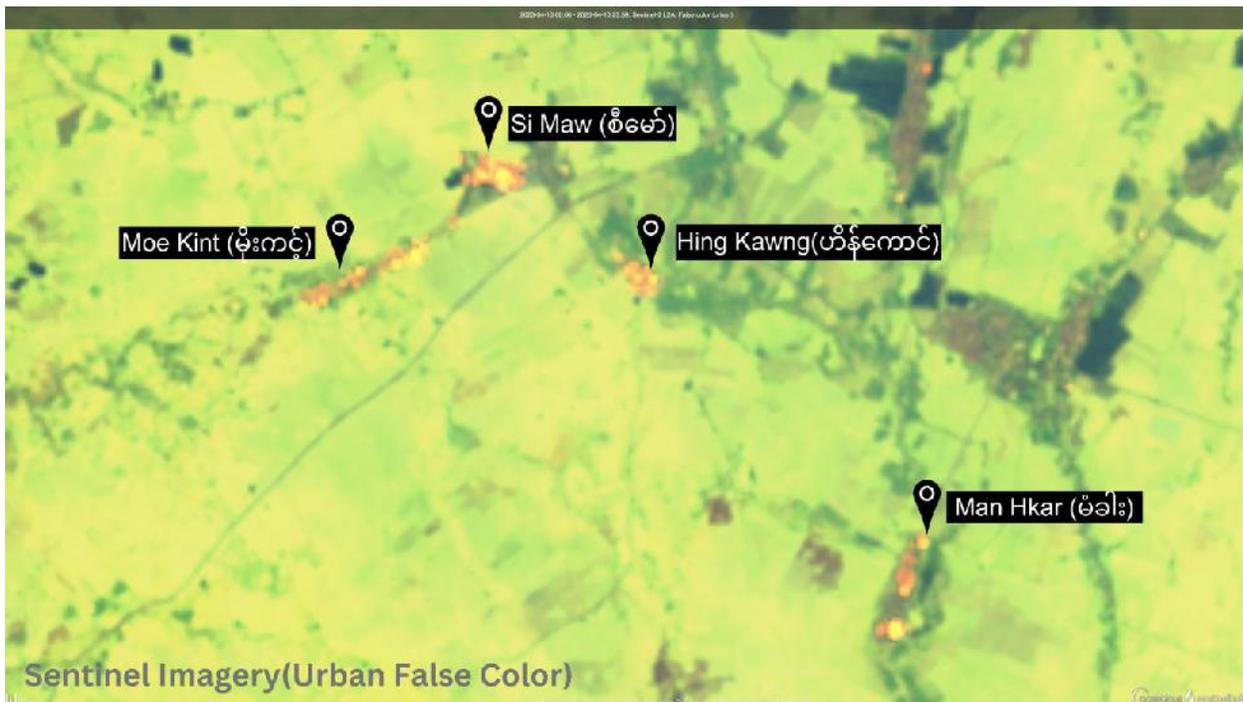


Figure 7: Active fires were captured on Sentinel's Urban False Colour on [10 April 2023](#) in Si Maw, Moe Kint, Si Maw, Hing Kawng, and Man Hkar.

### Date and location of the fires identified via FIRMS

Village Name	Date of fire (FIRMS)	Coordinates
Nam Lang (နန်လန်)	<a href="#">29 March</a> , <a href="#">11 April</a>	24.157110, 96.719063
Si Mu Gyi (စီမူကြီး)	<a href="#">30 March</a>	24.153249, 96.739303
Man Wein (မံဝိုင်း)	<a href="#">30 March</a> , <a href="#">3 April</a> , <a href="#">9 April</a>	24.137754, 96.738591
Si Mu Lay (စီမူလေး)	<a href="#">5 April</a>	24.149589, 96.732139
Si Thar (စီသာ)	<a href="#">5 April</a> , <a href="#">7 April</a> , <a href="#">8 April</a>	24.128808, 96.745465
Man Nar (မံနား)	<a href="#">7 April</a> , <a href="#">8 April</a>	24.126390, 96.745613
Tone Kauk (တုံးကောက်)	<a href="#">7 April</a>	24.136419, 96.753562
Si Thaug (စီသောင်)	<a href="#">9 April</a>	24.107611, 96.746033
Man Hkar (မံခါး)	<a href="#">10 April</a>	24.117149, 96.737876
Hing Kawng (ဟိန်ကောင်)	<a href="#">10 April</a>	24.131099, 96.724823
Si Maw (စီမော်)	<a href="#">10 April</a>	24.136140, 96.719657
Moe Kint (မိုးကင့်)	<a href="#">10 April</a>	24.130970, 96.710113
Nawng Let Gyi (နောင်လက်ကြီး)	<a href="#">11 April</a>	24.162870, 96.723030

## Fires in five villages further verified using UGC

### Si Thaung

Si Thaung village reportedly experienced fires more than once within the investigative timeframe. For example, the media reported the first fire on 25 March, however FIRMS didn't detect fire signatures that day. On the same day, a [Shwegu Facebook page](#) and the [BBC](#) posted images allegedly showing the aftermath of military attacks in Si Thaung, Si Mu Lay, and Man Wein. Myanmar Witness geolocated the images (Figure 8) to Si Thaung at 24.105928, 96.748044.

Although there were claims of airstrikes in the area, the images posted by the [Shwegu Facebook page](#) are inconclusive. While some show destruction that is consistent with airstrike damage — houses have been completely destroyed with parts of the roofing and fencing broken — other images appear to show burnt flooring and material that could indicate fires where the houses were destroyed (Figure 9). Despite images of destruction to buildings, Myanmar Witness cannot fully verify the claims of an airstrike due to the lack of geolocatable features or verifiable evidence in these images, particularly of aircraft or munitions in the area.

FIRMS detected heat signatures on 9 April; this is consistent with the destruction Myanmar Witness identified using Sentinel satellite imagery on 20 April. [Sentinel imagery](#) from 20 April 2023 shows ground changes, suggesting potential fire damage to Si Thaung. This indicates that the village could have been the site of clashes more than once between 24 March 2023 and 11 April 2023.



Figure 8: Footage of destroyed likely school building and motorcycles, geolocated to Si Thaung [24.107351, 96.745435] (source: [Myitkyina News Journal](#)).



Figure 9: Footage of destroyed houses, geolocated to Si Thaug [24.105928, 96.748044] (source: [Social Punishment Shwequ](#)).

## Man Wein

On 30 March 2023, [Mandalay Free Press](#) reported on an airstrike in Man Wein and claimed that almost the entire village was burned down after the airstrike. The military allegedly set fire to the village by hand.

[FIRMS](#) registered a fire at around 0844 on 30 March 2023 in Man Wein. Myanmar Witness geolocated [PDF drone footage](#) that reveals that almost the whole of Man Wein was damaged by fire. Myanmar Witness geolocated this drone footage to around 24.137754, 96.738591. Using Google Earth's measurement tool, Myanmar Witness estimates that a 60 m squared area of Man Wein was destroyed, as shown in the drone footage. This coincides with the [Sentinel](#) satellite imagery burn mark visible the day after the event on 31 March 2023 (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Google Earth and an image layer from the PDF drone footage, with FIRMS imagery from [30 March](#) (bottom left) and Sentinel imagery from [31 March](#) 2023 (right) at 24.137754, 96.738591.

### Si Thar and Man Nar

On 5 April 2023, the anti-military group [Red Peacock](#) media reported that Si Thar was hit by an airstrike, resulting in the destruction of the village’s hospital and fire damage to the adjoining village of Man Nar (Figure 11). FIRMS data shows multiple heat signatures in Si Thar and Man Nar villages on [5 Apr 2023](#), consistent with [media](#) claims that the military attacked these villages on these days. Both villages also appear to have suffered significant burn damage, evident through changes to ground coverage as identified using [Sentinel](#) imagery (dated 20 April 2023).

[Shwegu PDF](#) posted footage on 6 April 2023, purporting to show the aftermath of the airstrike on the medical facility which Myanmar Witness geolocated to 24.128808, 96.745465 (Figure 12). Myanmar Witness also geolocated images of destruction to Man Nar village. Limited UGC showing the aircraft or munitions has made it difficult for Myanmar Witness to confirm the airstrike. Despite this, the damage to structures in Si Thar and Man Nar appears to be consistent with an air attack: buildings suffered structural damage (especially to roofing). Additionally, [images](#) posted online by Shwegu PDF indicate that there was fire damage and active fires.



Figure 11: Geolocated footage of active fires in Si Thar at 24.126099, 96.743182 (source: [Red Peacock Media](#)).



Figure 12: Geolocation of the alleged medical facility destroyed in Si Thar at 24.128808, 96.745465 (source: [Red Peacock Media](#)).



Figure 13: Geolocated footage of Man Nar at 24.127086, 96.745625 (source: [Red Peacock Media](#)).

## Nawng Let Gyi

On 11 April 2023, [Mizzima](#) reported that the military set fire to Nam Lang and Nawng Let Gyi (for the second time). FIRMS also detected high heat signatures around Nam Lang on [11 April 2023](#). Myanmar Witness analysed [Sentinel imagery](#) (taken on 20 April 2023) and confirmed that both villages suffered significant ground changes which are consistent with burn damage.

Myanmar Witness also identified and verified UGC from Nawng Let Gyi village, confirming the extent of the destruction (uploaded by a private account and the source has been redacted due to privacy concerns).



Figure 14: Geolocated footage of destroyed houses in Nawng Let Gyi village at 24.162724,96.721197 (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).

## Displacement and Victims

### Clashes causing displacement

On 23 March 2023, [The 74 Media](#) reported that thousands of residents from the western side of Shwegu were seen fleeing Shwegu township at around 0800 local time, as the military was reportedly using heavy weapons in the area. Similarly, on 17 April 2023, [Kachin News Group](#) reported that around 10,000 people had fled Shwegu, with more than half of them living in

surrounding jungles, where emergency medical aid and food were needed. Individuals supporting IDPs from Shwegu told the [Kachin News Group](#) that IDPs feared returning to villages in southeast Shwegu due to concerns about the military’s return.

At the time of reporting, Myanmar Witness has not identified verifiable footage of IDP movement from the township. It’s likely that internet shutdowns and ongoing conflict could have hampered the documentation and reporting of these events. As such, these claims have not, as of yet, been verified.

## Deceased individuals

[PCT](#) reported at least 17 known KIA/PDF soldiers were killed by the military during the clashes. On 19 April 2023, [RFA](#) also reported on casualties of the clashes, including that the bodies of ten individuals were found after the military convoy left Shwegu. The victims’ names and ages were shared online. The casualties reportedly aged between 22-60 years old. RFA also noted that these individuals had sustained injuries to their throats and gunshot wounds. [MRTV](#) uploaded images of three deceased individuals allegedly killed during the clashes; two of which were wearing military fatigues. The MRTV post alleged that these individuals were KIA/PDF personnel killed during clashes in the area. Myanmar Witness could not identify images of all of the deceased individuals.



*Figures 15: Images of deceased individuals alleged to be KIA/PDF soldiers killed during clashes with the military in Shwegu. (Left picture appears to show individuals in civilian clothes, while on the right shows an individual in a uniform). (Source: [MRTV](#)).*



Figure 16: Pro-military account uploaded pictures of an alleged KIA/PDF bunker in Shwegu. (Source: [MRTV](#)).

## Graffiti

Mandalay Free Press released [images](#) online allegedly showing messages left on structures within Shwegu (although the specific village or location remains unknown). These messages contain profanities directed against the KIA and PDF (Figure 17). Myanmar Witness has [reported](#) on similar graffiti in other sites of conflict and have largely been considered an intimidation tactic.



Figure 17: Messages against the KIA and PDF allegedly appeared on structures in Shwegu during clashes between the military and local defence forces. The text reads (left) "Fuck you KIA, are you happy guys?", and (right) "Fuck you, PDF and civilians". (Source: [Mandalay Free Press](#))

## Munitions

During the course of the investigation, Myanmar Witness analysed a video posted by local residents on Facebook on 12 April 2023, in which they claim that munitions from a military aircraft had been found in Si Thaug.

Myanmar Witness cannot identify with certainty the type and model of the filmed ordnance nor the system that delivered it. At the same time, Myanmar Witness has identified some noteworthy details – reported below – which allow for an overall assessment that the ordnance filmed in the video was highly likely delivered by an aircraft.

In the video, seven pieces of ordnance are visible. The seven pieces of ordnance appear to be identical apart from one, which has an additional tail kit with fins section still partly attached (Figure 19). Myanmar Witness believes that it is highly likely that the other six pieces of ordnance belong to the same model as the seventh but lack the additional tail kit, which may have been lost during flight or impact.



*Figure 19: The presence of screws on the first munition from the bottom suggests that a tail kit may have been initially attached. (Source: Private)*

The seven pieces of ordnance appearing in the footage appear to be of a calibre larger than 60mm. This was estimated by Myanmar Witness based on the calibre of the first round (a mortar round) visible in frame on the right of the video (Figure 20).



Figure 20: 60mm mortar round on the right of the image (Source: Redacted due to privacy concerns).

The presence of add-on tail kits strongly suggests these rounds were re-purposed to be employed by aircraft. At the same time, the lack of suspension lugs on all of the bombs' bodies indicates that these rounds could not have been attached to any aircraft pylons. The possibility that these rounds were fired by a rocket pod must be excluded, given the absence of a rocket motor and the fixed tail fins. For these reasons Myanmar Witness strongly believes that these seven rounds may in fact be sub-munitions, released mid-air by a larger, cargo-type bomb.

An additional element which corroborates this thesis is the strong resemblance between the only surviving tail kit found in Shwegu township with other add-on tail kits allegedly found in the Kokang region of Shan State – following SAC airstrikes – and posted on Facebook on 28 December 2022 (shown below). On that occasion the add-on kits were found together with a large container-type bomb.



Figure 21: remnants or air-dropped munitions, allegedly found in the Kokan region (Source: Khit Thit Media)

## Conclusion

Myanmar Witness investigated a cluster of 13 fires in Shwegu township between 24 March 2023 and 11 April 2023. These fires coincided with claims online that the military was active in the area. All 13 fires were confirmed using FIRMS and sentinel satellite imagery, and five of the fires were further verified following the geolocation of UGC of the fire damage. As a result, Myanmar Witness is confident that multiple fires occurred in villages in Shwegu around the time clashes were taking place in the area.

Myanmar Witness has also identified several allegations of airstrikes and claims related to munitions found in these attacks. It is claimed online that LID 88 and the Myanmar Air Force were responsible, causing destruction to medical facilities and close to places of worship. While this could not be verified, the munitions found were consistent with those used in other Myanmar Air Force attacks.

This investigation has highlighted the destruction of civilian infrastructure and identified claims related to the mass displacement of individuals from the township as well as human casualties. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor claims related to the human toll of fires.

## Abbreviations

Ethnic Armed Organization/Ethnic Resistance Organisation	EAO/ERO
Fire Information for Resource Management System	FIRMS
Kachin Independence Army	KIA
People's Defense Forces	PDF
Local Defense Forces	LDF
Myanmar Air Force	MAF
State Administration Council	SAC
User Generated Content	UGC