

Airstrike Denial

Myanmar state rejects evidence of deadly airstrikes in Tamu township

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 12 January 2024

Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** Ka Nan village (ကနန်), Tamu township (တမူးမြို့နယ်), Sagaing region (စစ်ကိုင်းတိုင်းဒေသကြီး) [23.803833, 94.144694].
- **Date/Time of Incident:** 7 January 2024
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and Involvement:**
 - Myanmar Air Force (MAF)
- **Summary of Investigation:**
 - MAF airstrikes allegedly destroyed civilian infrastructure and killed up to 17 people in Ka Nan village. Myanmar's state-run news outlet, MRTV, denied the claims in a broadcast released on 7 January 2024, stating that:
 - the church in Ka Nan village was not hit by an airstrike;
 - claims that several people, including two children, died as a result of the airstrike are false; and
 - no aircraft flew over the area on the morning of 7 January.
 - Myanmar Witness has identified, cross-referenced, and, where possible, verified local media reports, air traffic tracking channels, satellite imagery, and user-generated content (UGC) in order to assess MRTV's claims.
 - **The Church:** Satellite imagery, cross-referenced with UGC, reveals that the church and other infrastructure in Ka Nan were damaged between 3 and 8 January.
 - **The Victims:** Myanmar Witness identified imagery purporting to show the deceased. At least 12 individuals were visible in the footage, including three children and three women. Although this UGC was not geolocatable, an image of one of the deceased (also seen amongst the 12 bodies) was geolocated to Ka Nan village.
 - **The Aircraft:** Myanmar Witness identified four Q-5 ground attack jets at 0943 local

time at Tada-U airbase on 7 January 2024. Myanmar Witness also identified and geolocated footage of a Q-5 ground attack jet in the sky above Ka Nan village moments before the sound of an explosion. The MAF is the only known actor with access to Q-5 ground attack jets. The Q-5 has an operational range significantly beyond the distance between Tada-U airbase and Ka Nan village.

- This investigation suggests that it is highly likely that airstrikes took place around 1030 on 7 January 2024.

Introduction

On 7 January 2024, claims circulated online that the MAF carried out airstrikes on Ka Nan village, Tamu township, Sagaing region. One report suggested that the strike targeted a party in Ka Nan village following a People's Defence Force (PDF) military training ceremony. This claim has not been independently verified.

Myanmar Now and Khit Thit Media claimed that these airstrikes killed at least 17 people and injured at least 19 people, including women and children. It targeted civilian infrastructure such as schools, churches and homes.

In a broadcast released on 7 January 2024, Myanmar's state-run news outlet, MRTV, denied that airstrikes took place, claiming that the reports were 'fake news', misinformation and anti-government 'propaganda'. The broadcast made the following claims (translated by Myanmar Witness):

"A fake news is spreading that 11 people, including two children, died due to the bombing of the Christian church in Ward No. 5 of Kanan Village, Khampat town, Tamu township, Sagaing Region, by terrorist-inciting, subversive media are being written and distributed. Regarding the news, we got a statement from an official from the relevant area. We learned that there were no flights this morning. The bombardment by the army is just a misinformation.

It is said that the subversive media outlets are writing and distributing fake news on a timely basis and are carrying out propaganda activities to destroy regional peace and stability."

In this report, Myanmar Witness has verified several pieces of UGC and cross-referenced claims, in order to assess the following three claims made by MRTV:

- The church in Ka Nan village was not hit by an airstrike.
- Claims that eleven people, including two children, died as a result of the airstrike are false.
- No aircraft flew over the area on the morning of 7 January.

Myanmar Witness believes that it is highly likely that an airstrike took place, with a number of civilian casualties. It is also highly likely that a Q-5 ground attack jet, currently only in use by the MAF, was used during the attack.

Debunking MRTV's claims

Claim one: The church in Ka Nan village was not hit by an airstrike.

- Myanmar Witness geolocated imagery posted on social media showing extensive destruction to structures in Ka Nan village, including a church, a high school and homes. At least four separate areas of the village showed signs of extensive damage.
- This imagery was cross-referenced with Sentinel-2 satellite imagery to determine that the damage was inflicted between 3 and 8 January.
- High-resolution Planet satellite imagery from 17 January also reveals damage to the locations identified within the Sentinel-2 and UGC analysis.

Claim two: Several people, including two children, did not die as a result of the airstrike.

- Myanmar Witness has analysed and cross-referenced UGC, which purports to show the victims of the event. At least 12 deceased individuals are visible in the UGC, six of whom were women or children. Although this UGC was not geolocatable, an image of one of the deceased (also seen amongst the 12 bodies) was geolocated to Ka Nan village.
- Myanmar Witness identified footage showing bloodstains inside the church and school, suggesting that people were injured or killed at these locations. This adds further weight to claims that the church and school suffered damage from an airstrike.

Claim three: No aircraft flew over the area on the morning of 7 January.

- Social media reports claimed a Q-5 ground attack jet was used in the attack. Myanmar Witness has geolocated footage showing a Q-5 ground attack jet flying over Ka Nan village. Further, unverified UGC purports to show a Q-5 ground attack jet in Ka Nan village.

- Myanmar Witness identified multiple claims by Air Traffic monitoring Telegram Channels that a ground attack jet took off from Tada-U airbase on 7 January 2024 at 1000 local time and headed in the direction of Tamu township.
- Myanmar Witness has verified the presence of four Q-5 aircraft in satellite imagery of Tada-U airbase at 0943 local time on 7 January 2024, possibly refueling, before the time of the alleged attack.
- The MAF is the only known actor with access to Q-5 ground attack jets.

The investigation walkthrough

Myanmar Witness has identified, cross-referenced, analysed and, where possible, verified multiple pieces of UGC which are reportedly related to the airstrike on Ka Nan village. This information contradicts claims made by MRTV, as shown by the analysis below (see figure 1).



Figure 1: Map showing the locations of buildings damaged by the alleged airstrike as shown by UGC analysed in this report. The location of an explosion captured within UGC is shown in red. A video showing plain clothed individuals suspected to be civilians running while the sound of aircraft overhead can be heard took place at the white POV marker. white). The school (marked in blue) and church (marked in yellow) sustained damage consistent with an airstrike.

Claim one: The church in Ka Nan village was not hit by an airstrike.

Myanmar Witness has identified and geolocated footage which shows extensive damage to St. Peter Baptist Church in Ka Nan village [23.805503, 94.143868] (see figure 2). Sentinel-2 satellite imagery analysis reveals that the damage occurred between 3 and 8 January 2024, narrowing down the timeframe of the events. Additionally, by reverse image searching these images, it was possible to determine that they were first uploaded on 7 January 2024. This lends further support to the claim that an attack took place around this time.

The attack allegedly took place on a Sunday, an important day for Christians. Imagery posted on social media revealed potential bloodstains within the church, indicating that individuals may have suffered from severe injuries while inside the church (see section: Claim Two). The church remains ‘temporarily closed’ at the time of writing this report.



Figure 2: St. Peter Baptist Church at 23.805503, 94.143868 was identified as having been damaged, with the insides of the church containing bloodstains (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).

Myanmar Witness has also identified and geolocated UGC, which shows that other buildings in the village were also impacted. Footage showing heavy damage to the Basic Education High School in Ka Nan village was also identified and geolocated [23.805603, 94.144311] (see figure 3). Google Maps notes that the school is also ‘temporarily closed’.



Figure 3: Basic Education High School Ka Nan at 23.805603, 94.144311 was damaged in the attack (Source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

As well as identifying and verifying UGC, and analysing Sentinel-2 satellite imagery, Myanmar Witness has accessed high-resolution Planet satellite imagery of Ka Nan, captured on 17 January

2024. The high-resolution satellite imagery (see figure 4) shows discolouration and evident destruction at the exact locations identified by Myanmar Witness in figure 1, especially in the areas surrounding the church and the school. The location of the damage is consistent with the claims made by social media users and local media, lending additional weight to claims that Ka Nan village was hit by airstrikes.



Figure 4: High-resolution Planet satellite imagery showing the damaged areas, which correlate with the locations identified in Figure 1.

Footage posted on Facebook by a private account shows damaged buildings, reportedly after the airstrike took place (source redacted due to privacy concerns). The footage has also been geolocated to Ka Nan village, near the site of the alleged airstrike [23.805920, 94.143032] (see figure 5). These images of the school and other damaged buildings were also reverse image searched and cross-referenced with Sentinel-2 satellite imagery. This revealed that they first appeared on 7 January 2024 and that damage consistent with the UGC imagery was inflicted between 3 and 8 January 2024 (see figure 6 below).



Figure 5: Panorama created by Myanmar Witness shows geolocated houses in Ka Nan that have been damaged and destroyed by the airstrike (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).



Figure 6: Sentinel-2 imagery showing surface change between 03 and 08 January 2024 indicates the destruction in Ka Nan village occurred between this time.

Although Myanmar Witness has not identified footage showing an aircraft dropping ordnance on either the church or the school, Myanmar Witness’ resident arms expert assesses that the damage visible is consistent with that of an airstrike. The alleged explosion site is located within close proximity to both buildings.

Claim two: Several people, including two children, did not die as a result of the airstrike.

MRTV refuted claims that people had died as a result of an airstrike in Ka Nan village. However, Burmese news media channels, Myanmar Now and Khit Thit Media reported that 17 people, including five children, were killed by airstrikes in Ka Nan village on 7 January 2024. Other news outlets claimed that about 20 civilians were injured by the airstrike. Myanmar Witness compiled a table of the alleged victims, including their ages. By international standards, nine of the named deceased individuals are minors (see figure7).

Victims allegedly killed by an airstrikes on Ka Nan village	
Name	Age
ဒေါ်လွတ်ဖဲန်	၇၀ (70)
ဦးဘွလ်ခမ်း	၆၂ (62)
ဦးထန်သင်ဆောင်	၆၂ (62)

ဒေါ်ဆွေးကြင်ပါးရ်	၅၂ (52)
ဦးလားရဲမ်းအုပ်	၃၉ (39)
ဦးဗန်ပက်အော်ထန်	၃၂ (32)
ဦးဆလောမ်	၂၉ (29)
မောင်အာရောထန်	၂၉ (29)
မောင်အုပ်ထန်လျှံ	၁၇ (17)
မောင်ကပ်ရှုန်ခိုင်	၁၇ (17)
မောင်လားနွံမောယာ	၁၆ (16)
မထင်နွံမ်	၁၄ (14)
မနွမ်းဒိမ်မော	၁၃ (13)
မထျန်နေမော	၁၁ (11)
မောင်လားထန်းလျှံ	၇ (7)
မောင်မျိုးသူရလင်း	၆ (6)
မောင်စတီဗင်	၅ (5)

Figure 7: Table created by Myanmar Witness after compiling the information from *Khit Thit Media* and *Myanmar Now* which claimed the total death toll was 17 people, including six minors. The reports included the names and ages. The names were originally in Chin language, but have been written in Burmese.

Myanmar Witness identified footage which reportedly showed the victims, including UGC of individuals trying to cover or carry injured or dead people, and graphic and in-depth footage of the alleged victims, along with details about their genders, ages and the number of different bodies (sources redacted due to privacy concerns). By cross-referencing the different UGC, it appears that at least 12 people were visible, including at least three children, three women and an elderly individual (see figure 8). Unfortunately, this footage could not be geolocated due to a lack of identifiable features, preventing complete verification.



Figure 8: At least three of the victims were determined to likely identify as women according to their appearance, with another three victims identified as children according to their sizes and appearances (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).

In footage uploaded by [Khit Thit Media](#) (at 1 minute 18 seconds), a woman wearing orange clothing and distinctive trousers is visible. The woman is motionless and has sustained injuries. Although most of the images analysed could not be geolocated, the woman in orange is present in images posted by several different sources. One image of the lady in orange could be geolocated to a road in Ka Nan village [23.805460, 94.142951]. The same woman is also present amongst the deceased in the aforementioned graphic and in-depth video of the alleged victims, providing further support to claims that individuals died in Ka Nan (see figure 9). Her wounded leg is visible in multiple pieces of UGC, increasing the likelihood that this is the same person (see figure 10).



Figure 9: A panorama to demonstrate the location of the female identified in orange who was allegedly injured in Ka Nan (orange dot). The blue dot marks the location of another individual who lies motionless in the UGC, close to the alleged impact site, marked by the yellow dot. This panorama was created by cross-referencing multiple pieces of footage (sources: [Khit Thit Media](#), two additional sources have been redacted due to privacy concerns).



Khit Thit Video



MM Now



Free Burma Rangers



Private source

Figure 10: The woman wearing orange is present in a number of different pieces of UGC, published by different sources (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).

Myanmar Witness also identified multiple pieces of UGC showing potential blood stains at the site of the alleged airstrike [23.806026, 94.142977], the St. Peter Baptist Church [23.805503, 94.143868], and the Basic Education High School [23.805603, 94.144311] (sources redacted due to privacy concerns). If these marks are blood stains, it suggests that individuals were severely injured or possibly killed at these locations (see figure 11). In additional footage geolocated to the Basic Education High School Ka Nan village, there are further potential blood stains and a pit in the ground that could suggest an explosion took place close to the school building, resulting in severe injury.

While Myanmar Witness cannot fully verify the deaths due to the lack of geolocatable or chronolocatable footage, the cross-referencing of UGC — including images of the alleged deceased and potential blood stains — lends weight to the media claims that individuals were injured or killed in Ka Nan. Myanmar Witness reverse image searched the content it found

related to the alleged airstrike and determined that the videos were not uploaded prior to 7 January 2024, increasing the likelihood that they are authentic.



Figure 11: Potential blood in the airstrike-damaged areas suggests people were likely injured or killed in this attack. The appearance of this red stain in some areas on the ground could be fresh due to the bright colourisation (sources: two sources were redacted due to privacy concerns).

Claim three: No aircraft flew over the area on the morning of 7 January.

On 7 January 2024, [Khit Thit Media](#) posted a video in which Myanmar Witness has geolocated to Ka Nan village [23.804809, 94.142874]. The sound of an aircraft overhead can be heard while plain clothed individuals duck and run around the area. A small, black object in the sky can be seen briefly (at 0.11 seconds) before a loud noise can be heard, consistent with the explosion of the airstrike. The sound suggests the employment of one single air-dropped munition during the

filmed pass. Smoke plumes, which were geolocated to the red circle in figure 12 below, are then visible.

This footage first appears to have been posted online on 7 January 2024. Images uploaded to social media after the alleged airstrike show damage to the area where the smoke plume is visible. Additionally, the damage is visible in Sentinel-2 satellite imagery taken between 3 and 8 January 2024, narrowing the event's timeframe to between 3 and 7 January.



Figure 12: The airstrike took place at around 23.805646, 94.142957 (red) and was filmed from further south of the village at around 23.804809, 94.142874 (source: [Khit Thit Media](#)).

In the Khit Thit Media version of the footage, the small black object cannot be identified due to the footage's low quality. However, Myanmar Witness located the original, higher-quality footage. Using this, it was possible to identify the small black object as the silhouette of a Q-5 aircraft, flying over Ka Nan village (0.11 seconds; source redacted due to privacy concerns). The Q-5's engines become louder as the aircraft approaches the location where the video is being filmed.

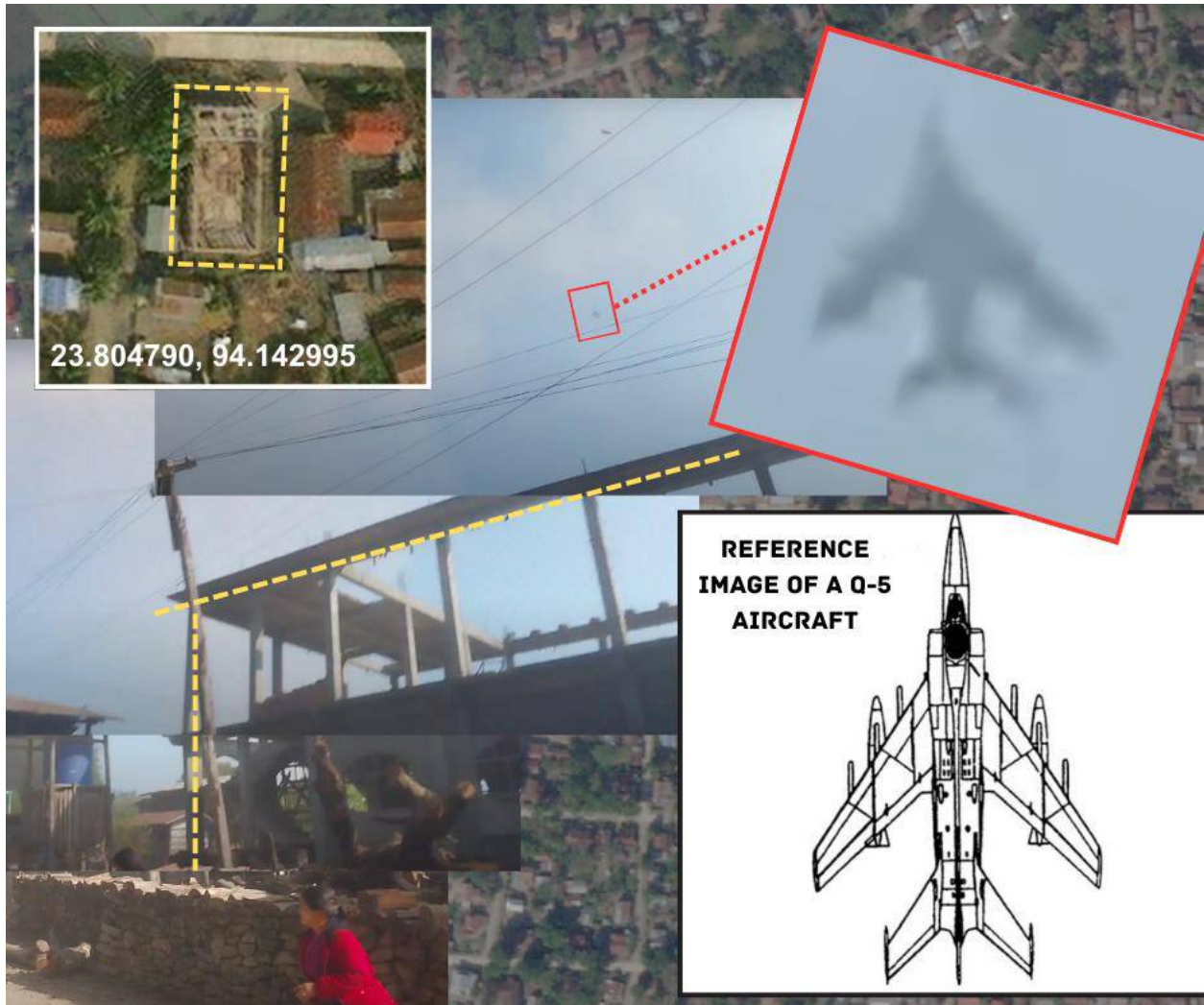


Figure 13: Screenshot from the private footage as compared to a reference image of a Q-5 ground attack jet (source: blueprints.com).

One additional video, allegedly filmed in Ka Nan village, captured a Q-5 ground attack jet in the sky (figure 13; source redacted due to privacy concerns). However, Myanmar Witness cannot confidently geolocate the footage due to a lack of identifiable features (see figure 15).

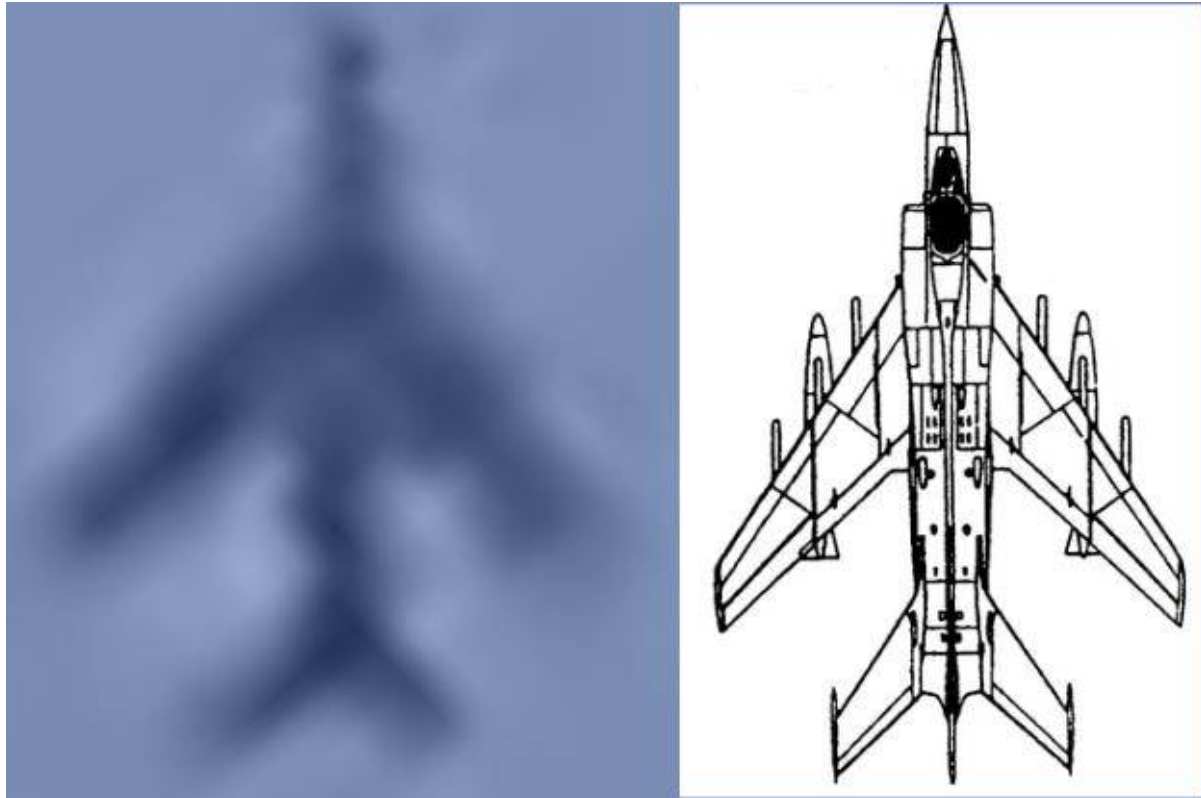


Figure 14: Screenshot from the private footage as compared to a reference image of a Q-5 ground attack jet sourced from blueprints.com.

Flight Tracking Telegram Channels

Two different telegram channels that post about Myanmar military aircraft movements reported that a ‘fighter jet’ left Tada-U airbase on the morning of 7 January 2024, heading in the general direction of Khampat town (ခမ်းပတ်မြို့) or Tamu township. Commenters on these Telegram posts mention that Khampat town — less than one kilometre from Ka Nan village — was bombed at around 1030 on 7 January 2024, around half an hour after the airstrikes in Ka Nan allegedly took place. Myanmar Witness documented the channels’ reports in the table below and mapped the reported sightings to understand the aircraft’s potential route (see figure 16 and 17).

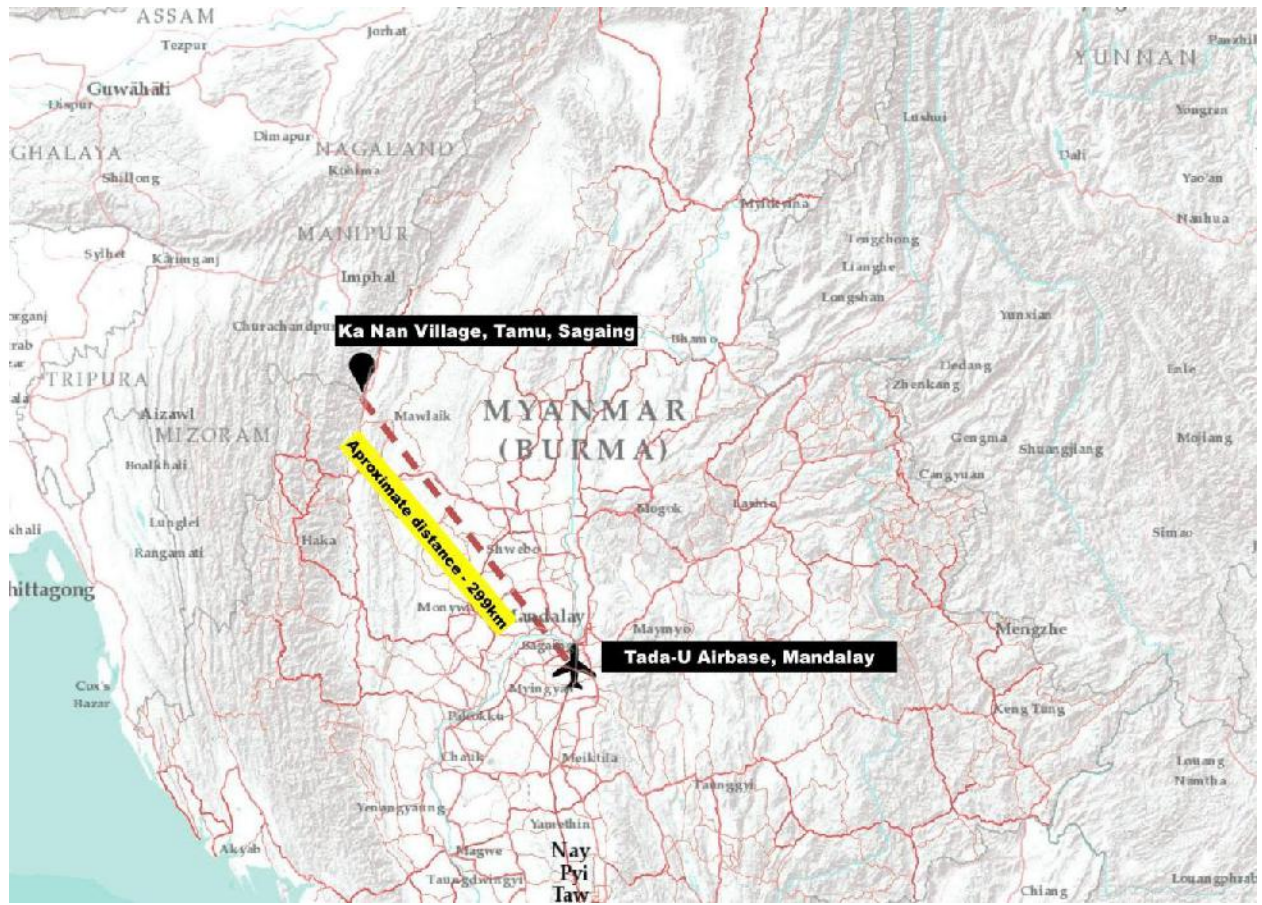
Channel	Status: Quote	Time	Additional Remarks
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One jet fighter left Tada-U airbase.	1000	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter left Tada-U airbase.	1000	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One jet fighter passed Sagaing town.	1002	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One jet fighter passed Tabayin area.	1014	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter passed western Ye-U area.	1016	

Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One A-5 jet fighter passed Kalewa area.	1026	Mentioned the jet fighter as an A-5
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter passed Kalewa area.	1028	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter was flying around Khampat area.	1033	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter passed Mingin area.	1042	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One jet fighter passed Tabayin area.	1049	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter passed Ayadaw area.	1050	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One jet fighter passed Ayadaw area.	1051	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 2	One jet fighter landed Tada-U airbase	1055	
Telegram Air Traffic Channel 1	One A-5 jet fighter landed Tada-U airbase	1056	Mentioned the jet fighter as an A-5

Figure 15: Table created by Myanmar Witness with quotes from two separate Telegram channels that track MAF aircraft movements (sources: Private). The Q-5 in service with the MAF is the export version of the Chinese-manufactured A-5 ground-attack aircraft. The names are often used interchangeably. Additionally, technically the Q-5 is a ground attack aircraft, rather than a fighter jet.

The Q-5 in service with the MAF is the export version of the Chinese-manufactured A-5 ground-attack aircraft. This model was allegedly ordered in the early 1990s, and Myanmar Witness assesses that more than 30 aircraft were delivered to the MAF. Myanmar Witness cannot independently verify how many are still in operation, but [FlightGlobal's 2023 World Air Forces directory](#) claims that 20 are still in active service with the MAF. [Expert sources](#) claim the Q-5 is equipped with 10 hardpoints (4 underbelly and 3 under each wing) and that it can carry a total payload of 2000 kilograms. Its [alleged](#) maximum range is 2000 kilometres, but its combat radius (with full payload and no refueling) is 600 kilometres. The distance from Tada-U airbase to Ka Nan village is approximately 299 kilometres, meaning that the mission range was well within the capabilities of a Q-5 with a full payload.

Despite its longevity, Myanmar Witness has observed that the Q-5 has been employed with increased frequency by the MAF. It has been kept in operational service after the February 2021 coup thanks to deliveries of spare parts from the People's Republic of China, as [alleged by the UN in a 2023 report](#)



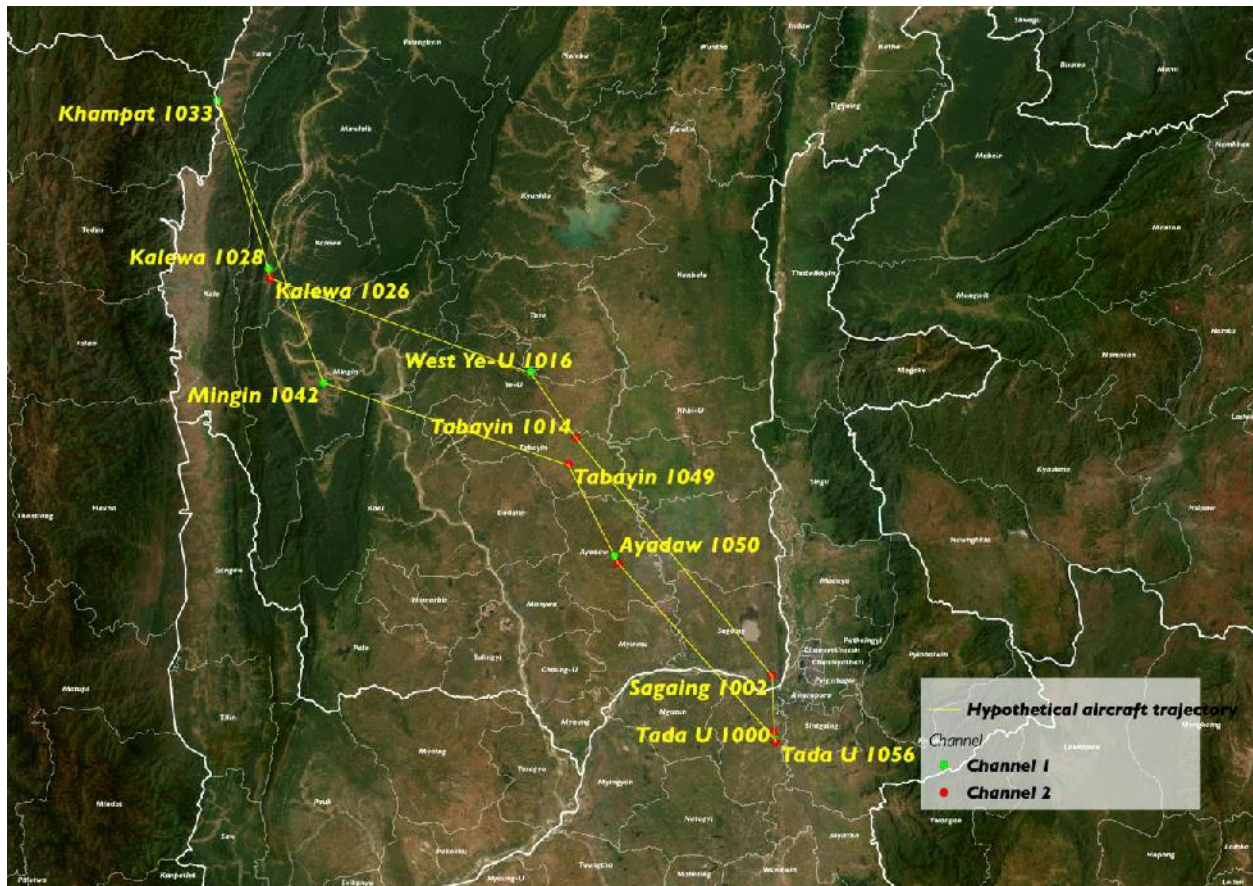


Figure 16: Routes according to the reports from two Telegram channels.

The Tada-U Airbase

Satellite imagery obtained from Planet of Tada-U air base on 7 January 2023 shows multiple aircraft on the airbase's tarmac, including four Q-5 ground attack jets (figure 18). This satellite imagery was captured at 0943 local time. Close-up shots of these aircraft also reveal vehicles on the tarmac next to one of the Q-5 aircraft. While unconfirmed, the cylindrical shape could signal that these are refueling trucks, which may suggest that the Q-5 aircraft was involved in air operations. High resolution imagery of the same airbase several days prior and following 7 January 2023 shows that Q-5 jets were active on the base's tarmac, runway and aprons next to the hangars.

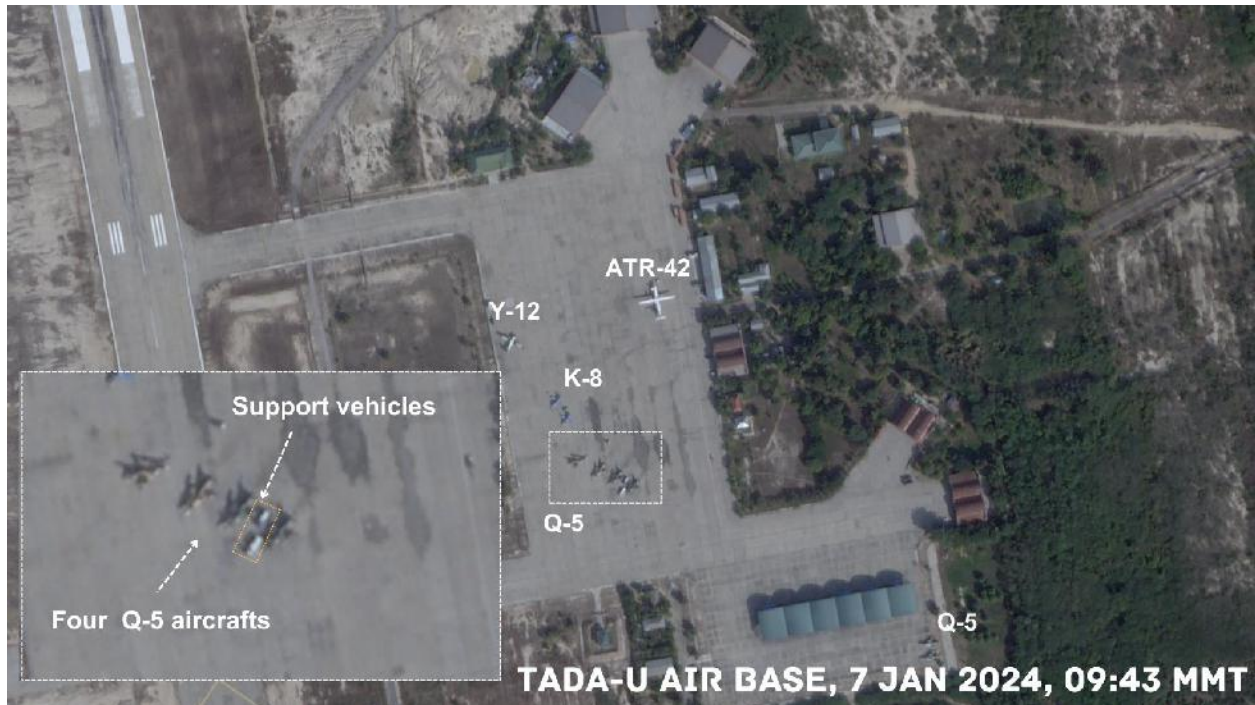


Figure 17: Tada-U airport shows aircraft, including the Q-5 ground attack jets, on the Tada-U airbase tarmac on 7 January 2024 on Planet.



Figure 18: Reference image of a Myanmar Air Force (MAF) Q-5 aircraft. The overall measurements, shapes, and camo patterns match with the four aircraft spotted on the tarmac via satellite imagery at Tada-U Airbase on 7 January 2024.

Time of the event

Multiple media outlets claimed the incident happened on 7 January 2024 at around 1030 local time. This corresponds with the Flight Tracking Telegram Channel's reports on the suspected Q-5 aircraft movement from Tada-U Airbase. Additionally, most of the footage identified by Myanmar Witness related to the event emerged on social media on the afternoon of 7 January 2024.

Using Suncalc, Myanmar Witness analysed the shadows in the aforementioned Khit Thit Media footage, within which an explosion could be heard, and a smoke plume was visible. Assuming the

footage was taken on 7 January 2023, or within proximity of that date, using the shadow direction (at 0.13 seconds), it is possible to determine that the footage was taken around 1030 (see figure 21).

Similarly, assuming it was taken on 7 January 2024, another piece of footage showing potentially fresh bloodstains and destroyed buildings appears to have been taken between 1100-1130 local time in Ka Nan village, suggesting that the attack had recently taken place in Ka Nan village (see figure 22). This provides further weight to the claims that an airstrike occurred around 1030 on 7 January 2024.



Figure 19: Shadow direction calculations on Suncalc place this footage, featuring the airstrike in question, at around 1030 local time. (Source: Khit Thit Media).



Figure 20: Footage of potential fresh bloodstains and damaged buildings was chronolocated using [SunCalc](#) between 1100-1130. The footage was posted at 1201 local time (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).

Future monitoring

Despite MRTV’s claims that an airstrike did not take place, resulting in casualties and the destruction of a church, Myanmar Witness has collected contradictory information with supporting UGC, which suggests that an airstrike by a Q-5 ground attack jet likely took place, with multiple casualties in Ka Nan village.

The MAF is the only known actor in the conflict in Myanmar with Q-5 ground attack jets. Myanmar Witness has previously [reported](#) on the use of airstrikes by the MAF, including against local resistance forces and civilians in the Sagaing region. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor the use of airstrikes throughout Myanmar and attempt to hold the MAF accountable through open-source investigations.

Abbreviations

- Myanmar Air Force MAF
- Myanmar Radio and Television MRTV
- User-generated content UGC