



MYANMAR WITNESS

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SHWE KOKKO: A CRACKDOWN UNDER SCRUTINY

Examining Inconsistencies In Myanmar Military's
Reported Demolition Campaign

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10 August 2026

DIGITAL SAFETY NOTE: Some pro-military media sources are referenced throughout this report; please consider using a VPN for access.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 25 May 2026, the Myanmar military government announced a crackdown on Shwe Kokko, a known scam compound. The operation was carried out by the Myanmar military with support from the Karen National Army (KNA), formerly the Karen Border Guard Force (KBGF). State media reported that 77 out of the 322 buildings identified as illegal were targeted for demolition, with the operation continuing until 26 July 2026.

Myanmar Witness analysed the 'crackdown' series and found that although the state's official narrative and visuals did broadly align with the demolitions to begin with, from July 2026 a number of discrepancies were identified when compared with available evidence. This includes differences between reported and geolocated building locations, changes to roofs and structure heights ahead of demolitions, and the use of AI-edited imagery.

In order to understand the state's measures and plans for its operation, Myanmar Witness also reviewed three official state media statements written in English, as well as one statement given by the KNA.

These statements provided a narrative to minimise responsibility and shift blame onto other actors, while emphasising the scale of the state's action. With the narrative and visual evidence presented together, it raises questions about how far this operation was aimed at actually dismantling scam networks in the country, and how its intentions were to project this appearance of showing a decisive action towards domestic and international audiences.

Although this report examines the demolition within Shwe Kokko, it is less about proving that every building destroyed was or was not connected to scam activity, but rather about highlighting that the state's official narrative and its visuals of the crackdown are not consistently supported by the available evidence.

2 BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 SHWE KOKKO'S RISE

Shwe Kokko has developed quickly over a few years, and is now widely connected with organised crime, online scam activities as well as human trafficking. In December 2016, Chinese businessman She Zhijiang signed an [agreement](#) with the then leader of the Karen Border Guard Force (KBGF), officially rebranded as the Karen National Army (KNA), Saw Chit Thu (also known as San Myint), to develop what was presented as a new special economic zone (SEZ). She Zhijiang would [provide](#) the funding and Chinese infrastructure, and the KBGF would provide security. The project later became known as 'Yatai New City'.

In 2017, new companies were formed between She Zhijiang and KBGF leaders. With this, the Myanmar government reportedly [provided](#) 68 acres of land to the KBGF for commercial development, including the Shwe Kokko Myaing town area. [Myanmar Yatai International Holding Group Company Limited](#) (Myanmar Yatai) was one of the main businesses running this operation (figure 1). In 2018, Myanmar Yatai received a special investment commission permit from the Myanmar government to build high-end villas in Shwe Kokko, approving \$22.5 million in investment.

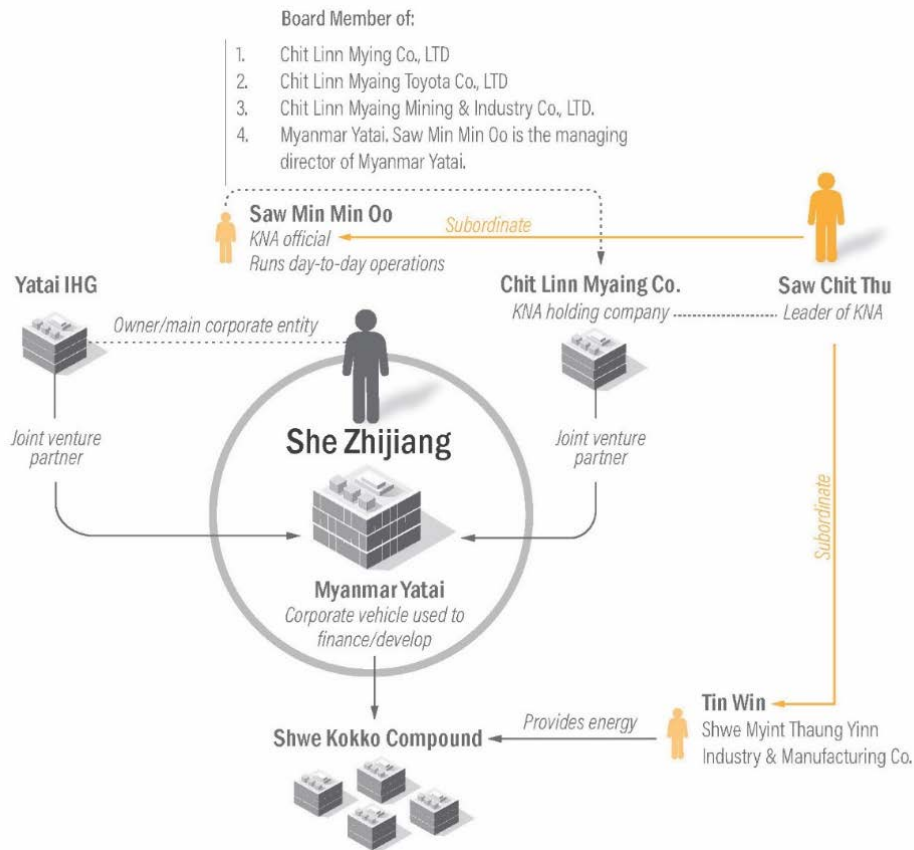


Figure 1: A visual from a US Treasury press release showing the relationship and dynamics of actors and businesses tied to Shwe Kokko, highlighting the close ties (Source: [United States Department of the Treasury](#)).

On 16 June 2020, the Myanmar government launched an [investigation](#) into Myanmar Yatai and its activities in Shwe Kokko. This included illegal casinos and [breaches](#) of investment regulations.

Despite this, the project continued to develop after the February 2021 coup, with the KBGF reportedly securing a [deal](#) with the Myanmar military to allow the ongoing development of the scam compound in return for military support.

2.2 KEY ACTORS

Shwe Kokko's development over the years has been dictated by a group of actors and units whose roles altered as the site expanded; despite these changes, they still remained closely linked to the same power structure.

One of the most important actors is Saw Chit Thu, who transferred from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) to the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and later became the leader of the KBGF. In 2024, the KBGF [rebranded](#) as the Karen National Army (KNA) and said it would no longer rely on support or facilities from the Myanmar military. Reports at the time described this move as a shift toward [independence and peacebuilding](#); however, the transition still appears to

have been uneven, with KNA soldiers still seen wearing KBGF badges and uniforms.

She Zhijiang, who helped with the launch of the Yatai New City project with Saw Chit Thu, was [arrested](#) in Thailand in August 2022, for running illegal online gambling operations. He [denied](#) any intentional personal wrongdoing and accused China of turning against him after he acted under their instruction to build in the Myanmar region. She Zhijiang was held in Thailand until his [extradition](#) to China on 12 November 2025.

A [BBC](#) interview from February 2025 suggests that operational control was then transferred to He Yingxiong, who denied the existence of scam activities and stated the company was a property developer. Myanmar Witness is unaware of any leadership changes in the Yatai New City Project, suggesting that He Yingxiong still likely leads business operations.

Furthermore, what is important to highlight regarding the KBGF's rebrand as the KNA is that the names may have changed and yet the control history remained closely connected to Shwe Kokko and its associated actors.

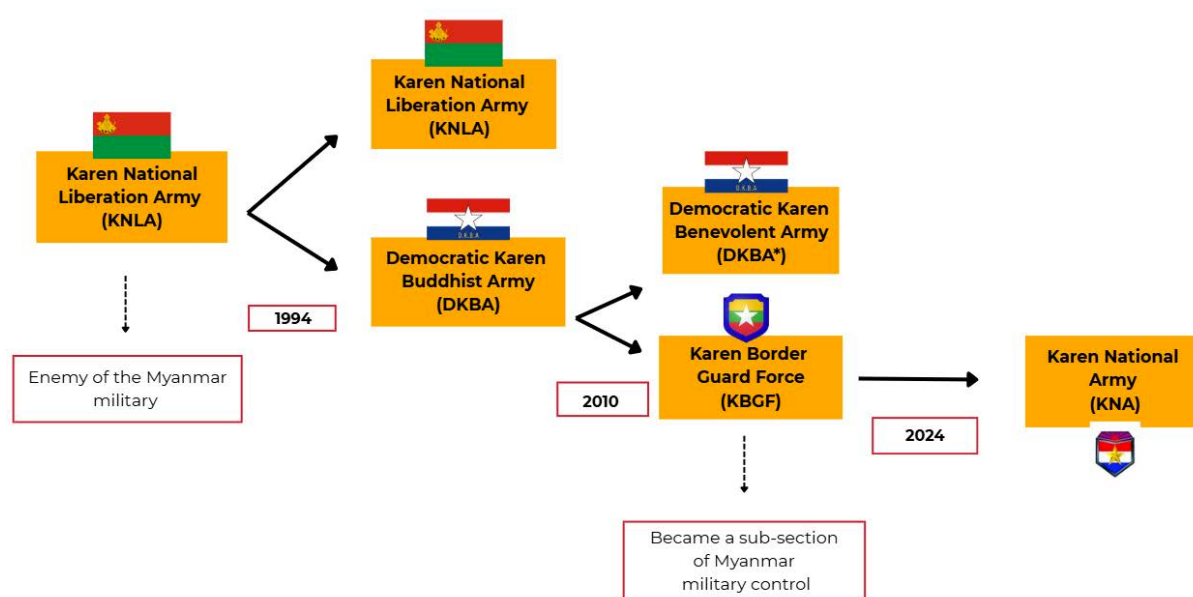


Figure 2: A timeline showing the evolution of the different armed groups. (A Myanmar Witness visual).

The KNU and its military faction, the KNLA, continue to hold territory in parts of Kayin State, formerly known as Karen State, alongside areas controlled by the DKBA and KNA. Tensions between armed groups appear to remain fluid, but current reporting indicates that many of the scam operations in Kayin State are found to be in KNA- and DKBA-controlled areas. It is important to note that one reported location in Kayin State is tied to the KNLA.

The history of these groups is complex, and some media reports continue to refer to the KNA as the KBGF. For clarity, this report uses the term KNA when referring to the group's activities since its 2024 rebrand, even where source reporting uses its previous name.

2.3 NEW ANTI-ONLINE SCAM BILL

On 14 May 2026, the military government's national newspaper, The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM), announced a new [Anti-Online Scam Bill](#), and the military parliament then [approved it](#) on 28 July 2026 (figure 3). The bill, which consists of 13 chapters, includes measures on web monitoring and banking activity as well as introducing extreme penalties tied to certain roles within these scam operations. Human Rights groups, including [Human Rights Myanmar](#), have highlighted several issues with the bill, describing it as:

'...not a genuine response to cybercrime, but a repressive tool of military control. Framed as an anti-scam law, it expands mass surveillance, censorship, arbitrary asset seizures, and disproportionate punishment...'



Figure 3: A screenshot of the Global New Light of Myanmar's (GNLM) announcement of the Anti-Online Scam Bill on 14 May 2026. The 13 chapters are highlighted (Source: [GNLM](#)).

This bill is vital to highlight in this report, as it forms part of the state's broader public narrative, which is addressed in the next section. It sets out a visible public state response to scam activity, but raises questions around its scope and its implementation.

3 OFFICIAL STATE NARRATIVES

Since November 2025, the military government and the KNA (referred to by their previous name, KBGF, in reporting) have published three statements describing action against scam operations at Shwe Kokko specifically. These official statements (one by the KNA and two by the military government) are important to highlight because they show how this particular operation was framed to a wider audience.

- On 17 November 2025, a KNA [statement](#) announced it would take part “in the fight to eliminate cyber scams”. DVB quoted KNA spokesperson Naing Maung Zaw, who denied involvement in criminal activity, and said it was merely leasing land.
- On 29 March 2026, the [military](#) government announced their plans for a national crackdown against scam operations while also blaming the KNU for ‘sheltering’ scam activity in their areas, including in KK Park and Shwe Kokko.
- On 26 May 2026, the military government [statement](#) focused on the Shwe Kokko demolition plans.

Taken together, these statements demonstrate messaging around state action, minimisation of responsibility, and redirection of blame. Although these statements cannot prove deception, it does highlight a need for scrutiny of the evidence behind these claims cited.

3.1 NARRATIVE CLAIMS

3.1.1 DENYING AWARENESS

The KNA spokesperson, Naing Maung Zaw, told [DVB](#) that “the war against the [scam operations] has just begun”. In the same statement, he also denied KNA involvement in scam operations, stating that the group was only leasing land and not involved in criminal activity. This claim signifies a lack of alignment between the KNA’s history and its business links, legal scrutiny involving Shwe Kokko and sanctions involving associated actors such as Saw Chit Thu.

Below is a list of relevant public actions and sanctions on individuals and entities tied to scam operations in Shwe Kokko specifically:

- She Zhijiang - [UK Sanctions](#) on 7 December 2023 for human trafficking, inhumane treatment and forced labour tied to scam businesses.
- Saw Chit Thu - [UK Sanctions](#) on 7 December 2023 for supporting human trafficking, inhumane treatment and forced labour tied to scam businesses.

- Saw Chit Thu, Tin Win, and Mote Thone - [EU Sanctions](#) on 22 October 2024 for human rights violations tied to scam compounds. Also highlights a business: Chit Linn Myaing Group (CLM).
- KNA, Saw Chit Thu, Saw Htoo Eh Moo and Saw Chit Chit - [US Sanctions](#) on 5 May 2025, "...for their role in facilitating cyber scams that harm U.S. citizens, human trafficking, and cross-border smuggling". Saw Htoo Eh Moo and Saw Chit Chit are Saw Chit Thu's sons.
- She Zhijiang and eight other targets operating in Shwe Kokko - [US Sanctions](#) on 8 September 2025 tied to scam centre operations.
- Mote Thone - [Thai official arrest warrant](#) on 27 July 2026, for human trafficking, drug trafficking, and operating online scam networks.

It is also important to mention that many reported [arrests](#) in Myanmar have involved foreign nationals at lower- and mid-level positions in these scam compounds, with no mention of the main organisers. Although this finding does not alone disprove the KNA statement on 17 November 2025, it suggests that this type of public narrative focuses on visible arrests, rather than on higher-level responsibility regarding scam operations in Shwe Kokko.

3.1.2 BLAMING THE KNU

The military's March 2026 [statement](#) blamed the KNU as the perpetrators for sheltering scam operation crimes in KK Park and Shwe Kokko. They even refer to the KNU as "terrorists", which they legally [designated](#) as of August 2025. However, the KNU does not have control over Shwe Kokko; the KNA (formerly KBGF) does.

The KNU has been accused in various reports of having ties to [Huanya International City Project](#) and [KK Park](#), through leasing land and project approval arrangements. KNU released a statement in May 2023 stating it would investigate allegations that some of its senior members were involved in these projects. However, it later said that the matter remained under review. Although these examples are distinct from Shwe Kokko, they are relevant because they illustrate why the military's narrative blaming the KNU for scam activity in Shwe Kokko is misaligned with the current on-the-ground control structure.

Furthermore, as stated, other armed parties in Kayin State, especially the DKBA and the KNA lineage, have been connected to reports of scam operations and other related exploitation in the area. This is important because the military's March 2026 statement singled out only the KNU, even though the control behind Shwe Kokko sits more under the KNA rather than the KNU itself. This framing from the military suggests that the state may be focusing attention toward one actor while potentially downplaying other armed groups more closely connected to the area.

3.1.3 EXAGGERATION OF ACTIONS

The same March 2026 [statement](#) also highlighted scam operations in Shan State and credited the military for dismantling the scam compounds in that area. While this crackdown did occur and the Myanmar military did participate in it, the statement leaves out pertinent details. It excludes [China's role](#), Operation 1027's Three Brotherhood Alliance, and other actors that were central to the crackdown. For example, [China's police force](#) was on the Shan State border, taking into custody Chinese citizens who were handed over by Wa State police.

This narrative is important to highlight because it shows a pattern of how the state is presenting itself as the main driver of the enforcement, while excluding and downplaying the influence of other actors.

4 EVIDENCE FROM SHWE KOKKO

4.1 “YATAI NEW CITY” GROWTH

Satellite imagery shows that Shwe Kokko grew rapidly between 2017 and early 2026, becoming a large developed area spanning approximately 8-9 square kilometres (figure 4). This figure does not include related developments nearby, including a water park, farm, shooting range, and a golf course under construction.



Figure 4: [Left] 3 May 2017 satellite imagery compared to early 2026 satellite imagery [Right] shows an expansion of Shwe Kokko (satellite imagery source 2017: © CNES / Airbus, Unknown date: © Apple Maps, 2026, Maxar Technologies).

Shwe Kokko's rapid expansion into the size of a city makes it a significant site for scrutiny, especially given the detailed public reports of abuse and criminal activity tied to it. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that over [322 buildings](#) were reported as illegal in the Myanmar military's statement on 26 May 2026, but despite this, only 77 buildings were marked for demolition. The following sections examine the crackdown series and the discrepancies in how it was carried out.

4.2 DEMOLITION OVERVIEW

On 25 May 2026, the Myanmar military government, with KNA support, began the 77-building [demolition crackdown](#) in Shwe Kokko. Fifty-seven buildings were demolished by machinery and 20 by explosives. Myanmar Witness geolocated demolition footage and compared it with the state's own visual map and imagery.¹ The [reason](#) given for the demolitions was that these designated buildings were deemed illegal and tied to scam operations.

Myanmar Witness created an ArcGIS map to document the geolocated demolitions and compare them with the state-provided map shared by Myanmar state media outlets (figure 5).

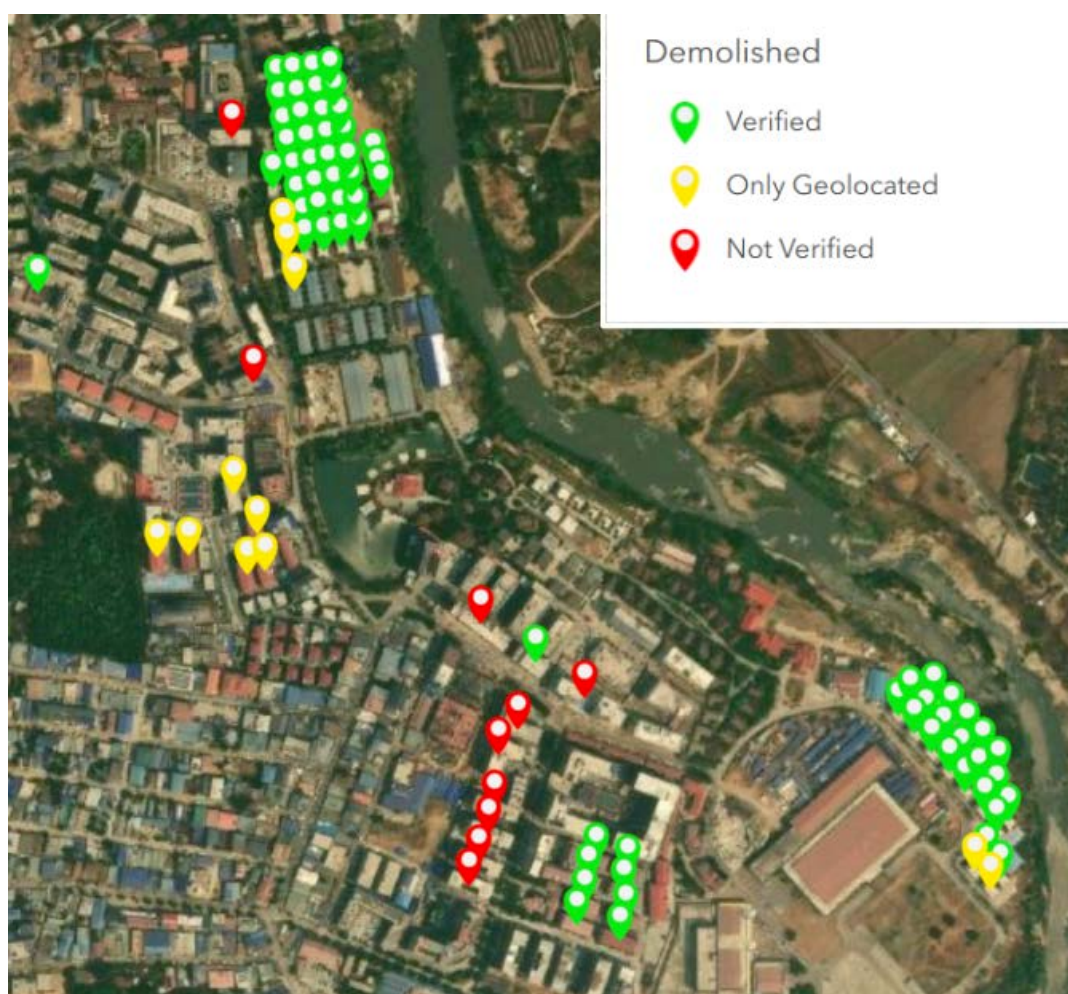


Figure 5: A Myanmar Witness ArcGIS map documenting the geolocated demolitions and comparing them with the state-provided map.

Myanmar Witness's map uses green icons for state-reported demolitions that have been geolocated and verified. The 10 red icons indicate state-reported demolitions

¹ One [demolition](#) from 3 December 2025 is included in this total count, based on separate reporting of a small crackdown in Shwe Kokko at that time.

that could not be verified. The 11 yellow icons show buildings that Myanmar Witness verified were demolished, despite the state not reporting planned demolitions of them. Overall, the map shows that several reported locations did not match the geolocated sites.

It is important to note that no evidence beyond the 26 May 2026 statement was provided to the public to support the claim that all the designated buildings were tied to illegal scam activity.

The first weeks of demolitions appeared to go as stated in the Myanmar military government's plan. The first [21 buildings](#) demolished by machinery appeared to be high-end villas right along the Moei River, followed by a further [36 high-end villas](#) in another nearby riverside location. By 26 July 2026, the 77-building demolition series in Shwe Kokko was [complete](#).

4.2.1 MISLEADING MAP

Myanmar Witness compared the state-provided demolition map(s) with geolocated imagery. Several maps were shared throughout the demolition series, with imagery of the building before and after demolition often shared in the same post. In several cases, as listed below, the building depicted on the map did not match the building that was actually destroyed in the footage.

The state-reported [map](#) shown in figure 6 is a zoomed-in version shared on 22 July 2026. The yellow boxes highlighted indicate which buildings were reported to be demolished, but were not confirmed by Myanmar Witness to be taken down.



Figure 6: A zoom-in view from the state-provided map of the demolished buildings, showing which ones were not geolocated during demolitions. This was the last provided map to viewers on 22 July 2026 (source: [GNLM](#)).

The key discrepancy is not the demolition activity itself, but rather that the public representation of what buildings were demolished does not always align with the available imagery or geolocated evidence. This includes:

- Buildings shown as demolished in one place, but geolocated elsewhere
- Roofs removed before demolition
- Roof colour, or material, appearing different in state imagery than in satellite imagery
- Reported buildings did not consistently match geolocated imagery
- A number of buildings appeared to show possible additions to their upper floors prior to demolition
- Several published images appear to have been AI-edited

The table below sets out the clearest discrepancies between the state's map and Myanmar Witness's analysis.

Date & Given Image	Reported Location	Geolocation
1. 5 July 2026  No map provided; reviewed previous demolition (1 July) with next-day demolition (6 July) maps, and compared.	[16.815458, 98.540936] 	[16.818064, 98.537782] 
2. 6 July 2026 	[16.815967, 98.541088] 	[16.818063, 98.537434] 
3. 8 July 2026 	[16.816602, 98.541897]  Reported to be a six- storey building	[16.814752, 98.546393]  Counted only four storeys

4. 10 July 2026 	[16.819900, 98.53849]  Reported to be an eight-storey building	[16.814571, 98.546572]  Counted only 4 storeys
5. 12 July 2026 	[16.816371, 98.541218] 	[16.818579, 98.538246] 
6. 14 July 2026 	[16.815123, 98.541020]  Reported to be a 12-storey building	[16.820846, 98.538977]  Counted only two storeys
7. 16 July 2026 	[16.814852, 98.540762]  Reported to be a 12-storey building	[16.817851, 98.538413]  Counted only seven stories

8. 19 July 2026 	[16.814610, 98.540803]  Reported to be a 12-storey building	[16.821149, 98.538964]  Two buildings, counted as only three storeys each
9. 22 July 2026 	[16.822437, 98.538102]  Reported to be a 17-storey building	[16.817899, 98.538639]  Counted only seven storeys
10. 26 July 2026  No map provided; reviewed previous demolition on 22 July	[16.817283, 98.540866]  Reported to be a 17-storey building	[16.818305, 98.538523]  Counted only seven storeys

Satellite imagery source: © Apple Maps, 2026, Maxar Technologies.

4.2.2 ROOF AND MAP ISSUES

Potential Removal of Roofs

Verification of the demolition series became less clear from 8 July 2026, when one targeted building appeared to have [no roof](#) before explosives were used (figure 7). The imagery and reporting on the activity also appeared limited, but the building was still possible to be geolocated at [16.814753, 98.546400]. Two further locations, shown on [14 July](#) [16.820846, 98.538977] and on [19 July](#) 2026 [16.821149, 98.538964],

also appeared roofless in state-shared footage. However, Sentinel-2 imagery from [2 June](#) and [14 June](#) 2026 shows that two of these buildings still had roofs shortly prior to the planned demolition. (figure 7).

This finding suggests that several buildings have been altered before their demolition; however, Myanmar Witness cannot verify when or why the roofs were removed, but it certainly reduces the clarity of the state's messaging around this crackdown.



Figure 7: [Left] Three images showing no roofs (Sources: 8 July 2026 [东南亚大事件](#), 14 July 2026 [【妙瓦底论坛】妙瓦底新闻 | 亚太新闻 | 缅甸新闻](#), 19 July 2026 [MRTV](#)); [Right] Low-resolution Sentinel-2 imagery showing original rooftops (sources [2 June](#) 2026 [Top], [2 June](#) 2026 [Bottom], and [14 June](#) 2026).

Potential Roof Alterations

Further discrepancies were also visible in at least two building demolitions where the roof colour (or material) depicted in state footage did not match satellite imagery. On 10 July 2026, a villa with a [blue roof](#) was shown being demolished with explosives. Using satellite imagery, Myanmar Witness confirmed that as of early June 2026, no villa in Shwe Kokko had a blue roof (figure 8). Myanmar Witness geolocated this demolished villa to [16.814565, 98.546576]. However, in all available [satellite imagery](#), the roof of this building is red.

Similarly, on 26 July 2026, state-reported imagery showed a building with a [grey roof](#), but geolocation placed the demolition at [16.818302, 98.538524], where high-resolution satellite imagery shows a red roof as of [25 May 2026](#). Additionally, low-resolution Sentinel-2 imagery confirms this building was red-roofed on [2 June](#) 2026, after the demolition series began.



Figure 8: {Top Left} A building showing a blue roof [16.814571, 98.546572] (source: [东南亚大事件](#)); {Bottom Left} A building showing a grey roof [16.818305, 98.538523] (source: [GNLM](#)); {Top Right} Imagery from 25 May 2026 showing the blue roofed building location having a red roof (source: [GNLM](#)); {Middle Left} Sentinel-2 imagery showing the blue roofed location as still having a red roof on 14 June 2026 (source: [Sentinel-2](#)); [Bottom Right] Sentinel-2 imagery showing the grey roofed building location having a red roof on 2 June 2026 (source: [Sentinel-2](#)).

Myanmar Witness has been unable to confirm why these roofs appear to have changed in the weeks before the demolitions. It should be noted, however, that the state-provided map outlining the demolition plans and the specific buildings to be destroyed does not align with the geolocated buildings shown in the footage. The state map placed the blue-roofed villa at [16.819900, 98.53849], but Myanmar Witness's geolocation identifies the demolished building at [16.814565, 98.546576]. Additionally, on 26 July 2026, the state map puts the grey-roofed building at [16.817283, 98.540866] while geolocation confirms the demolished building at [16.818302, 98.538524] (figure 9).

Therefore, these types of mismatches- the roof removals, differences in colours, and map locations suggest that the state's visual presentation of the demolitions does not consistently match the buildings that are actually shown being destroyed.



Figure 9: [Top Left] A 10 July 2026 state-provided map showing the location where the state media reported the blue roofed building location (white box) [16.819900, 98.53849] (map source: [妙瓦底论坛](#) | [妙瓦底新闻](#) | [亚太新闻](#) | [缅甸新闻](#)) (satellite image source: © Apple Maps, 2026, Maxar Technologies); [Top Right] Image of the blue roofed villa with an arrow indicating its geolocation on the state map (source: [GNLM](#)); [Bottom Left] A 22 July 2026 state-provided map showing the final demolition location (white box) [16.819900, 98.53849] (map source: [GNLM](#)) and (satellite image source: © Apple Maps, 2026, Maxar Technologies); [Bottom Right] Image of the grey roofed building with an arrow indicating its geolocation on the state map (source: [GNLM](#)).

4.3 BUILDING MANIPULATION

Further analysis of the Shwe Kokko demolition series identified several cases where reported building heights did not match geolocated imagery. In some instances, the discrepancy appears to be connected to the upper floors of the buildings, and in others the height simply does not match.

4.3.1 FLOOR HEIGHT MANIPULATION

On [8 July](#) 2026, a villa [16.814752, 98.546393] was shown in demolition footage as having six visible storeys; however, earlier imagery from [25 May](#) 2026 shows the building had four levels (figure 10). On [10 July](#) 2026, another nearby blue-roofed villa also appears to be presented as taller than in earlier imagery, with six storeys. State media reported the villa to be an eight-storey building. In both cases, low-resolution Sentinel-2 imagery from 14 June 2026 still shows red roofs, indicating that the buildings' appearance also changed before demolition. The green line shown in figure 10 below highlights the part of the 8 July demolished villa that appears to have additional storeys.



Figure 10: [Top Right] Image of the 8 July 2026 building with a green outline highlighting the appearance of additional storeys [16.814752, 98.546393] (source: [东南亚大事件](#)); [Bottom Right] Image of the blue roofed villa from 10 July 2026 [16.814565, 98.546576] (source: [东南亚大事件](#)); [Top Left] Zoomed-in imagery of the 8 and 10 July 2026 buildings with both showing red roofs (source: [GNLM](#)); [Bottom Left] Sentinel-2 imagery from 14 June 2026 showing red roofs on both buildings (source: [Sentinel-2](#)).

On [14 July](#) 2026 and [19 July](#) 2026, additional buildings were reported to be higher than the geolocated structures. The first structure was reported as a 12-storey building, but again appears to be much lower according to satellite imagery. The second was also reported as a 12-storey building, but in fact it was geolocated to two separate three-storey buildings.



Figure 11: [Top Left] Image of the 14 July 2026 building showing no roof and a taller build [16.820846, 98.538977] (source: [妙瓦底论坛](#) | [妙瓦底新闻](#) | [亚太新闻](#) | [缅甸新闻](#)); [Bottom Left] Image of the 19 July 2026 building showing a taller build [16.821149, 98.538964] (source: [MRTV](#)); [Right] Zoomed-in imagery of the two buildings showing original roofs from 12 June 2026 (source: [妙瓦底论坛](#) | [妙瓦底新闻](#) | [亚太新闻](#) | [缅甸新闻](#)).

The [19 July](#) 2026 demolition is one of the clearest examples of this type of discrepancy. There was very little information shown around the location in the demolition footage, including nearby buildings. Importantly, state footage depicted the site as one tall singular building, but Myanmar Witness's geolocated imagery identified it as two separate buildings, with a much lower profile. Sentinel 2 imagery dated 2 June 2026 supports this and shows that the two structures were clearly distinct at that time (figure 12).



Figure 12: Geolocation of the 19 July 2026 building [16.821149, 98.538964]; [Top Right] Image of the 19 July 2026 building (source: [MRTV](#)); [Top Left] Satellite imagery showing the geolocation work [source: © Apple Maps, 2026, Maxar Technologies]; [Bottom Left] Zoomed-in imagery of the geolocated location from 12 June 2026 (source: [妙瓦底论坛](#) | [妙瓦底新闻](#) | [亚太新闻](#) | [缅甸新闻](#)); [Bottom Right] Sentinel-2 imagery showing original rooftops for both buildings on 2 June 2026 (source: [Sentinel-2](#)).

4.3.2 AI-EDITED IMAGERY

The state media also shared images that showed signs of AI manipulation (figure 13). Three images, connected to the [8 July](#) and [19 July](#) 2026 demolitions, in fact displayed a Gemini watermark and also tested positive for Google's SynthID. SynthID is essentially an invisible watermark embedded by AI image tools, from providers including Google and OpenAI, to indicate that an image was altered or generated by AI. Four additional images from three separate demolition days were also tested for AI use because they stood out as too tall compared to what was observed in satellite imagery, or the surroundings appeared potentially off in some way. All four images tested positive for SynthID.



Figure 13: [Top] Image showing the 8 July 2026 building with a yellow box highlighting the Gemini watermark [16.814752, 98.546393] (source: [Ministry of Information](#)); [Bottom] Two images showing the 19 July 2026 building with yellow boxes highlighting the Gemini watermark [16.821149, 98.538964] (source: [MRTV](#)).

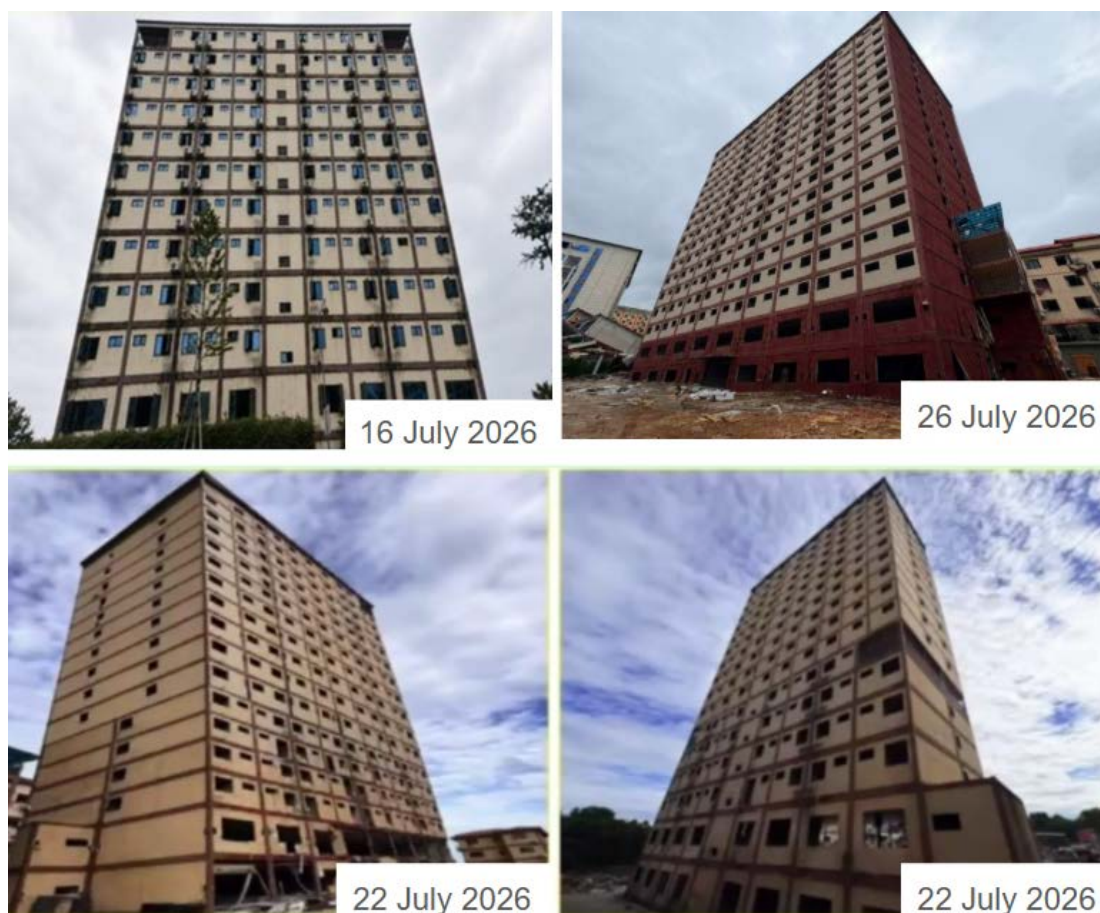


Figure 14: Four images that detected OpenAI SynthID. [Top Left] Image shared in connection with the 16 July 2026 demolition [16.817851, 98.538413] (source: [MRTV](#)); [Top Right] Image shared in connection with the 26 July 2026 demolition [16.818305, 98.538523] (source: [CNLM](#)); [Bottom] Two images shared in connection with the 22 July 2026 demolition [16.817899, 98.538639] (source: [MRTV](#)).

Taken together, these findings suggest that the state made some effort to alter visual material used to present the Shwe Kokko crackdown before publication. So while the evidence shows these alterations, it is difficult to determine the exact reason or intent behind these observed discrepancies.

5 CONCLUSION

The Shwe Kokko demolition series has shown an evident pattern of discrepancies between the state's reported narrative and visuals compared with Myanmar Witness's analysis of the available evidence. In the early phase of the crackdown campaign, the demolitions broadly aligned with the state's maps and published reports. However, from July 2026, Myanmar Witness observed discrepancies, including mismatches between reported and geolocated demolished buildings, changes to roofs, building height alterations and the use of AI-edited imagery.

At the time of writing, these findings are not able to confirm the exact reasons or the intention behind these discrepancies, and to what extent they were deliberate. However, taken together, they do raise questions regarding the reliability of the state's attempt at its public presentation of the crackdown. These patterns have been similarly observed in early operations, including KK Park.

Myanmar Witness's findings add to existing concerns about the state's overall crackdown narrative, and this includes the new Anti-Online Scam Bill, amid ongoing enforcement operations. As stated, current online reports suggest that most arrests and repatriations tied to scam centre operations have involved lower- and mid-level actors, rather than targeting the main organisers of these criminal networks.

Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor the state's future actions and narrative regarding crackdowns tied to the implementation of the new bill.

6 METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

Myanmar Witness follows a methodology of digital preservation and rigorous, replicable analysis. Digital content is collected and archived in a secure database and hashed to confirm authenticity and prevent tampering.



Myanmar Witness uses a confidence judgment system to describe the extent of independent verification of footage:

- **Very High:** Myanmar Witness is 85-95% sure that the event took place as described in the claims. Footage is independently geolocated and mostly chronolocated by Myanmar Witness, with strong corroborating evidence on details of the claim.
- **High:** Myanmar Witness is 70-80% sure that the event took place as described in the claims. The footage is geolocated by Myanmar Witness. Other reliable sources confirm the time and date, but it cannot be independently chronolocated. Other details of the claim have not been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.
- **Medium:** Myanmar Witness is 50-60% sure that the event took place. The event is somewhat verified, but significant gaps remain, such as the inability to identify or geolocate the mechanism of attack linked to the damage.
- **Low:** The geolocation and chronolocation process has shown the location or timing of the footage to be inaccurate.

- **Unknown:** There is not sufficient evidence for the investigator to make a confident judgement.

Myanmar Witness has also assigned confidence levels to responsible actors, including:

- **Very High:** Actors confess to the action, and Myanmar Witness has verified evidence of their involvement.
- **High:** Myanmar Witness is at least 80% confident of the actor's involvement, without their admission. This may be based on factors such as an exclusive mechanism of attack (e.g. airstrike) or observed insignia, etc.
- **Medium:** Multiple sources suggest involvement, and some evidence from related User-Generated Content (UGC) supports this, but confidence is not complete.
- **Low:** Evidence suggests the alleged actor was not involved.
- **Unknown:** Insufficient evidence to confidently assess the actor's involvement, and/or no allegations of a perpetrator exist.

For the avoidance of doubt, this verification system only refers to Myanmar Witness's ability to independently geolocate or chronolocate footage. Incidents marked as unverified may still be substantiated by multiple eyewitness reports. Myanmar Witness also collates and assesses unverified information, including claims on social media. This information is presented as claims, rather than verified facts.

This report contains figures showing how footage has been geolocated. In these images, coloured lines are used to represent the left and right arcs of vision. Coloured boxes show corresponding landmarks or distinguishing details in each piece of footage or data. Geolocation is conducted using an array of open-source tools, such as Google Earth, to match satellite imagery with visual features identified in the footage or images. Geolocations are peer-reviewed.

Chronolocation is conducted using metadata, contextual analysis, weather patterns, and shadow analysis. Through this, possible time frames are deduced. For example, by orienting geolocated content and identifying the sun's position, time can be determined.

Myanmar Witness follows rigorous ethical standards: obscuring identifying information about individuals involved; censoring private information and images where appropriate; blurring graphic imagery; removing links to private individual accounts; and archiving digital content securely.

6.1 OFFICIAL STATE NARRATIVES

Myanmar Witness collected and analysed three state narratives describing actions against scam operations in Shwe Kokko, specifically to understand how this operation was framed to a wider audience. These statements were collected from online media sources and official Myanmar state reports. The analysis involved fact-checking claims related to previous scam operations, the actors involved, and earlier crackdowns in Myanmar.

6.2 EVIDENCE FROM SHWE KOKKO

Shwe Kokko demolition events were routinely reported by the Myanmar military government and its official state media outlets (the Ministry of Information, The Global New Light of Myanmar, and the MRTV Telegram channel) beginning on 25 May 2026. Two additional sources were Chinese-based news outlets focusing on Myanmar or Southeast Asia. Demolition activity was monitored daily for updates until its completion on 26 July 2026.

Imagery and video footage were analysed for geolocation and chronolocation purposes. High-resolution Apple Maps satellite imagery was used to support geolocation efforts. Copernicus's low-resolution Sentinel-2 true-colour imagery was utilised for chronolocation. Chronolocation was challenging due to heavy cloud cover over Myanmar throughout much of June and July 2026. Further analysis was conducted to determine whether the reported information matched the associated UGC. All discrepancies are explained in this report.

All imagery underwent AI verification checks using Gemini and OpenAI verification platforms to identify watermarks and SynthID markers.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

This investigation was subject to several limitations that affected the collection, verification, and analysis of demolition reporting.

No single source captured all aspects of the demolition activity. Instead, multiple sources provided updates on the progress of the crackdown, requiring the investigative team to monitor various outlets daily to determine whether demolition activity had occurred. As a result, this report does not seek to document every reported demolition event. Rather, it focuses on specific examples where Myanmar Witness was able to identify inconsistencies between reported information and the available evidence.

Once reporting was identified, further limitations affected efforts to verify and chronocate demolition activity. Heavy cloud cover from early June 2026 limited chronolocation and building-detail analysis throughout June and July 2026,

reducing the availability of satellite imagery that could be used to corroborate reporting.

Geolocation was also challenging. Imagery associated with individual demolition events often focused solely on the building being demolished, providing limited context of the surrounding area and few visible reference points. In addition, inaccuracies in maps and location information released by state sources, alongside changes to building structures that were not reflected in the available satellite imagery, complicated efforts to accurately identify demolition locations.

Finally, several images showed indicators of potential AI-altered content during verification checks, limiting their value for analysis and geolocation and reducing confidence in some visual evidence.

7 ABBREVIATIONS

Border Guard Force	BGF
Democratic Karen Buddhist Army	DKBA
Global New Light of Myanmar	GNLM
Karen Border Guard Force	KBGF
Karen National Army	KNA
Karen National Liberation Army	KNLA
Karen National Union	KNU
National League for Democracy	NLD
Special Economic Zone	SEZ