

Myanmar Internet Project 4 days ago 13 min read

Fueling Genocide

Telegram's Role in the Ongoing Violence in Rakhine State

Introduction

Since the 2021 military coup d'état and the period beforehand, Rakhine State has faced intense conflict fueled by a genocidal campaign against the Rohingya - an ethnic minority within the State. The Burmese junta also continues to oppress other ethnic groups across the country, but due to the Rohingya genocide, Rakhine State has come to the forefront of international attention and interest.

In Burma, nationalists and military supporters have exploited popular social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to foster tension and discrimination across ethnic, religious, political, and social lines, and have contributed to the ongoing violence in Rakhine State.

However, due to the junta's imposed bans and restrictions on Facebook after the 2021 coup, the majority of the public migrated to the platform "Telegram," and currently continue to simultaneously engage with both.

Facebook's new censorship policies on content related to the Rohingya and other issues concerning Rakhine State have also restricted nationalists and military supporters from continuing to push harmful narratives on this platform. They have instead shifted to rely on another application - Telegram - as their primary platform to launch propaganda campaigns, spread disinformation and fake news intended to construe the facts, and overall weaponize the use of information online. They have constructed and established a digital network of different profiles on various social media platforms for immediate and mass distribution of their content to society. Utilizing this network, the harmful narratives launched on Telegram are then scattered across other platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok.

This report details the creation and distribution of Telegram content that seeks to escalate tensions and incite violence in Rakhine State, and identifies the users behind these efforts. It explores the construction of various narratives, the propagation of fake news and conspiracies, and includes a collection of key words and language examples used in these materials.

Key Words

Terms used by nationalists and military supporters to address different communities often promote ethnic and religious discrimination, featuring slurs, other derogatory terms, and comparisons of certain ethnic groups to wild animals.

They avoid the use of "Rohingya," and instead employ key words historically found within genocidal propaganda that aim to erase the group's existence in history.

For example, the Rohingya are often referred to as "Bengali ('ဘင်္ဂါလီများ)" and "လူမျိုးလိမ်အမည် (roughly translated to - 'the fake ethnic name group') to push the narrative that they are from Bangladesh and deny them of their heritage in Burma. Derogatory terms such as "ဘင်္ဂါများ" are also employed. In an effort to escape censorship policies, new terms were also created that could escape the monitoring algorithms of social media platforms, such as "Kmkများ" and "Pင်ပြဲအောင်."

In addition, news of Rakhine towns and villages being attacked by airstrikes and heavy weaponry are referenced as the Rakhine people's "blood debts" finally being paid off, suggesting they deserved the violence.

Attached is a list of the most popular keywords utilized in posts regarding the Rohingya and Rakhine State:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| • ဘင်္ဂါလီများ | • AA ဓာတ်ခဲ |
| • လူမျိုးလိမ်အမည် | • ဘင်္ဂတွေ မွတ်တွေ |
| • ပြည်ဖျက်မီဒီယာ | • မျိုးမစစ်ဘင်္ဂါလီ |
| • မြောက် ၃ ကောင် | • နိုင်သခေါ |
| • သွေးကြွေး | • ဘင် |
| • Pင်ပြဲအောင် | • ရခီး |
| • Kmk များ | • ခဲဝါဝဲစားမီဒီယာ |
| • AA ခဲဝါများ | • ခဲဝါ သွေးမြက်နှိုက် |
| • ခဲဝါ | • ခဲဝါ နိုင်သွေးခဲ |

- ဟာသုခ

- ငြိမ်းစုံ

Narrative Style

Hateful content against the Rohingya and communities in Rakhine State typically avoids direct, aggressive language that could be easily flagged on social media, such as "Let's kill them all and make them extinct." Instead, users embed these messages into more subtle narratives.

These posts use catchy phrases and engaging stories to attract readers and influence their views. They often depict cases of Rohingya and Rakhine people abusing women and other vulnerable groups, using emojis and graphic photos to amplify the impact.

Attached are examples of popular narratives regarding the Rohingya and Rakhine State:

1."If you don't deliver the strongest [military] action [to Rakhine State], I won't love wearing my uniform [to serve the Burmese junta] anymore."

2."Will Rakhine State look good like this?"

3."Your land [Rakhine State] is going to face more storms [like Cyclone Mocha]. Don't bother shouting for help when it happens."

4."I wouldn't even donate underwear to the people in fucking Rakhine State who are living like dogs because of the cyclone."

5."Remember these six bombs and keep them in your heart. For those affected, go ahead and ask for retaliation to cover these blood debts."

6."If Yanbyae town is captured, Kyawphyu and Taungote towns are at high risk of being taken as well. [The Burmese junta] must take all means necessary to avoid this."

7."You can rip your ass screaming until the end of the world you motherfuckers. [May the Burmese junta] attack them until they are all destroyed."

8."Let's boycott Rakhine businesses and punish these ethnic liars"

9.[This person] is definitely someone working like a cow to help Htun Myat Naing's family get rich. Bengalis like to see the youth lazy and mentally unaware. When the Rakhine people yell for help, to save them, I'll just watch them with my hands crossed [doing nothing]. If Htun Myat Naing's plan oppresses ethnicities, it's the Rakhine people who will suffer. They deserve the punishment."

Mis/ dis Information

Fake news, mis/dis-information, and conspiracies were all regularly distributed, intending to fuel ethnic and religious hatred and divides.

Attached are examples of fake news stories that were spread:

1."When ARSA was killing masses of Rakhine people, AA did not protect anyone, it was the Burmese military who saved everyone and took this case all the way to the ICJ."

2.A screenshot shared with the caption, "All ethnically Rakhine employees at the company have been fired. If you are Rakhine and in my [online] Friends list, un-friend yourself."

3."The Arakan Army is now targeting the 'ဆွေ' [Rohingya]"

Language

"Bamar" : The Bamar language, which originates from the Bamar ethnic group, is the official language of Myanmar. However, other ethnic groups and minorities use their own languages in daily life. The Myanmar government officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, with the eight major ones being: 1) Bamar, 2) Kachin, 3) Karenni (also known as Kayah), 4) Karen (also known as Kayin), 5) Chin, 6) Mon, 7) Rakhine, and 8) Shan.

Each major ethnic group speaks a different language, and within these groups, smaller ethnic minorities speak distinct, indigenous languages. Other languages, including Bengali and Hindustani dialects, are also present in Myanmar.

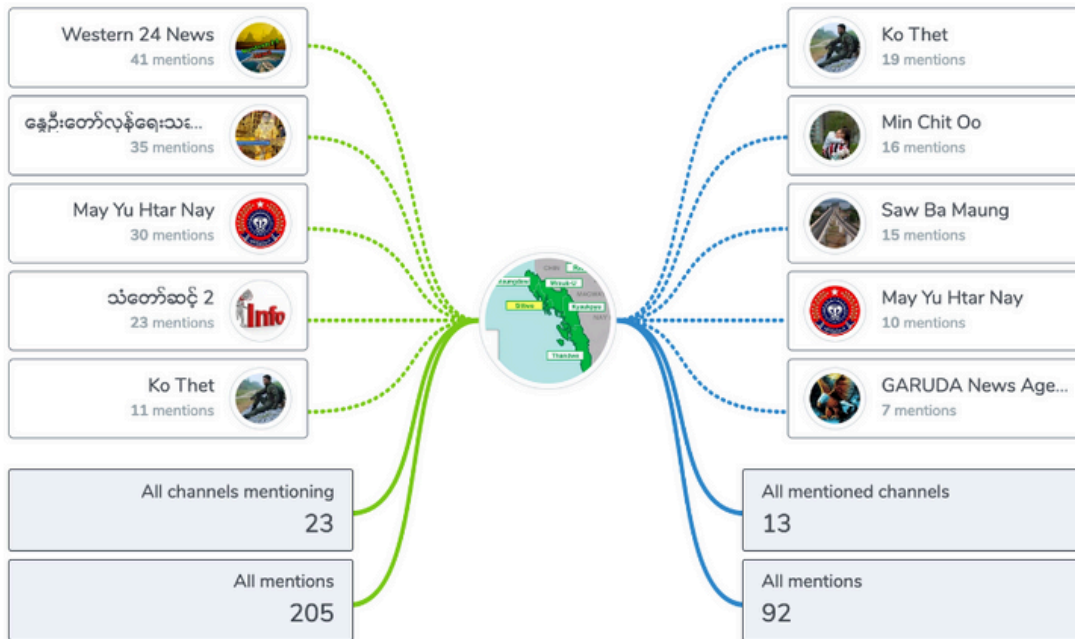
Nonetheless, the Bamar language is commonly used by other ethnic groups and minorities, and very few groups in Myanmar do not speak it.

As a result, most propaganda related to the Rohingya and Rakhine State is written in Bamar. Nationalists and military supporters accuse ethnic groups of finding fault with the Bamar language, and claim that they believe its usage will destroy Myanmar.

The Main Actors of Hatespeech and Propaganda Network

Arakan Htar Ney

Incoming and outgoing mentions

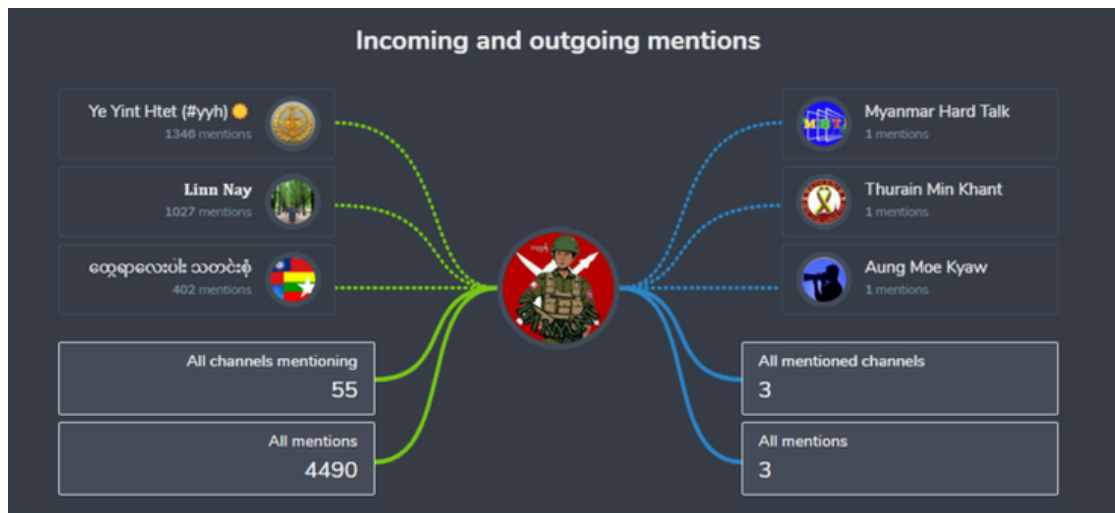


Arakan Htar Ney was created on December 9, 2023. This channel was part of Ko Thet's network and focused on propaganda in Rakhine State. It incited conflict in Rakhine State, praising the killing, arresting, and torturing by the Myanmar military, and called for bombings and airstrikes. As of April 2024, the channel is inaccessible.

Arakan Htar Ney collaborates with a network of 23 military-proxy channels led by Ko Thet and promotes 13 other military-proxy channels within their network.

Ba Nyunt (aka Bo Kyaw)

Incoming and outgoing mentions



Ba Nyunt, also known as Bo Kyaw, is a pro-military actor with close ties to Han Nyein Oo and Kyaw Swar, sharing admin access to various Telegram channels with them. He has played a key role in the ongoing campaign of terror against pro-democracy activists, responsible for widespread doxxing and gender-based harassment, including the repeated sharing of non-consensual sexual imagery. He operates 17 Telegram accounts under the names Ba Nyunt and Bo Kyaw.

Ba Nyunt emerged as a significant bad actor following the coup on July 8, 2021. Initially, he mostly re-shared content from senior channels such as Myanmar National Post, Han Nyein Oo, and Kyaw Swar. His active Telegram account was opened in March 2023.

He collaborates with 55 other military-proxy Telegram channels and promotes three additional military-proxy channels, including two partisan media outlets.

Combat News

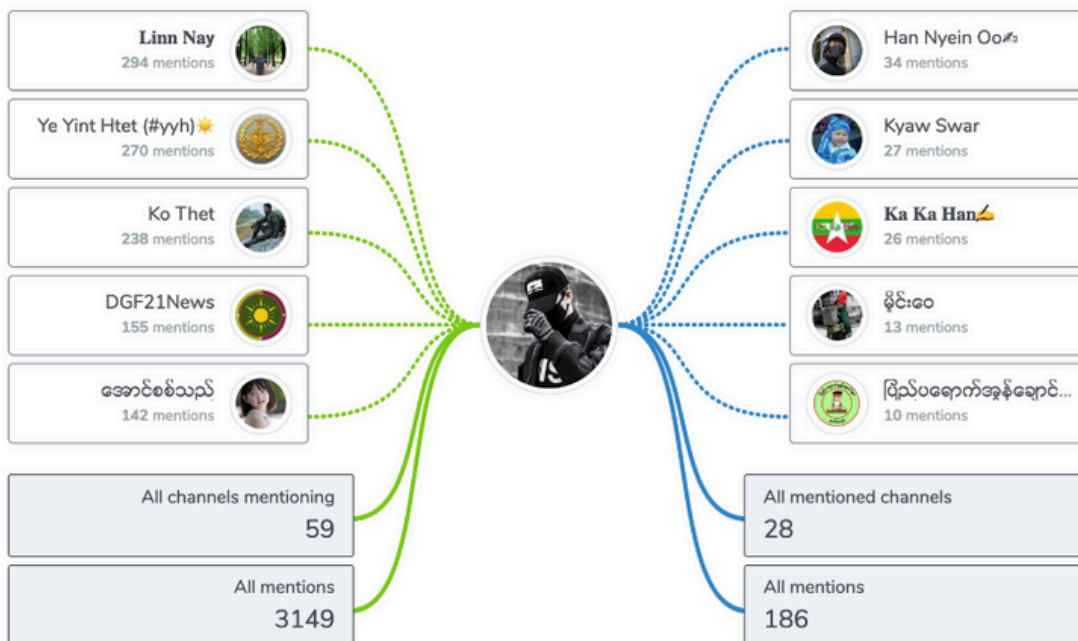
Incoming and outgoing mentions



The Burmese name "တိုက်ပွဲစုံသတင်း" translates to Combat News, a military proxy channel that opened on July 7, 2023. This channel is part of Ko Thet's network and has been promoted by Ko Thet's channel at least 300 times. Another related account, using the hashtag (#), is Khin Nyo Chaw(ခင်ညိုချော), which primarily shares content from "Fifty Two News". Combat News distributes battle news content from the opposing side and also shares content from Kyaw Swar and Min Chit Oo. Initially, Combat News was promoted by 47 military-proxy channels led by Ko Thet. It promotes other news channels, including Fifty Two News.

Han Nyein Oo

Incoming and outgoing mentions



Han Nyein Oo, also known as Soe Naing or Ka Ka Han, was a notorious celebrity gossip figure before the coup. He was associated with various clickbait publications and YouTube channels, reportedly monetizing through these ventures. Since the coup, he has been actively

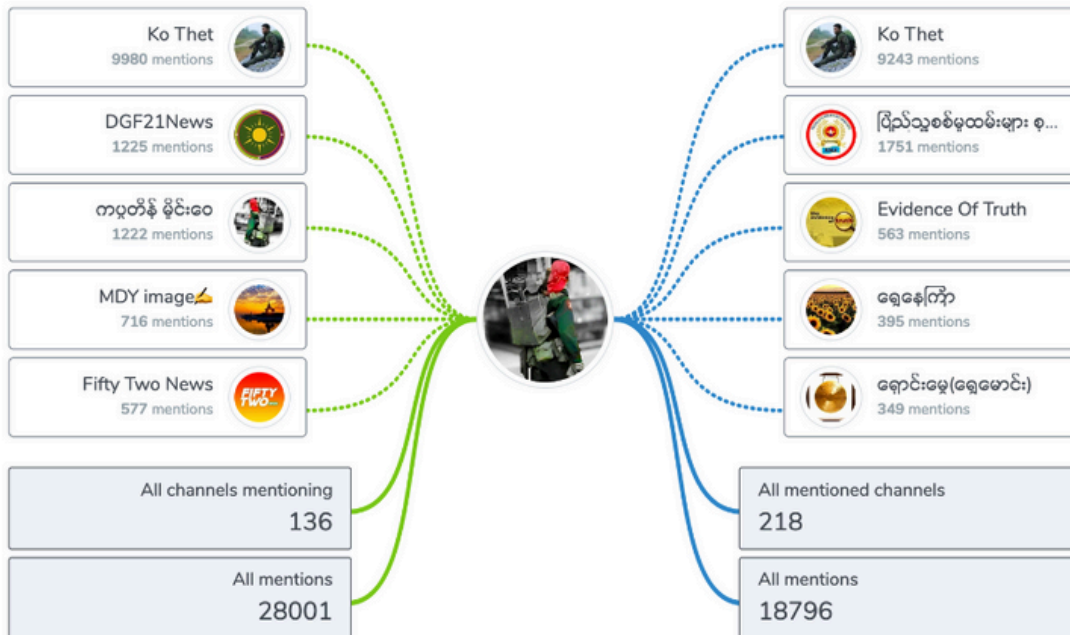
involved in targeted attacks on anti-coup activists, including campaigns of sexual harassment and mass doxxing. According to some sources, even the police and troops of the State Administration Council (SAC) are required to inform Han Nyein Oo immediately upon arresting individuals.

After the coup, Han Nyein Oo has built audiences on Telegram, sometimes sharing illegal pornographic content. We have identified 42 Telegram accounts associated with Han Nyein Oo, including 5 active channels and 2 active groups.

He collaborates with 59 other military-proxy Telegram channels and promotes 28 additional military-proxy channels, including those associated with Hmine Wai and Kyaw Swar.

Hmine Wai

Incoming and outgoing mentions



The account named "စိုင်းဝေ" (Hmine Wai) was opened on December 2, 2021, and shares content from figures such as Phoe Si (တပ်ကြပ်ကြီးဖိုးစို), Ko Thet, Han Nyein Oo, Kyaw Swar, Ba Nyunt, among others. Another account associated with Hmine Wai is "ကုတ်စိုင်းဝေ," which was opened on June 16, 2023. According to some of Hmine Wai's posts, he is based in the military headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw. Ko Thet has been promoting Hmine Wai since the account's inception.

On Telegram, Hmine Wai collaborates with 136 military-proxy channels and promotes 218 military-proxy channels. His network significantly overlaps with Ko Thet's.

Ko Chit (MDY)

Incoming and outgoing mentions



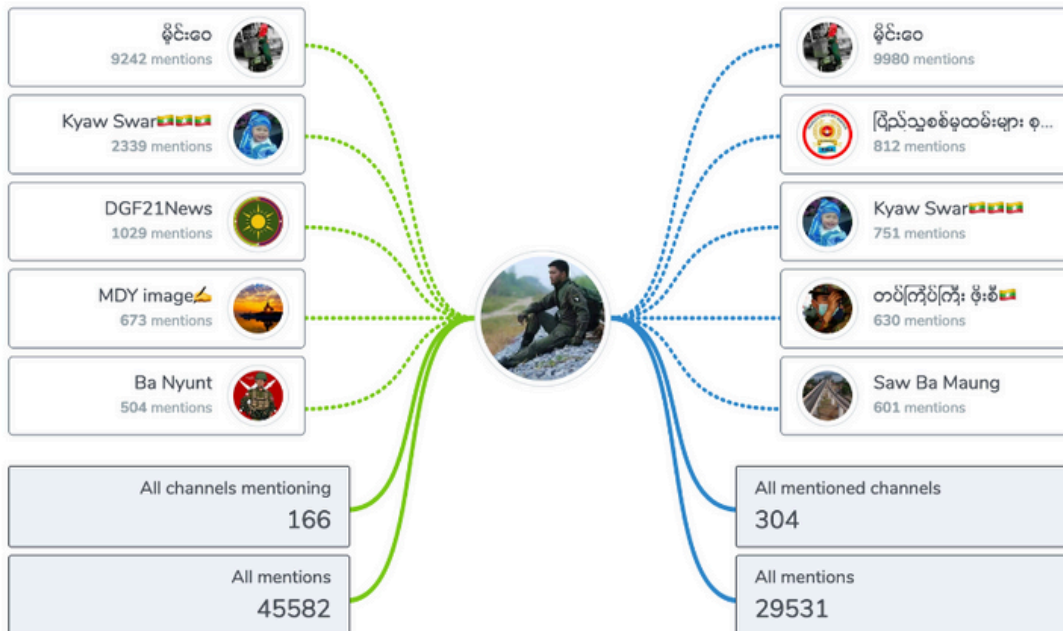


Ko Chit (MDY) is a pro-military Telegram channel opened on June 28, 2021. This account is affiliated with Ko Thet's network and disseminates content for military propaganda while undermining pro-democracy movements. Most of Ko Chit's content focuses on military movement information, particularly in the Mandalay region. Evidence suggests he is involved with the MDY image channel, further implicating his role.

On Telegram, Ko Chit (MDY) collaborates with 67 military-proxy channels and promotes 56 others. His network overlaps significantly with Ko Thet, Hmine Wai, Kyaw Swar, and others.

Ko Thet

Incoming and outgoing mentions



Ko Thet presents himself as a journalist, but he is actually a lieutenant commander, as revealed in a video published on Han Nyein Oo's Telegram channel where Ko Thet is seen wearing a military uniform. The badge and logo on his uniform indicate his affiliation with the 44th Light Infantry Division of the Myanmar Military, based in Thaton, Mon State. He operates 10 Telegram accounts, with his active account opened in October 2021.

Since the coup, Ko Thet has been actively involved in military propaganda and leads a network of accounts across multiple social media platforms. On Telegram, he collaborates with 166 military-proxy channels and promotes 304 military-proxy channels, including those associated with prominent nationalist activist Naung Taw Lay.

Kyaw Swar

Incoming and outgoing mentions

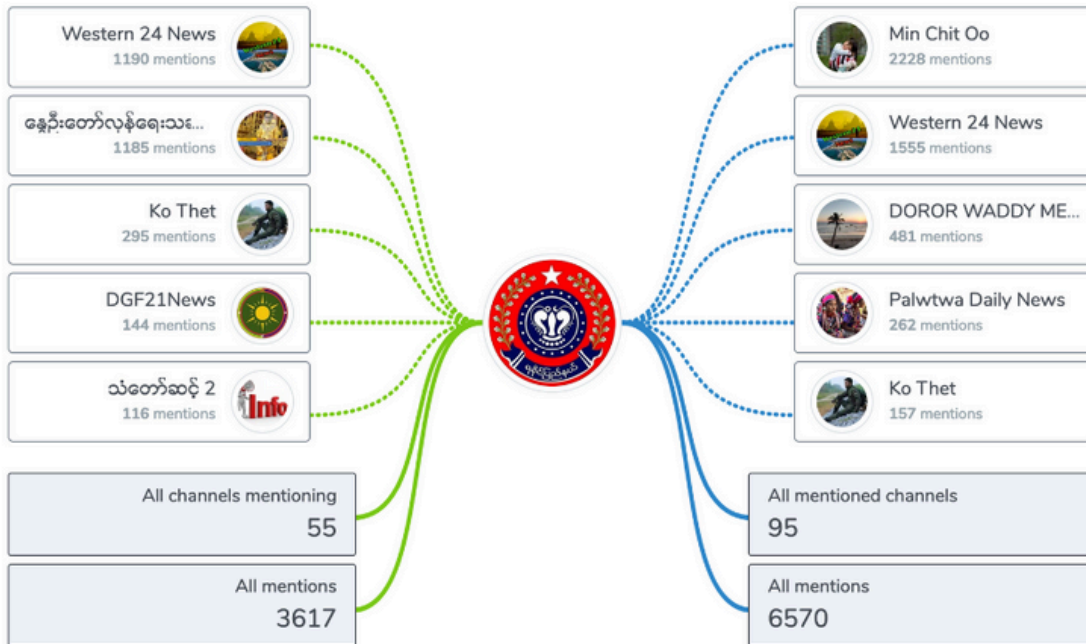


Kyaw Swar is the chief editor of Positive Angle News (PAN), founded in January 2023. He was originally part of the Southeastern Command and also served as a digital lobbyist for the USDP during the 2020 elections. Since the coup, he has been actively connected with Han Nyein Oo and Thazin Oo under the Tri Star umbrella, coordinating doxxing campaigns. He operates 12 Telegram accounts, with his active account opened in October 2023, The Positive Angle News (PAN), Telegram account was also opened in January 2023.

Kyaw Swar's update channel, established on October 20, 2023, now has 165,000 followers. He actively collaborates with 85 other military-proxy Telegram channels, including Ko Thet, and promotes the Min Chit Oo channels, a prominent military lobbyist focused on propaganda in Rakhine State.

May Yu Htar Nay

Incoming and outgoing mentions



May Yu Htar Nay is a covert media channel that opened on June 23, 2022, and is led by Ko Thet's team. This channel posts and shares Rakhine news from the military, serving as military propaganda. It particularly promotes Min Chit Oo and other purported Rakhine covert Rakhine media outlets including Western 24 News, Doror Waddy Media, Paltwa Daily News, ရခိုင်နေ့စဉ်, ယနေ့ရခိုင်ပြည်ဖြစ်ရပ်မှန်များ, သံတွဲမြို့လူထု အသံ, Voice of Muslim, and Arakan Htar Ney. Our observations indicate that May Yu Htar Nay plays a key role in the military propaganda network targeting Rakhine State.

On Telegram, May Yu Htar Nay collaborates with 55 military-proxy channels and promotes 95 military-proxy channels within Ko Thet's network.

Min Chit Oo

Incoming and outgoing mentions

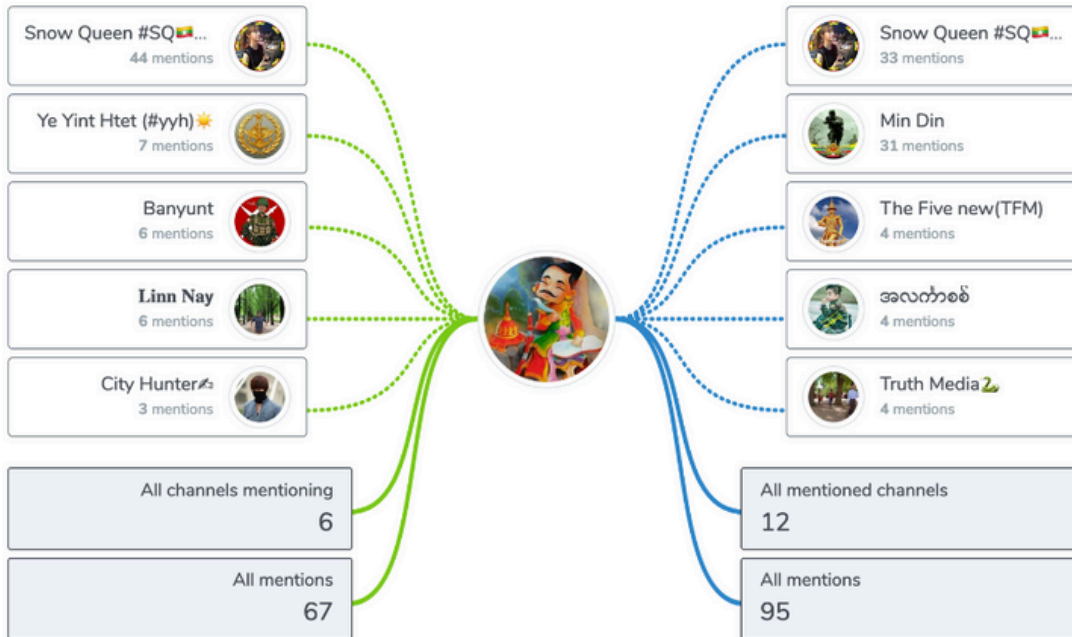


Min Chit Oo is a pro-military Telegram channel that opened on June 27, 2021. He is part of a propaganda network alongside Ko Thet, Kyaw Swar, Ba Nyunt, and Han Nyein Oo. Min Chit Oo(2) serves as the backup channel and was opened on February 18, 2023. This account primarily targets Rakhine State and leads the military narrative in that region. It is involved in mass doxxing, collecting intelligence on the Arakan Army's movements, inciting violence, and conducting disinformation campaigns.

Min Chit Oo has been promoted by Ko Thet and May Yu Htar Nay's network. On Telegram, Min Chit Oo collaborates with 89 military-proxy channels and promotes content related to ရခိုင်နေ့စဉ်.

Min Kan Si aka လက်ဝဲသုန္ဒရအမတ်ကြီး

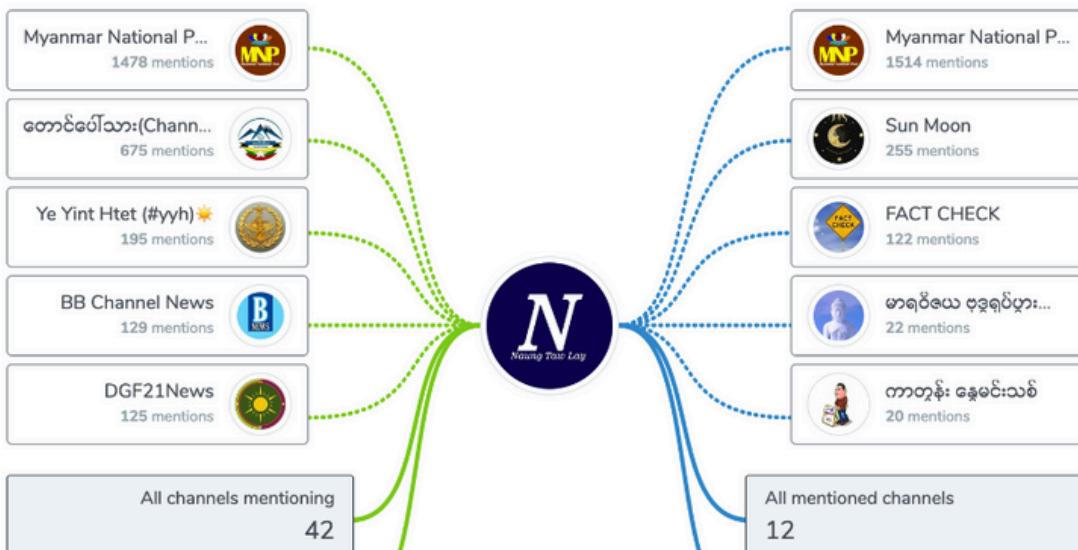
Incoming and outgoing mentions



The Burmese name "လက်ဝဲသုန္ဒရအမတ်ကြီး" is an account of Min Kan Si, opened on October 30, 2023. This channel is part of the Snow Queen network. It geographically targets Mon State and is involved in military intelligence, collecting information on the movements of PDF (People's Defense Forces) and EAOs (Ethnic Armed Organizations), and engaging in counter-propaganda. Min Kan Si, also known as "လက်ဝဲသုန္ဒရအမတ်ကြီး," incites violence against civilians in conflict areas. This account primarily shares content from Snow Queen and Min Din and collaborates with 6 military propaganda channels, promoting 12 military propaganda channels.

Naung Taw Lay (aka Naing Win Tun)

Incoming and outgoing mentions



All mentions
3204

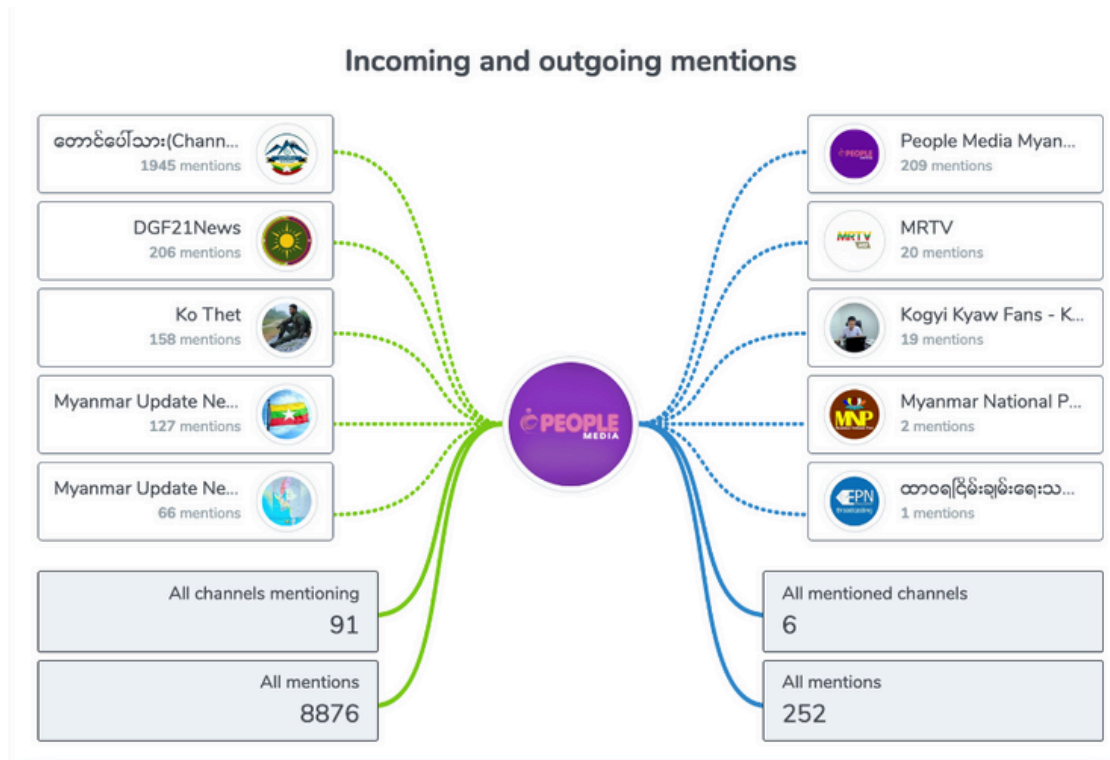
All mentions
2089

Naung Taw Lay, also known as Naing Win Tun, is the chief editor of Myanmar National Post (MNP), the secretary of the Myanmar National Network, and a nationalist activist. Before the coup, he was actively involved in nationalist movements and has strong connections with Win Ko Ko Latt, Aye Lay, Kyaw Soe Oo, Win Maw (Shwe Than Zin), and the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (Ma Ba Tha). Naung Taw Lay founded MNP with other associates from the Myanmar National Network and serves as Editor in Chief.

Naung Taw Lay started using Telegram in December 2021. Initially, he collaborated with the USDP digital campaign channel called Taung Paw Tar (တောင်ပေါ်သား). **After June 2023**, Ko Thet's network began promoting Naung Taw Lay's channel. Members of Ko Thet's network, such as Ko Thet, Hmine Wai, and Lin Nay, shared Naung Taw Lay's content on their channels and encouraged their audiences to join his channel.

Naung Taw Lay has three Telegram accounts, including personal and channel accounts. His active Telegram account was opened in December 2021. On this account, he identifies himself as a national journalist. The same posts are uploaded on both his personal and channel accounts on Telegram. He collaborates with 42 USDP and military-backed channels and promotes 12 channels, including his partisan media outlet, MNP.

People Media

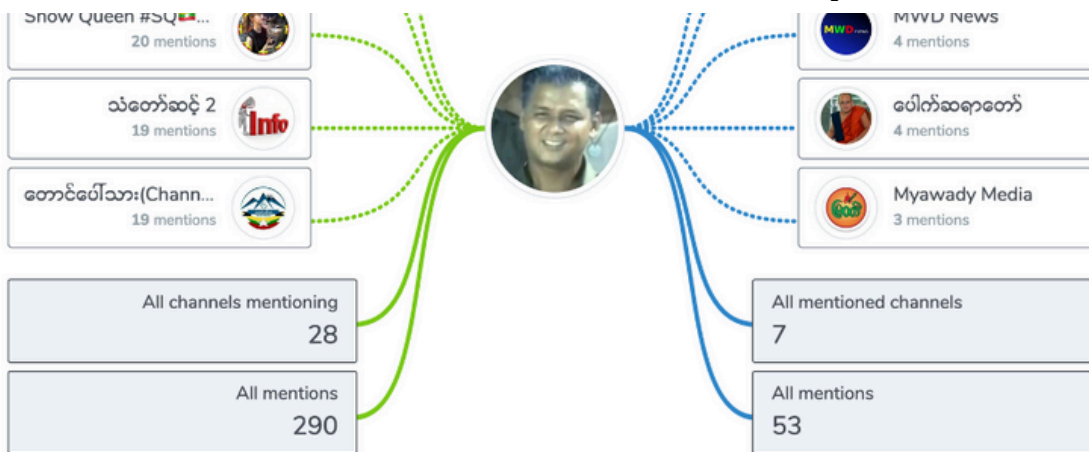


People Media is a pro-military media outlet founded by Kyaw Soe Oo, its chief editor, in 2019. The People Media Telegram channel was launched in February 2022 and is primarily used as a platform for their media content. Kyaw Soe Oo hosts a daily news review talk show on the People Media Telegram channel every night.

People Media collaborates with 91 other military-proxy Telegram channels, including Ko Thet, and promotes six additional military-proxy channels, including MRTV.

Phoe Si





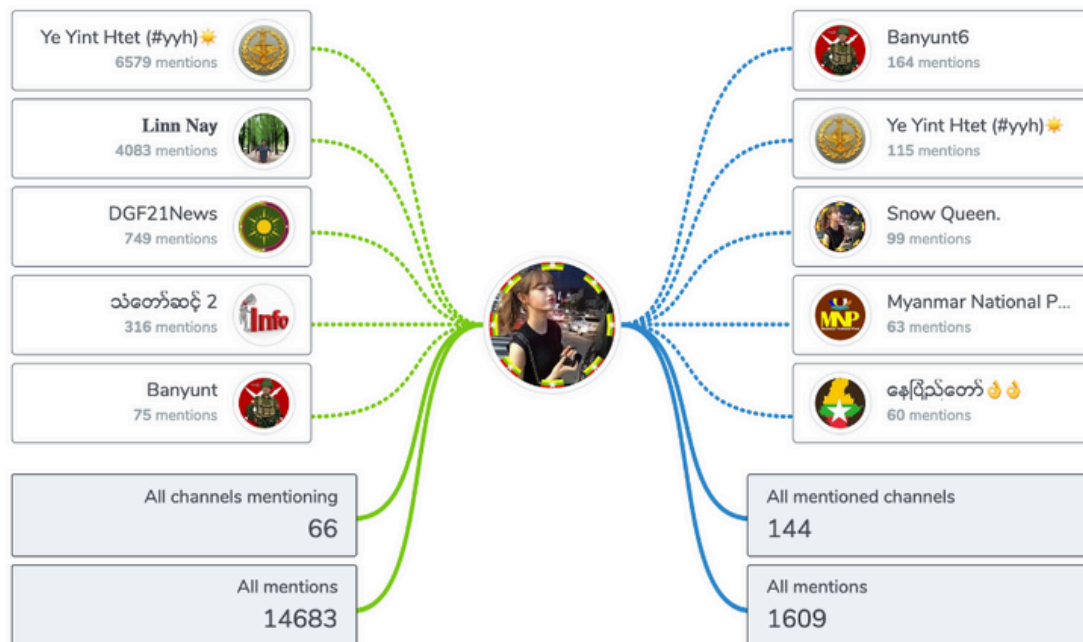
The Burmese name "တပ်ကြပ်ကြီးဖိုးစည်" is the account of Phoe Si, which was opened on [September 15, 2021](#). Other accounts associated with Phoe Si include "မောင်ဖိုးစည်" (opened on [August 27, 2021](#)), "တပ်ကြပ်ကြီးဖိုးစီ" (opened on [March 10, 2022](#)), and "ဖိုးစည်" (opened on [February 27, 2023](#)). The name "တပ်ကြပ်ကြီး ဖိုးစည်" means Sergeant Phoe Si and is derived from a famous military propaganda movie character played by Kyaw Hein. As a result, the account uses the Burmese film star Kyaw Hein's photo as its Telegram profile picture.

Phoe Si is involved in collecting military intelligence information on the movements of PDF (People's Defense Forces) and EAOs (Ethnic Armed Organizations), and engaging in counter-propaganda. Phoe Si primarily shares content from military-owned media channels, such as [MWD News](#) (opened on [March 31, 2021](#)), and the Commander-in-Chief Office of Defense Services Telegram channel, [CINICDS Myanmar](#) (opened on [April 15, 2021](#)).

On Telegram, Phoe Si collaborates with 28 military-proxy channels and promotes 7 military-proxy channels, including CINICDS Myanmar, Myawady Media, and his own backup channels.

Snow Queen

Incoming and outgoing mentions

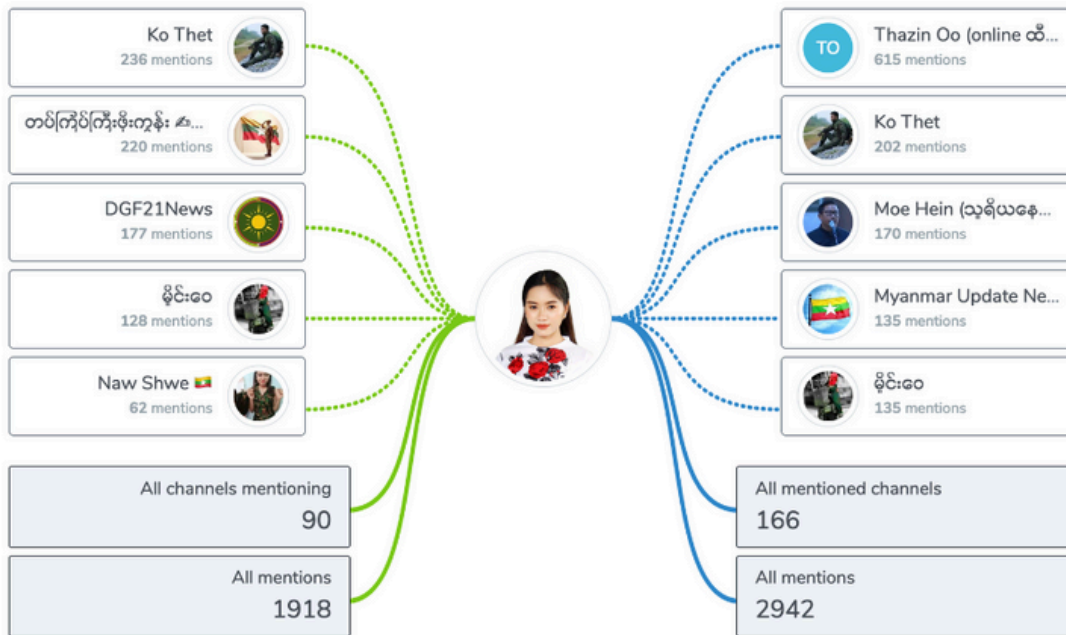


[Snow Queen is a covert account claiming to be a news channel, which opened on April 9, 2023](#). In a short time, the network of Ye Yint Htet, Linn Nay, Ba Nyunt, and City Hunter channel promoted Snow Queen's content, helping her amass 58K followers. Snow Queen is involved in mass doxxing, intelligence gathering, inciting violence, and counter-propaganda online.

Snow Queen closely collaborates with 66 channels, including Ye Yint Htet and Linn Nay, and promotes 144 channels, including Ba Nyunt and Ye Yint Htet.

Thazin Oo

Incoming and outgoing mentions

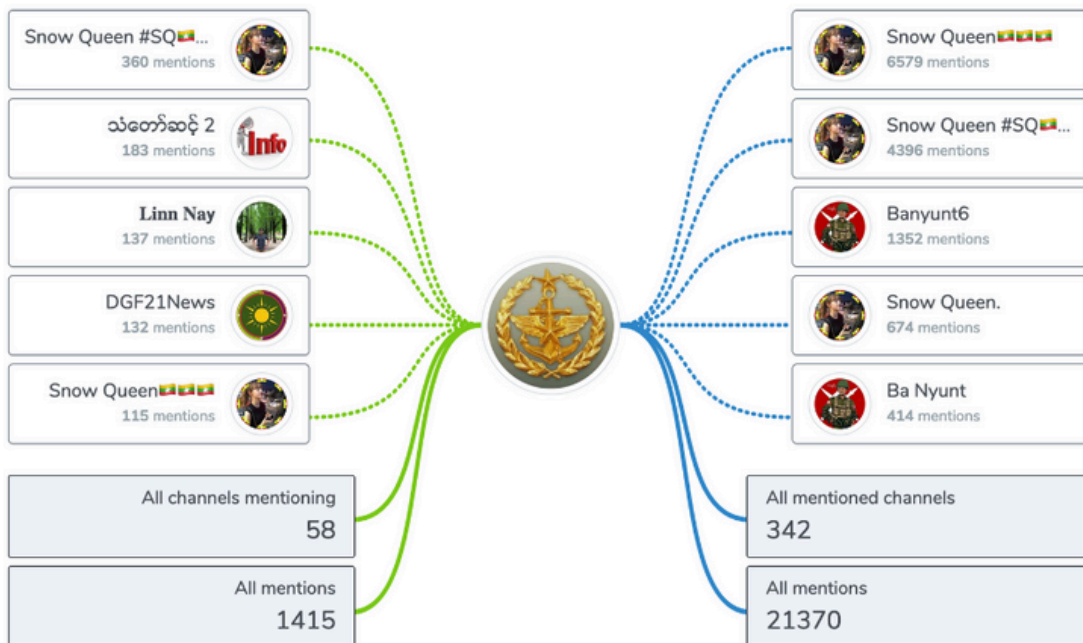


Thazin Oo is the presenter of Thuriya Nay Wun and a former presenter of MHT News. She currently hosts TV shows on the MWD channel with Moe Hein on a weekly basis. Additionally, she campaigned for the USDP in the 2020 elections. Thazin Oo manages several Telegram channels, one of which has been previously banned by Telegram for repeated violations. Since the coup, she has been actively involved in targeted attacks on anti-coup activists, including campaigns of mass doxing. Her active Telegram account was opened in March 2022.

Thazin Oo collaborates with 90 other military-proxy Telegram channels, including Ko Thet, and promotes 166 additional military-proxy channels, such as Ko Thet, Hmine Wai, and others.

Ye Yint Htet

Incoming and outgoing mentions



Ye Yint Htet (#yyh) is the name of a pro-military Telegram channel that opened on June 30, 2021. This channel is part of the network involving Snow Queen and Ba Nyunt. Ye Yint Htet is involved in mass doxing, intelligence gathering, inciting violence, and counter-propaganda online.

Ye Yint Htet closely collaborates with 55 channels, including Snow Queen and Linn Nay, and promotes 342 channels, including Snow Queen and Ba Nyunt.

Coordinated Behavior

During our research, we observed significant overlap within the network of military proxy channels. Key actors such as Ko Thet, Hmine Wai, Thazin Oo, Kyaw Swar, Han Nyein Oo, and Snow Queen are central to the propaganda network on Telegram. These actors and their teams are also behind covert media channels, targeting different geographic regions and ethnic groups.

One of their strategies to gain more audience is cross-posting channel URLs and asking their existing audience to join other channels. They also share content from less popular actors to increase their visibility. There are many overlapping admins within this network.

On Telegram, military actors use the same strategies for shaping narratives, mass doxxing, intelligence gathering, and inciting violence.

Conclusion

The analysis of the military propaganda network on Telegram in Myanmar reveals a highly coordinated and pervasive effort to influence public opinion, suppress dissent, and reinforce the military's narrative. Key actors such as Ko Thet, Hmine Wai, Thazin Oo, Kyaw Swar, Han Nyein Oo, and Snow Queen play central roles in this network, using overlapping administrative control and cross-promotion strategies to expand their reach and amplify their messages.

This network's tactics include mass doxxing, intelligence gathering, inciting violence, and disseminating disinformation, particularly targeting different geographic regions and ethnic groups to create division and unrest. The extensive collaboration and promotion among these channels not only enhance their propaganda efforts but also obscure the origins of their content, making it difficult for the public to identify reliable information sources.

These actors are using Telegram not just for sharing their content but also as a platform to drive traffic to their new accounts on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, where Meta has actively banned them. Consequently, Telegram has become their audience bank for other social media platforms.

The implications of this coordinated propaganda network are profound, contributing to an environment of fear, misinformation, and polarized public opinion. It undermines democratic processes and threatens the safety and freedoms of individuals opposing the military regime.

To counter these efforts, it is crucial to sanction the main actors and investigate their networks. Social media platforms such as Meta, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok need to ban links associated with the Telegram propaganda network. Additionally, civil society organizations and the international community must advocate for platform accountability and work with Telegram to address these issues.