

STATE VIOLENT CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

Overview and Trends

In December 2016, 37 violent incidents occurred, as many as in January 2016. However, the December incidents affected less people: 44 casualties including 12 fatalities and 32 injuries.

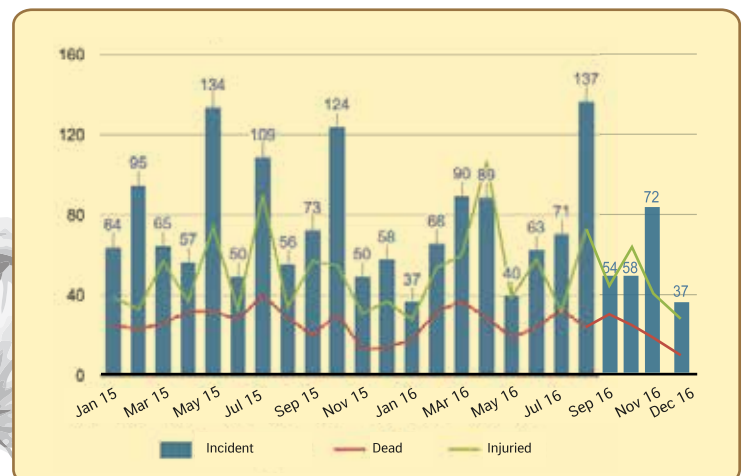
VIOLENCE IN DECEMBER

Number of Violent Events, Persons Dead and Injured in December

37
VIOLENT

12
DEAD

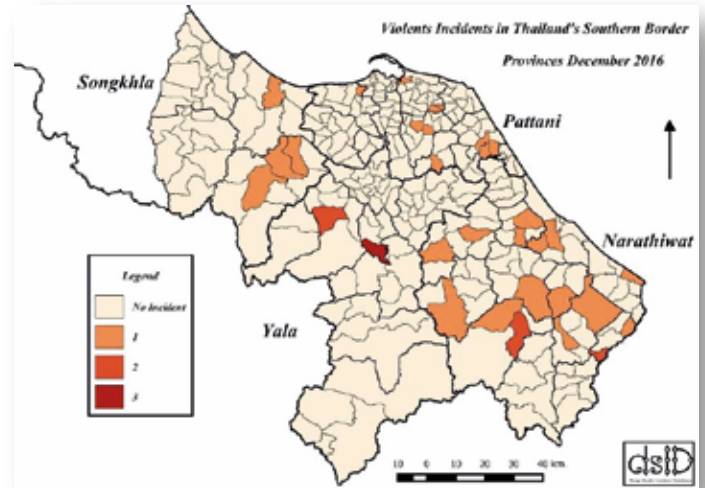
32
INJURED



Overview and Trends

Those incidents were concentrated in specific areas (as shown in Figure 1). From January 2004 to December 2016, amounting to 13 years, the total number of violent incidents was 19,012 which caused 6,442 fatalities and 12,289 injuries.

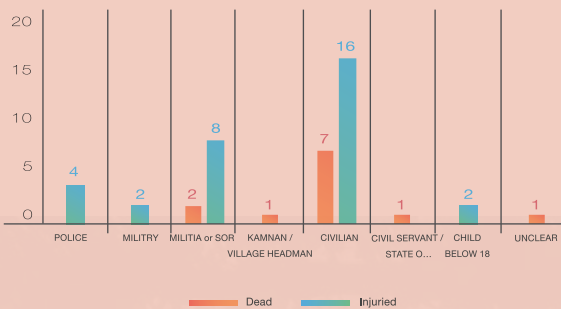
Comparing to the number of incidents in December each year, it can be seen that the frequency of incidents in 2016 (37 incidents) comes second lowest after that of the same month in 2005 (35 incidents). It has been a trend that the number of incidents declines during the last month of the calendar year, as Thailand's Deep South is typically affected by heavy rains and floods during that period. There were two periods of severe floods in December 2016, in the first and last weeks of the month.



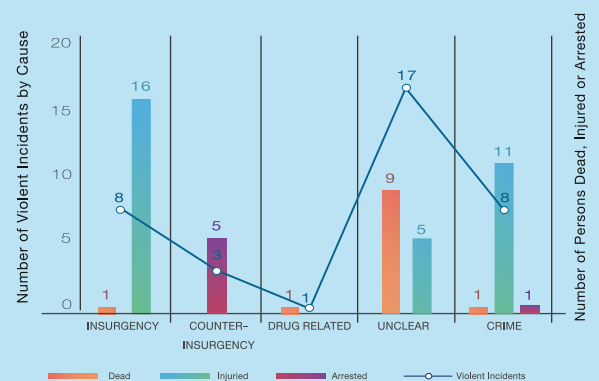
Causes and Impacts of Violent Incidents

Civilians were still the group most directly affected by violent incidents: 7 civilians were killed and 16 injured. Moreover, shootings were the most frequent type of incident (51 percent, or 19 out of 37 incidents). Considering the causes of the incidents, 11 incidents (30 percent) were confidently attributable to the insurgency and counterinsurgency operations, while the cause of 46 percent of all incidents remains undetermined.

VICTIM OF VIOLENCE IN DECEMBER 2016



CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE IN DECEMBER 2016





Major Movements and Observations

Even though December saw a relatively low number of incidents, political developments continued. The Special Representative Committee also known as ‘Forward Cabinet’, a body established in October 2016, drafted an action plan for conflict resolution and development in the Southern border provinces during a meeting on the 23rd of December. The action plan aims to integrate all previous plans adopted by the Government and achieve three tangible outcomes including security, development, and better understanding within two years. Furthermore, within the year of 2017, it plans to expand the model of ‘secure, wealthy, and sustainable city’ currently piloted in three districts (Nongjik, Sungaigolok, and Betong) to the sub-district level. It is expected that the target areas will become safety zones as defined and implemented unilaterally by the Thai authority without arrangements involving the insurgent movements.

Since last October, the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) began to withdraw military officers from other regions and let them return to their hometown by transferring security tasks to local military units. This decision was made as a result of decreasing violence, which is an indicator for the development of conflict resolution by the State. Reducing violence is a top policy priority and it is addressed via various measures including promoting peaceful dialogue. The movement on establishing safety zones is more or less a result of peace talks between the Thai Government and MARA Patani, as a

measure to build trust in the early stage of the peace process. The Thai State does not only aim to reduce violence but also to ascertain how much authority and control their counterpart really has over insurgent forces in the field. On the other hand, MARA Patani wants to test the willingness and ability of the Thai State to reduce its military operations, and more generally its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Previously, the definitions of the safety zones were quite different for both parties, until they were partly reconciled during the third meeting of Joint Technical Team on the 20th of December. On that day, they jointly drafted a ‘General Framework on the Establishment of Safety Zone’ including details agreed by both parties. The draft is nearly completed and undergoing review by each party’s steering committee. It is expected that the safety zones will come in effect within the year of 2017.

Nonetheless, several groups questioned the chances that safety zones can be effectively implemented as long as the internal unity of the insurgent movement is challenged, in particular given the lack of participation of forces affiliated to the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) in the peace talks. Another issue is the level of participation of local communities in the determination of safety zones and their implementation.





Recommendations

The number of violent incidents decreased in December as a result of severe floods. However, there is no indication that violence will remain low as long as the root causes of the conflict are not seriously addressed. Local communities remain frustrated and the situation remains volatile.

It is important to realize that the effort to implement safety zones via peace talks or unilateral action will not be sufficient to assure a sustainable peace in the long run. Tackling the remaining challenges will require tremendous support from all parties, and public communication and preparation by various groups would be necessary in any changing circumstances.

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All data comes from the Deep South Incident Database.

The report is funded by: The Asia Foundation

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**Deep South Incident Database is a program affiliated to
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