MYANMAR WITNESS

A project by

CIR CENTRE for INFORMATION RESILIENCE

# Explosion in Sittwe Town, Rakhine State

## Investigation of a 23 October 2026 Explosion and Assessment of Conflicting Claims

# Explosion in Sittwe Town, Rakhine State

## Investigation of a 23 October 2026 Explosion and Assessment of Conflicting Claims

29 October 2026

WARNING: This report contains graphic information and imagery. While efforts have been made to blur details, the report includes information which some readers may find distressing. Additionally, several sources have been withheld due to the graphic nature of the material.


1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1
2 VERIFICATION 2
2.1 GEOLOCATION 2
2.2 CHRONOLOCATION 5
2.3 CASUALTY ASSESSMENT 7
2.4 MUNITIONS AND POSSIBLE CAUSE 9
3 ACTOR ATTRIBUTION 10
4 NEXT STEPS 11
5 ABBREVIATION 11


---

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 23 October 2026, an explosion reportedly occurred in Sittwe (စစ်တွေ) Town, Rakhine (ရခိုင်) State, at approximately 07:55 local time.

Myanmar Witness geolocated the incident with high confidence to the junction of Min Bar Gyi Road (မင်းဘာကြီး) and Merchant Road (ကုန်သည်) in Sittwe Town, at [20.144199, 92.896641] and determined the reported date and time with medium confidence.

Sixteen injuries were also reported, but investigators could only confidently determine two deaths from available user-generated content.

Notably, online sources published conflicting accounts of the explosion's cause. One pro-military Telegram Channel (Hmine Wai) alleged that the explosion was triggered by the Arakan Army (AA) 120mm artillery, while Development Media Group (DMG) reported that a Myanmar Air Force (MAF) Y-12 aircraft dropped bombs on at least

three locations in Sittwe. Myanmar Witness could not determine the exact source of the incident or the actor responsible.

Additionally, Myanmar Witness also identified that pro-military sources circulated AI-generated images and footage from earlier incidents, presented online as relating to the 23 October 2026 reported explosion. Note: these materials should not be treated as authentic documentation of the incident.

# 2 VERIFICATION

## 2.1 GEOLOCATION

Myanmar Witness geolocated the explosion with high confidence to the junction of Min Bar Gyi Road and Merchant Road in Sittwe Town, at [20.144199, 92.896641] (figure 1). This location is consistent with post-explosion imagery, CCTV footage and BBC Burmese reporting.




*Figure 1: [Top Left] UGC showing the aftermath of the explosion; [Top Right] CCTV footage capturing the moment of the explosion; [Bottom] The white dotted circle indicates the assessed location of the explosion [20.144199, 92.896641] (Sources: [Top Left and Top Right] redacted due to private and graphic concerns, [Below] satellite imagery © Esri | TomTom | Garmin | METI/NASA | USGS)*

UGC circulated by pro-military source Hmine Wai could not be verified as accurately depicting the incident. For example, one image (posted at 09:04 local time) showed several visual inconsistencies, including road markings inconsistent with typical roads in Myanmar, buildings that do not match satellite imagery of the reported location, as well as facial, gesture and clothing features consistent with AI-generated imagery. Moreover, the image did not match the road width or shadow patterns that are visible in CCTV footage of the explosion (figure 2) (source removed due to graphic content).




*Figure 2 :[Left] Image shared by Hmine Wai displaying characteristics consistent with AI-generated imagery. [Right] CCTV footage showing the explosion. (Sources: [Left] Hmine Wai Telegram channel; [Right] source withheld due to graphic content.)*

Subsequently, Hmine Wai posted additional AI-generated imagery alongside a satellite image labelled as Sittwe Town (figure 3). Note: The satellite image does not match Google Earth imagery of the geolocated incident site.




*Figure 3: [Left] AI-generated PICINT image shared by Hmine Wait, [Right] Comparison of features visible in the AI-generated image with Google Earth satellite imagery of the assessed location [20.144199, 92.896641] (Source: [Left] Hmine Wai via Telegram, [Right] Google Earth, © 2025 CNES/Airbus)*

Separately, a video posted on 20 October 2026 by a pro-AA Facebook page, We Love ULA/AA, depicts what appears to be AA personnel firing a rocket. Myanmar Witness geolocated this scene to near Htaunt Chaung Gyi (ထောင့်ချောင်းကြီး) village, Minbya (မင်းပြား) Township, Rakhine State at [20.341777, 93.251561], rather than Sittwe Town

(figure 4). Note: This footage was publicly available at least three days before the 23 October 2026 incident. Furthermore, investigators identified a potential original version of the same footage circulating online as early as October 2025, suggesting that the recording itself likely predates 2026. Nevertheless, Truth Waves later included this video in its 23 October 2026 compilation and presented it as evidence of the alleged AA attack on the Sittwe area (figure 5).

Therefore, Myanmar Witness assess that the footage is both geographically misattributed and temporally inconsistent with the reported incident, as it originates from a different location and predates the incident date. As a result, this should not be used as evidence of the 23 October 2026 incident.




*Figure 4: [Top] Two screenshot images from a Facebook video uploaded by pro-AA account We Love ULA/AA, [Below] Google Earth imagery [20.341777, 93.251561] (Source: [Above] We Love ULA/AA), [Bottom] Google Earth @ 2023, CNES/Airbus)*

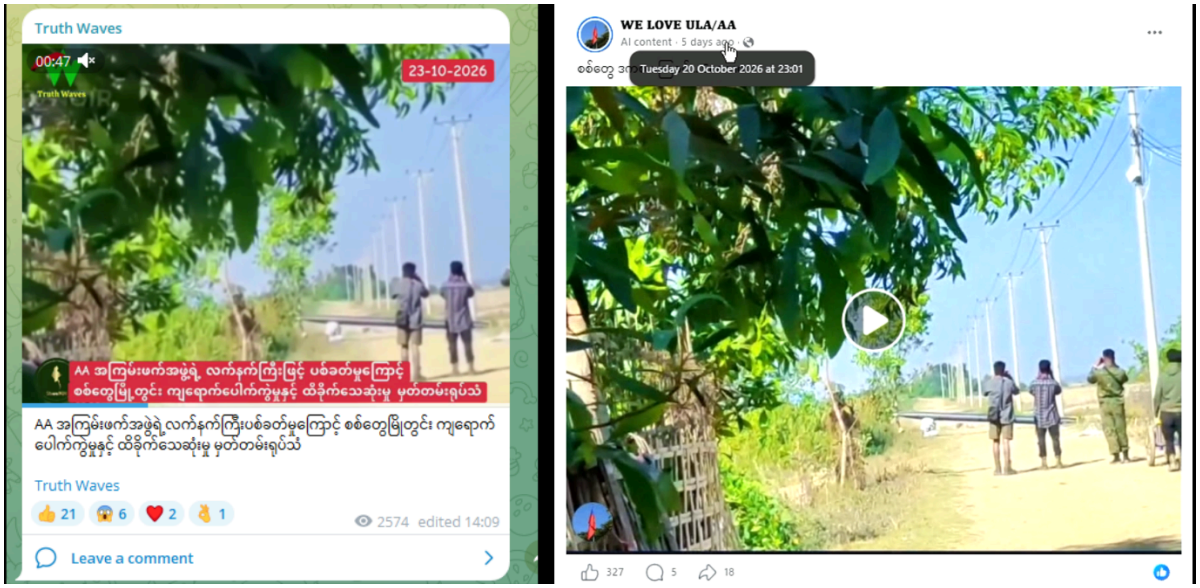



*Figure 5: [Left] Screenshot from Truth Waves footage purportedly showing an Arakan Army rocket launch, with a date stamp of 23 October 2026 visible in the top-right corner; [Right] Screenshot of a post from a pro-AA Facebook page, We Love ULA/AA, showing that the video was uploaded on 20 October 2026. (Source: [Left] Source: Truth Waves, source redacted due to graphic content, [Right] We Love ULA/AA via Facebook)*

## 2.2 CHRONOLOCATION

Myanmar Witness assessed the time of the explosion as approximately 07:55 local time on 23 October 2026, with medium confidence.

DMG reported that the explosion occurred at the junction of Min Bar Gyi Road and Merchant Road around 08:00 local time. CCTV footage shared by Truth Waves includes a timestamp of 07:55 local time and shows the explosion at the geolocated junction (figure 6).




*Figure 6: CCTV footage with a timestamp of 07:55 local time in the top-left corner and the explosion visible on the right side of the frame. The subtitle was originally in Burmese and has been translated into English using Google Translate. (Source: Truth Waves via Telegram; redacted due to graphic content.)*

An additional image of a deceased individual has the same timestamp of 07:55 local time. The shadow direction and its length shown in the image are consistent with this time within a 30-minute window. This is based on analysis using SunCalc (figure 7).




*Figure 7: [Top] UGC showing a recorded timestamp of 07:55 on 23 October 2026 and the shadow cast by an individual standing next to a deceased person. [Bottom] Shadow direction at 07:55 local time on 23 October 2026, modelled using SunCalc. (Source: [Top]Hmine Wai Telegram; source redacted due to graphic content. Bottom: SunCalc.)*

Moreover, reverse-image searches of the relevant UGC indicated that they first appeared online on 23 October 2026. Therefore, Myanmar Witness assesses that the available visual, temporal and reporting evidence is mutually consistent.

## 2.3 CASUALTY ASSESSMENT

Myanmar Witness visually confirmed two fatalities from UGC posted online by Hmine Wai (source redacted due to graphic content). One image shows an apparent male fatality with a severe traumatic head injury; another shows an apparent male fatality with further extensive blood visible around the upper body (figure 8). Myanmar Witness assesses that these injuries are consistent with a high-force mechanism, such

as an explosion, but the exact cause of death cannot be determined from the available imagery alone.

Hmine Wai uploaded additional imagery showing injured people at a medical facility. Myanmar Witness manually counted at least 12 injured individuals, including three females (figure 9). While these injuries are assessed as consistent with a wide-impact event, investigators could not verify if every uploaded image was caused by this specific reported incident.




*Figure 8: [Top left] UGC showing a deceased male with severe head trauma. [Top right] UGC showing a deceased male with a significant amount of blood visible around the upper body. [Bottom] Post-explosion UGC geolocated by Myanmar Witness. Coloured boxes indicate the locations of the two deceased individuals. (Source: Hmine Wai via Telegram, redacted due to graphic content.)*



*Figure 9: UGC shared by pro-military Telegram channel Hmine Wai from which Myanmar Witness manually counted 12 injured individuals (source Hmine Wai via Telegram; redacted due to graphic content).*

## 2.4 MUNITIONS AND POSSIBLE CAUSE

Hmine Wai alleged that a 120mm artillery fire from the AA caused the explosion, and uploaded images of munitions fragments that were reportedly recovered from the incident scene (figure 10). From the imagery, Myanmar Witness assessed that two fragments were likely fuse fragments from mortar rounds. However, the lack of measurements or other reference objects prevents a true calibre assessment, and Myanmar Witness could not verify that the fragments were accurately connected to this incident.

Figure 10 shows images of the reported fragments depicting the rifled base of a fuse, typically screwed into a recess, while the top portion (missing the tip) is progressively narrower and typically designed to conform to the shape of the shell's ogive.

CCTV footage of the explosion also shows a more contained blast with limited apparent blast effects. This is consistent with the impact of a mortar or artillery round, rather than a rocket, which typically produces a flatter trajectory and a larger blast radius. However, this observation alone does not establish the weapon system used or the actor responsible.




*Figure 10: [Left] UGC of the reported munitions shared by Hmine Wai. [Right] A screenshot from CCTV footage shared by Truth Waves. (Source: [Left] Hmine Wai, [Right] redacted due to privacy concerns.)*

Truth Waves also circulated footage of what appears to be AA personnel firing a rocket, which Myanmar Witness assessed as likely a 240mm MLRS (Multiple Launch Rocket System) of North Korean (DPRK) origin. This is based on its dimensions, colours, and markings. Moreover, the individuals appear to be firing the rocket without a standard launch platform, manually elevating and electrically igniting it. However, as stated already, Myanmar Witness geolocated this footage to Minbya Township, and it had already appeared online on 20 October 2026, and in 2025, before the explosion. It therefore cannot be treated as evidence for the 23 October 2026 incident.

## 3 ACTOR ATTRIBUTION

Myanmar Witness could not determine the actor responsible for the 23 October 2026 explosion.

The pro-military Telegram channel Hmine Wai alleged the AA caused the incident with a 120mm artillery fire. DMG reported that it was carried out by a MAF Y-12 aircraft that dropped bombs across three locations in Sittwe. At the time of writing, Myanmar Witness could not verify either account.

The available munitions imagery and CCTV footage of the explosion are more consistent with a mortar or artillery-type impact than a rocket strike. Moreover, the footage of AA personnel firing a rocket was recorded before 23 October 2026 and geolocated to Minbya Township. Therefore, it cannot be used as evidence for actor attribution of the Sittwe explosion.

Notably, the explosion occurred during ongoing clashes between the Myanmar military and the AA in and around Sittwe Township. Since 4 September 2026, pro-military sources have reported military drone attacks on AA positions in Sittwe, Ponnagyun, and Kyaukphyu townships, under the name 'Operation 4926'. Myanmar Witness has not independently verified these claims, and this still does not establish responsibility for this specific incident.

## 4 NEXT STEPS

Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor and assess pro-military and pro-AA reports on the incident, as well as local media and UGC, and developments of Operation 4926 in that area.

## 5 ABBREVIATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Arakan Army | AA |
| Development Media Group | DMG |
| Myanmar Air Force | MAF |