

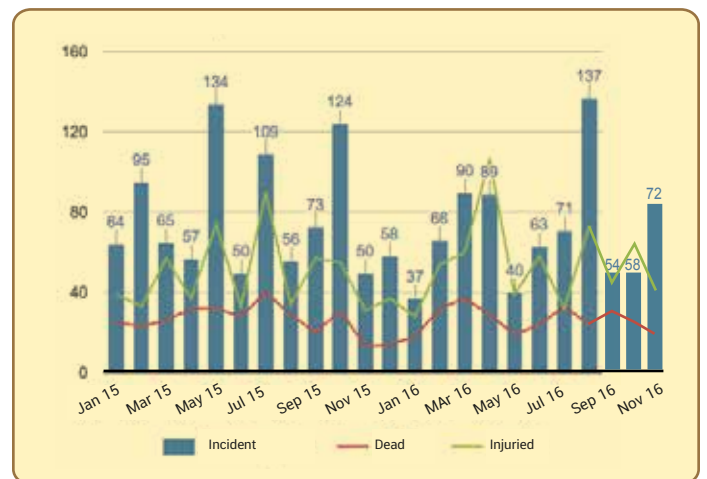
STATE VIOLENT CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

Overview

Violent incidents in southern border provinces in November 2016 saw a continuation since the previous months and significantly becomes volatile. However, the number of violent incidents slightly increased compared to the last period, but not so many as those occurred in August. From January 2004 to November 2016; amounting to 155 months, 15,999 are the total number of violent incidents which affected 19,236 persons including 6,794 fatalities and 12,442 injuries. November 2016 alone accounts for 72 incidents, causing 25 fatalities and 40 injuries.

VIOLENCE IN NOVEMBER

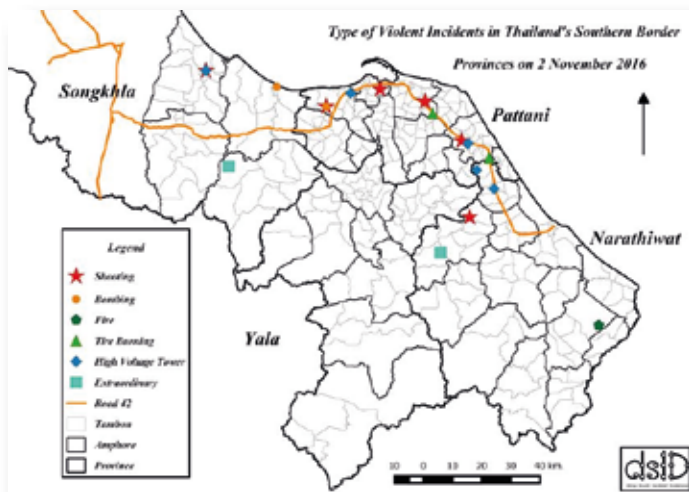
Number of Violent Events, Persons Dead and Injured in November



Overview

The highlight of violent incidents in November is a series of 16 incidents within one day; the 2nd of November. On that day, there were 6 shootings, 2 bombings, 1 fire, 2 tyre arsons, and 5 sabotages which caused 3 fatalities and 4 injuries. Apart from the quantitative aspect of violence, one could look at incidents in southern border provinces from geographical and temporal dimensions as well. There were occurrences on main roads in 7 districts of Pattani, Narathiwat, and Songkla, and the timing of each incident was simultaneous in several cases; between 21.30 hrs. and 22.10 hrs. Interestingly, violent operations seem to have more symbolic impact and property damages than targeting lives.

[Figure 1] Type of Violent Incidents on 2 November 2016



It is difficult to clearly identify the determinant of incidents of violence in early November. On November 2nd, General Udomdej Sitabutr, as the head of Forward Cabinet, made the first official visit to the region. In fact, when considering the reasonable preparing time in advance to conduct violence, it would be impossible to do so within such presumed timeline. However so, the extrajudicial killing of the head of RKK unit on the 30th of October prior to the series of incidents could be a better justifying factor that caused the violence.

Major Political and Policy Moves by Thai State with important implications to Southern Thailand

There were intensive political and policy moves from Thai State in November starting from the 2nd of November when General Udomdej Sitabutr – Deputy Minister of Defense and a newly-appointed Head of Special Governmental Representatives for resolving southern border provinces' problems or so-called Forward Cabinet – paid his first visit to the areas and held a meeting between the Forward Cabinet and religious leaders, provincial Islamic committees from four southern border provinces as well as Thai Buddhist representatives

in the areas. Moreover, the fact that Thai State revealed that both parties have achieved common principles on defining safety zone during the first dialogue in the previous month had shown a very positive gesture from Thai State towards peace process. While MARA Patani demands before to the next Joint Technical Team's meeting that Thai State proposes a detailed plan for implementing safety zone, Thai State prefers the plan to be drafted together.

Furthermore, the Thai government appears to emphasize on political restructuring in order to facilitate the management of conflict in the area. Such is the restructuring of Provincial Police Region 9 and Southern Border Provinces Police Operation Centre to incorporate as one entity under the name of 'Police Region 9 Bureau' as it was before. This resulted from criticisms over the separation of Southern Border Provinces Police Operation Centre from the Bureau since 2009 seen as centrally employing personnel for administrative tasks rather than actual operations.

The diplomatic role in the international political arena was enhanced as there was an informal diplomatic engagement by General Pavit Wongsuwan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Thailand), who had met Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein (Minister of Defence of Malaysia) during informal ASEAN's Ministers of Defence Meeting in Laos on the 17th of November. Both insisted on extending a progressive cooperation in order to lay the ground for border security (extending from the latest meeting of Thai – Malaysia General Border Committee on the 10th of November 2016). Resolving southern border provinces' problems and ceasing violence by moving forward the peace dialogue were highly emphasized in this informal meeting. This portrays positive signals of a Government-to-Government relationship supporting Malaysia as the peace mediator.

The National Security Council has enacted the Southern Border Provinces Administration and Development Policy (2017 – 2019) with the objectives to ensure safety and peace for southern border provinces, develop a participation of all stakeholders, enhance understanding, acceptance, and realization of cultural diversity among broader Thai society and local populations, pursue confidence-building and guaranteeing of continuity of peace process, and make understandings about actual occurrences available for societies at national and international levels. This demonstrates the Thai State's will to officially solve the southern border provinces' problems.



Observations and Trends

On the 22nd of November, the Cabinet resolved that five districts; namely Thepa, Jana, Sabayoi, Nathawee (Songkla province), and Melan (Pattani province) are designated as internal-security-affected area; enacting from the 1st of December 2016 to the 30th of November 2017. Taking prior cancellation of emergency decree enforcement in abovementioned areas in consideration, this Cabinet resolution implies that those areas were placed less importance in term of their impact to overall national security in comparison with other areas of southern border provinces.

Later on the 24th of November, General Udomej's meeting with Special Operation Committee for resolving southern border provinces' problems encompassed several issues including the procurement of computerized tomography (CT) SCAN for forensic testing, collection of data on students studying abroad, and the Narathiwat Museum initiative. Moreover, Special Governmental Representative for the resolution of southern border provinces' problems – Mr. Panu Uthairat – mentioned that the 'Taking People Home Project'; an initiative which gives people having had a dissident standpoint and taken up arms against Thai State an opportunity to integrate back into the society as well as people affected by violence to return home, has so far more than 5,000 participants which he claimed deems successful resolution for the areas. This strategy was made successful during the government of General Chaowalit Yongchaiyuth with secret cooperation with Malaysia Government to fight against Communist Malaya.

Progress on Peace Dialogue Process

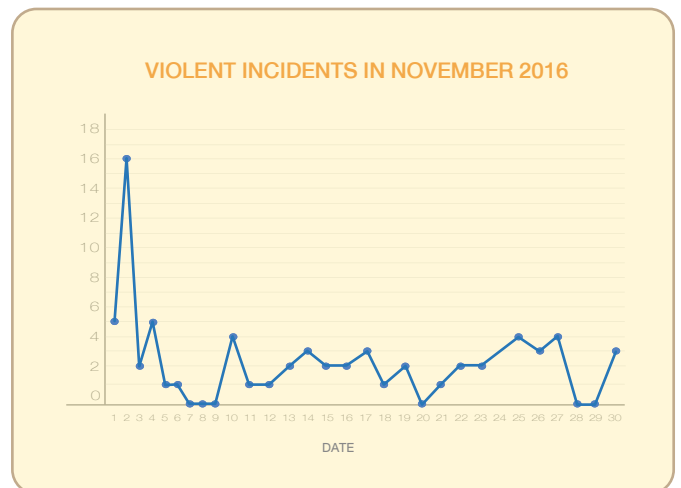
Following the first round of peace dialogue at the end of October, the second round was participated by Joint-Technical Team (JTT) in a close setting exclusively for negotiating parties on the 22nd of November. The subject matters included the creation of Safety Zone to protect civilians/ soft targets and the effort to contain violence in some areas. Apparently, there was no tangible outcome out of the first round, but the second round made progressive step to define a concrete term, purposes, and elements of safety zones. There appeared a more relaxing and active-listening atmosphere at this talk. Apart from the talk, MARA Patani proposed that the Party A (Thai State) consider three additional matters including (1) to assure safety and protection of MARA Patani's local representatives, (2) to release some political prisoners, and (3) to revoke the plan to construct coal power plants in southern border provinces and Songkla province. Lastly, the intention to conduct the third round of peace dialogue was discussed; however, time and venue has not yet been specified.

Firstly, the Thai State's political and policy pursuance shows there were better moves towards peace process during November than prior period of time when Lieutenant General Nakrob Boonbuatong was the Secretariat of peace dialogue committee. This suggests a tendency of consensus-building among several bodies within Thai State.

The second observation can be made from the demands of MARA Patani which recently include an issue of coal power plant as well as the consideration of safety zone proposed by local women networks during the first round of peace dialogue. Such moves show that MARA Patani is attempting to give more precedence to the voices of local populations and expect to gain more leverage and popularity in the bilateral process.

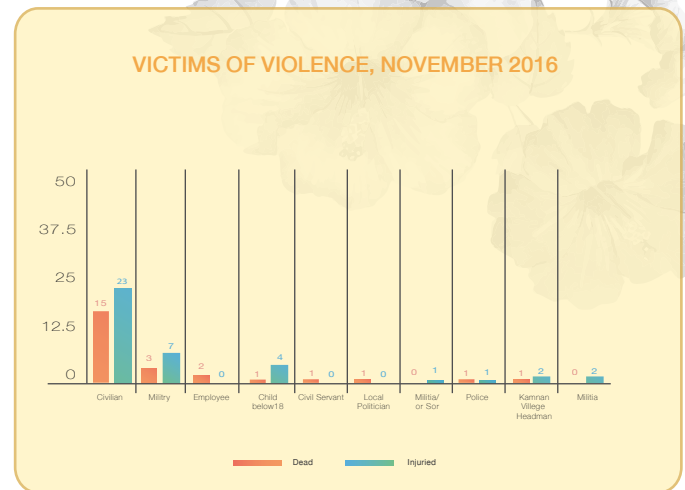
Overall, there were 72 incidents in November. More than half of those were shooting incidents (40), while bombings, explosive ordnance disposal, fire, arsons, and tyre arsons occurred 12 times, 3 times, 2 times, and 2 times respectively. A series of 16 incidents occurred solely on the 2nd of November should be highlighted; whereas other incidents appear to spread throughout the whole month period resembling to the past two months with just a slight increase of symbolic incidents during early days of November.

[Figure 2] Line graph showing the number of incidents occurred in November (30 days)



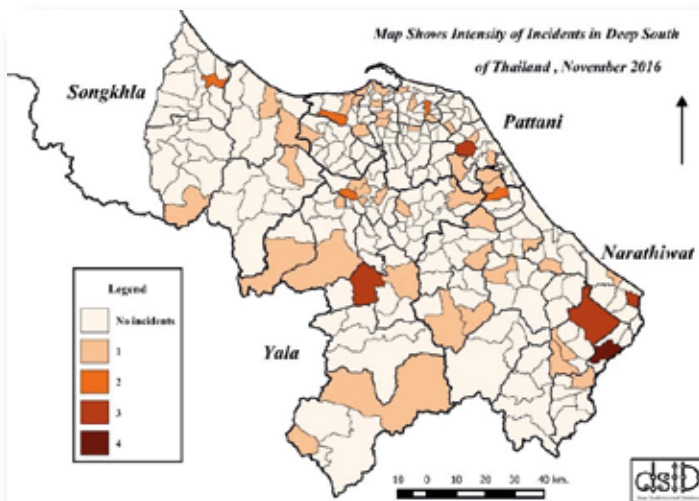
Comparing to October which had none of military casualty, many incidents in November still mostly involved soft targets/civilians and there was an increase in military or paramilitary rangers as targets. Towards the end of the month, the number of incidents gradually increased up until the day of intensified incident which a suspect was extra judicially killed. Since then, there appeared a rising frequency of violent incidents. Figure 2 shows the total incidents of violence for over 155 months and a sharp rise can be seen during November despite the tendency that peace process was increasingly accepted. Although such non-correlating circumstance often has no legitimate explanation and justification, it is clear that violent operations tend to have causal relations with surrounds and search operations as well as extrajudicial killings of insurgent suspects in the former period.

[Figure 3] The number of victims



Recommendations

On the one hand, it is recommended that the influence of Thai State's policies should be closely monitored because they are major determinant of whether Thai State would embrace proactive or responsive gesture towards peace process. Such influence on the other hand would also determine whether the MARA Patani would be able to acquire a recognition of its genuine representation in such process. Popularity and legitimization of representations are yet to be proved which require time for trust to be built. However, what can be done at this stage is to push for the efforts of peacebuilding from below and strengthening voices from local communities. The fact that tirelessly efforts of civil society still play a major factor in revitalizing peace process involves some positive signs that the process will continuously hold onto this current circumstance.



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