



CrisisWatch 2023 – August Trends and September Alerts

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China/Japan In East China Sea, China continued its maritime presence and conducted operations with Russia.**

As of 25 Aug, Japan had spotted 95 Chinese vessels in its contiguous zone during month. It detected 16 such ships in its territorial sea over three days in Aug. Notably, China's Maritime Security Administration 9 and 12-14 Aug held military exercises in waters adjacent to Chinese city Ningbo. Joint China-Russia flotilla consisting of around 10 ships 17 Aug operated in East China Sea, after it had sailed near Alaska earlier in Aug; China's foreign ministry said passage was consistent with international law. Japan next day spotted two Russian IL-38 information-gathering aircraft flying between Sea of Japan and East China Sea, prompting Japan to scramble its fighter jets. Japan 25 Aug sent fighter jets to monitor two Chinese air force bombers flying between Okinawa and Miyako islands.

➔ **Korean Peninsula North Korea's second attempt at satellite launch failed as U.S. and South Korea began summer military drills, which raised tensions and could provoke further missile tests by Pyongyang.**

North Korea attempted second satellite launch. After first try to launch military reconnaissance satellite into orbit failed on 31 May, North Korea 24 Aug made second attempt but rocket booster faced issues during third phase, according to state media, and disintegrated before falling into sea. U.S. and South Korea condemned launch as violating UN Security Council resolutions, as Pyongyang vowed to try again in Oct.

U.S. and South Korea began summer military exercises. U.S. and South Korea 21 Aug commenced annual summer drills called Ulchi Freedom Shield. Although arguably essential for military readiness, drills risk fuelling instability on peninsula and triggering North Korea response; South Korean National Intelligence Agency 17 Aug warned that Pyongyang had "provocations" in works to respond to combined drills, which may come in form of missile tests. North Korean military 18 Aug said it dispatched warplanes after U.S. reconnaissance aircraft previous day entered North Korea's economic zone off eastern coast, denouncing "dangerous military provocation". Leader Kim Jong-un 29 Aug warned of "danger of a nuclear war" in waters off peninsula. Pyongyang 30 Aug fired two short-range ballistic missiles as part of "tactical nuclear strike drill simulating scorched-earth strikes".

With North Korea in mind, U.S., South Korea and Japan deepened ties. At historic Camp David summit, leaders of U.S., South Korea and Japan 18 Aug signalled

enhanced trilateral relations and coordination against North Korea; three pledged to “share information, align our messaging and coordinate response actions” and embark on joint military exercises as well as “annual Trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue”; statement also reaffirmed “commitment to the complete denuclearisation of [North Korea]” and urged north to “abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs”.

Pyongyang began repatriating citizens. North Korea 22 Aug began repatriating its citizens from abroad more than three years after country closed its borders amid COVID-19 pandemic; China and Russia play host to significant cohorts of North Korean workers as well as hundreds of govt personnel.

➡ **Taiwan Strait China maintained aerial and maritime military activity as Taiwan’s VP transited U.S., while Washington, Seoul and Tokyo pledged commitment to strait’s stability.**

China held military exercises as Taiwan’s VP transited U.S. As of 28 Aug, Taiwan had detected 351 Chinese military aircraft around Taiwan, of which at least 115 crossed unofficial “median line” or were detected in south-western ADIZ; at sea, Taiwan spotted 183 Chinese navy vessels in surrounding waters. Taiwan’s VP and presidential candidate Lai Ching Te 12 Aug transited New York en route to Paraguay and 15 Aug went through San Francisco during return trip, meeting Taiwanese Americans and representatives of American Institute of Taiwan; upon his return, Lai said Taiwan’s election in 2024 is choice between democracy and autocracy, declaring that China cannot decide outcome. In response, Beijing 18 Aug launched low-key joint air and sea exercise around island. Taiwan’s military 15-17 Aug carried out “precision missile drill” during which air-to-air and anti-ship missiles were fired at decommissioned vessels. China 21 Aug banned import of Taiwan mangoes, citing concern with pests in likely attempt to create political pressures for Taiwan’s ruling party. U.S. 23 Aug approved \$500mn sale to Taiwan of F-16 infrared search-and-track systems. Tsai administration 24 Aug proposed 7.7% increase in next year’s defence budget.

U.S., South Korea and Japan voiced support for stability. In historic trilateral meeting between leaders of U.S., Japan and South Korea, trio 18 Aug reaffirmed commitment to peace and stability across Taiwan Strait and called for peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues. President Tsai 11 Aug expressed Taiwan’s interest in participating in NATO’s Center of Excellences in Baltic countries, as she urged parliamentary delegations from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to help deepen defence cooperation.

High-profile Japanese figures visited Taiwan. Former Japanese PM Taro Aso 7 Aug visited Taiwan and delivered keynote address at regional forum in which he urged international community to “wake up” to worsening situation in Taiwan Strait. Nobuyuki Baba, leader of Japanese parliament’s second-largest opposition party, 2 Aug visited capital Taipei, asserting “Taiwan’s peace is Japan’s peace” and calling for more cooperation on deterrence.

South Asia

➔ **Afghanistan** On second anniversary of Taliban's return to power, countrywide violence remained at historic low but worsening humanitarian crisis loomed large and tensions persisted with Pakistan.

Violence remained at low ebb despite sporadic attacks and Taliban raids. Afghanistan Freedom Front launched attacks on airport in Badakhshan province (north) 9 Aug and in Baghlan province (north) 11 Aug. Reports 19 Aug emerged that Taliban had besieged and dismantled last remnants of rebels in Badakhshan's Shuhada district, likely referring to renegade Taliban commander who rebelled in Oct 2022; although surrender removes major threat of armed challenge to Taliban's rule in Badakhshan, insecurity in province – which borders China, Tajikistan, and Pakistan – remains major concern. Meanwhile, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) did not claim major attack in Aug. Taliban-affiliated media 15 Aug claimed security forces' raid killed two important ISKP members. Fanning fears of transnational jihadist threats, gunman who 13 Aug conducted attack in Iran was Tajik national allegedly trained by ISKP in Afghanistan.

Threat of worsening humanitarian crisis persisted. Humanitarian appeal remained drastically underfunded by 75%, making it most underfunded UN humanitarian program. UN humanitarian coordinator 17 Aug warned that “massive funding cuts are forcing life-saving programs to close at an alarming rate”, with 29.2mn Afghans in need of assistance. U.S. diplomats and Taliban officials late July met for first time since Taliban retook power; despite meeting, impasse over Central Bank's frozen assets remained unresolved.

Taliban and Pakistan traded barbs over militant threat. Pakistan's foreign ministry 1 Aug and army chief 7 Aug alleged that Afghan nationals had been involved in July attack in Pakistan's Baluchistan province; Taliban called allegations baseless, countering that dozens of Pakistani nationals had joined ISKP and Pakistan failed to act on intelligence shared by Kabul. Taliban 11 Aug confirmed that preeminent body for religious edicts had issued fatwa prohibiting Afghans from fighting Pakistan. Reports 14 Aug emerged of blast near hotel in Khost city (south east) that housed refugees from Pakistan's Waziristan district; reports suggested Pakistani drones targeted site. Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani 20, 23 Aug stated attacks inside Pakistan were country's own internal problem.

➔ **Bangladesh** **Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)** continued campaign to force govt's resignation ahead of polls, while police abuses against Rohingyas came to light.

Opposition rallied countrywide, leading to clashes with police. BNP held near-daily rallies, sit-ins and protests in capital Dhaka and elsewhere to force PM Sheikh Hasina's resignation in order to hold elections – set for late Dec or Jan 2024 – under non-partisan caretaker govt. Ruling Awami League, however, rejected demand and ruled out dialogue, continuing its crackdown on opposition. Notably, BNP protested in capital after court 2 Aug sentenced exiled BNP acting leader Tarique Rahman to nine years in prison for corruption, and his wife to three years, making it impossible for her to contest next election. BNP and allies 17 Aug commenced three-day countrywide activities including mass processions; though mostly peaceful, police 19

Aug opened fire with rubber bullets in Habiganj in north east, injuring up to 300 people. Amid police attempts to disrupt Jamaat-e-Islami organisation, senior party officials 4 Aug held rally in Dhaka and 6 Aug organised processions countrywide, telling govt to “dissolve the parliament, resign immediately.” Member of Awami League’s Youth Wing 15 Aug shot dead Jamaat member in Cox’s Bazar. Police and Jamaat members same day clashed in Dhaka. Thousands of opposition supporters 30 Aug protested in Dhaka to demand information about hundreds of people allegedly disappeared under govt’s rule.

Plight of Rohingya continued amid reports of abuse by security forces. NGO Fortify Rights 10 Aug published report alleging Armed Police Battalion “arbitrarily detained and tortured Rohingya refugees while systematically demanding corrupt payments”. Bipartisan U.S. delegation 14 Aug visited Rohingya camps, urging international community to step up aid amid funding shortfall. Thousands of Rohingya 25 Aug rallied in camps demanding safe return to Myanmar to mark sixth anniversary of Myanmar military campaign against them. Insecurity concerns remained acute: according to local police, 85 of 186 murders in camps since 2017 have occurred in past 12 months.

Authorities arrested suspected militants. Police 12 Aug raided “militant hideout” in north-eastern region Moulvibazar, arresting 10 suspects whom authorities claimed were members of new jihadist group, and recovering explosives and jihadist books.

➔ India Manipur in north east remained volatile, authorities responded to communal clashes in Haryana state in north with home demolitions, and govt continued talks with China on disputed border.

Ethnic violence in Manipur showed little sign of abating. In Bishnupur district, gunfight between Kuki and Meitei communities 5 Aug killed two Kuki village guards, while assailants same day killed three Meitei men in their sleep; Manipur police, dominated by Meitei, 5 Aug registered case against federal security force Assam Rifles for allegedly helping Kuki militants escape from village where three dead individuals were found. In Ukhrul district, Meitei militants 18 Aug allegedly shot dead three Kuki men guarding village. Border security forces 18 Aug lodged protest with Manipur governor over “blockade on movement of troops” by locals, “mostly women”; amid state-wide insecurity, rule of law has broken down and state machinery seemed to have vanished. Gunmen 29 Aug fired at farmers on Bishnupur-Churachandpur border, killing two. The Wire 11 Aug reported violence erupted in May just as central govt was finalising agreement with Kuki militant groups to create autonomous territorial council within state. United Naga Council 21 August accused Kukis of “distortion of Naga history” and objected to separatist memorandum recently authored by 10 Kuki members of Manipur’s legislative assembly sent to PM Modi that included reference to Naga-dominated districts.

Authorities demolished scores of homes following deadly clashes in Haryana. Clashes between Hindus and Muslims 31 July erupted in Nuh town, Haryana state (north), after local Muslims opposed procession by right-wing Hindu groups, killing six and resulting in large-scale property destruction; state authorities in subsequent days demolished more than 300 Muslim homes/businesses and arrested 150 Muslims. In rare criticism of demolition, Punjab and Haryana High Court questioned if “an exercise of ethnic cleansing is being conducted by the state”.

Talks with China on disputed border made little progress. Indian and Chinese commanders 13-14 Aug met in eastern Ladakh for 19th round of talks; joint statement described “positive, constructive and in-depth discussion”, although situation remained unchanged. On BRICS summit sidelines, PM Modi 24 Aug raised concerns with China’s President Xi about border.

➔ **India-Pakistan (Kashmir) Supreme Court began hearing case on Jammu & Kashmir’s (J&K) autonomy revocation, govt signalled intent to hold grassroots poll, and security forces targeted militants.**

Supreme Court heard oral petitions challenging abrogation of J&K’s status. After 2 Aug beginning hearings, Supreme Court 10 Aug said J&K’s surrender of sovereignty to India in Oct 1947 was “absolutely complete”, and it was “really difficult” to say Article 370 (which offered J&K semi-autonomous status) was permanent in nature. Due to surveillance and retaliation fears, media coverage of proceedings in Kashmir remained scant but local politicians expressed satisfaction with hearings taking place; former chief minister Omar Abdullah 17 Aug said, “We are fighting and we are there with a hope for justice.”

Authorities signalled support for elections at grassroots level. After J&K in July marked five years without elected regional govt due to ruling Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) reluctance to hold assembly elections, J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha 3 Aug asserted “time has come when we should have Panchayat polls so that people can once again reap the benefits of governance at their doorsteps”, referring to grassroots administrative bodies; govt hopes such local elections will project normalcy in region but significant risk exists that militants could target participants in polls, which could take place in coming months.

Security forces continued operations against militants in J&K. Militants 4 Aug killed three soldiers in Kulgam district during security operation. Security forces 4 Aug killed four militants in Srinagar city; 5 Aug killed Pakistani militant during two-day operation in Rajouri district; 6 Aug killed militant near Line of Control in Kupwara district in north; 7 Aug killed two Hizbul Mujahideen militants, including senior commander, near Line of Contact in Poonch district. Resistance Front Militants 10 Aug threw grenade at security forces during search operation, injuring one soldier and two civilians in Anantnag district. Meanwhile, govt and Pakistan traded blame for violating Line of Control ceasefire, as India 21 Aug claimed to foil infiltration bid by shooting two militants in Poonch district; Pakistan accused India of killing civilian in “unprovoked firing”.

➔ **Pakistan Court handed former PM Imran Khan prison sentence as govt signalled potential delay to elections, while deadly militant attacks roiled provinces bordering Afghanistan.**

Authorities imprisoned Imran Khan and banned him from politics. Police 5 Aug arrested Imran Khan following court order which sentenced him to three years imprisonment for allegedly selling state gifts received in official capacity; Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party called for peaceful protests but response was limited amid heavy police deployment. Citing conviction, election commission 8 Aug declared Khan banned from contesting elections for five years. Federal Investigation Authority 19 Aug registered case against Khan and former FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi under Official Secrets Act 1923, and same day arrested Qureshi, over alleged

misuse of diplomatic cable at public rally. Appeals court 29 Aug suspended Khan's three-year sentence; court next day ordered Khan to remain in judicial custody until mid-Sept pending investigation into diplomatic cable case.

Uncertainty pervaded timing of upcoming elections. Govt 5 Aug claimed upcoming general election – set to be held by Nov – must be based on new census, which implies polls could be delayed by several months; PTI 17 Aug vowed to challenge decision at Supreme Court. President 9 Aug ordered parliament's dissolution and govt 12 Aug appointed Senator Anwaar-ul-haq Kakar as caretaker PM.

Militants continued deadly attacks in provinces bordering Afghanistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's North Waziristan district, suicide bomber 7 Aug killed two; IED 20 Aug killed 11 labourers en route to construction project; Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants 22 Aug ambushed two military vehicles, killing six soldiers and four militants. In Balochistan province, roadside bomb 7 Aug killed seven, including Balochistan Awami Party member, in Kech town. Balochistan Liberation Army 13 Aug attacked vehicles carrying Chinese engineers in Gwadar port city. Amid tensions with Afghan Taliban, FM Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari 1 Aug said Pakistan could act in "self-defence" in Afghanistan (see Afghanistan).

Blasphemy allegations triggered rampage in Punjab. Mob of several hundred Muslims 16 Aug attacked Christian settlement in Faisalabad district, Punjab province, after two locals were accused of "blasphemy"; mob desecrated churches and ransacked properties.

➡ **Sri Lanka Economic hardship continued amid severe drought and looming debt restructuring, while inter-ethnic tensions spilled over from north east as govt unveiled new measures aimed at reconciliation.**

Inflation diminished but concerns grew over drought's impact. Reports in Aug showed inflation in July fell to under 7%, but relief for average citizens remained limited given high prices of many essentials. Drought conditions during month affected large parts of island, threatening drinking water supplies and farming and possibly reducing hydroelectric power. Meanwhile, govt's flagship anti-poverty program continued to face serious administrative delays.

Domestic debt restructuring took centre stage. Govt attempted to fend off legal and political criticism of its decision – endorsed in motion by parliament on 1 July – to impose losses on contributory govt and private sector pension schemes while sparing banks. Supreme Court 4 and 11 Aug dismissed lawsuits that sought to block restructuring of debt held by pensions. After parliament speaker argued courts do not have power to rule on parliamentary resolution, opposition leaders 11 Aug criticised alleged blow to separation of powers, arguing parliamentary approval had taken form of non-binding motion.

Inter-ethnic relations faced pressure. Significant tensions surfaced at contested site known in Tamil as Kurunthumalai, and in Sinhalese as Kurundi in Mullaitivu district (Northern Province), where newly built Buddhist temple sits in close proximity to Hindu Athi Aiyandar temple. Eyewitnesses said Sinhala Buddhist monk and followers 18 Aug attempted to disrupt Tamil Pongal celebration at Hindu temple, despite permission from local magistrate. Sinhala nationalist legislator 22 Aug denounced magistrate in parliament, while second Sinhala nationalist MP 26

Aug led protest outside residence of Tamil MP for his role in supporting Hindu worship at Kurunthormalai. In separate dispute, Buddhist monks 28 Aug disrupted govt meeting and threatened Eastern Province governor for his decision to halt construction of new temple in traditionally Tamil village in Trincomalee district.

Govt unveiled new policies aimed at inter-ethnic reconciliation. President Wickremesinghe 9 Aug announced series of moves to strengthen provincial devolution of power within terms of existing constitution. Wickremesinghe rejected opposition demands to hold provincial elections, now years overdue, proposing instead to first amend Provincial Council Elections Act.

South East Asia

➔ **Myanmar** **Regime battled resistance forces, notably in Shan State in north, while regime expelled Timor-Leste's top diplomat to protest engagement with parallel National Unity Government (NUG).**

Clashes continued between military and ethnic armed groups and resistance forces. Fighting escalated in northern and central Shan State (north) between regime forces and ethnic armed groups after military and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) clashed in late July for first time since Dec 2022. Notably, hostilities 29 July-3 Aug continued in pocket of territory in Muse Township; TNLA claimed up to 25 regime soldiers and militia members were killed and released photos of large amount of seized weaponry. Fighting was also reported between two sides further south in Lashio Township. Meanwhile, clashes continued between military and Kachin Independence Army (KIA). Military 2 Aug drove KIA and aligned People's Defence Forces out of strategic Nabar junction in northern Sagaing Region (north) and 4 Aug carried out airstrikes at Mali Yang village in Waingmaw, damaging transmission lines that carry electricity from Kachin Independence Organisation-run hydropower station to state capital Myitkyina. Clashes 7 Aug erupted in jade mining township of Hpakant. Karen National Union 10 Aug declared Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement had been rendered null and void because regime had "destroyed" principles of deal; seven of ten initial groups continue to engage regime in process.

Regime expelled Timor-Leste's top diplomat. Regime 27 Aug announced that it had ordered charge d'affaires of Timor-Leste's embassy in Yangon to leave country by 1 Sept following series of engagements between Timor-Leste and rival NUG, including between Timor-Leste's president and NUG earlier in Aug.

UN's top humanitarian official visited capital as security council condemned violence. UN Under-Secretary General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths 15-17 Aug visited Naypyitaw, meeting with regime leader Min Aung Hlaing to push for greater humanitarian access; Griffiths called on donors to increase their funding. UN Security Council, except China and Russia, 23 Aug backed statement condemning "unrelenting violence" and lack of progress on Council resolution passed in Dec calling for end to violence and release of all political prisoners.

➔ **Philippines** **Militant attacks and surrenders continued in south, while deadly hostilities between military and Communists persisted.**

Insecurity persisted in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Around 10 militants 12 Aug killed soldier and wounded eight others in ambush on convoy in Ungkaya Pukan, Basilan province; two Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) members 15 Aug surrendered to authorities in Isabela city and claimed responsibility for attack. Explosion 16 Aug killed village official and wounded another local official in Shariff Saidona Mustapha, Maguindanao del Sur province. Thirteen members of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) 12 Aug surrendered in Maguindanao del Sur and North Cotabato provinces, turning over heavy weaponry. Three BIFF members 18 Aug surrendered in Isulan town, Sultan Kudarat. Military 17 Aug declared that 14 towns in Sulu province are free from Abu Sayyaf Group. Armed factions of MILF's 106 and 108 Base Command 22 Aug clashed in village of Sapakan in Mamasapano, Maguindanao del Sur, displacing at least 40 families. Assailants 28-29 Aug killed several village officials across country as they filed their candidacies for village chief and council positions. Bangsamoro parliament 17 Aug approved creation of eight new towns, emerging from pool of over 60 villages in region's Special Geographic Area in Cotabato province.

Clashes continued between military and Communist militants. Hostilities between security forces and Communist rebels occurred in Mindanao Island (Misamis Oriental) in south and Visayas Islands in centre, resulting in at least 12 fatalities (combatants and civilians alike) and two injuries.

➡ **South China Sea Maritime incident between China and Philippines near disputed shoal in Spratly Islands elevated tensions.**

China blocked Philippine resupply mission to disputed shoal. Chinese Coast Guard 5 Aug fired water cannon to drive away Philippine vessels seeking to resupply BRP *Sierre Madre*, World War II vessel grounded at Second Thomas Shoal in north-eastern Spratly Islands, causing one of supply boats to turn away; Philippine coast guard condemned China's "dangerous manoeuvres", while U.S. same day reaffirmed that attacks on Philippine coast guard ships will trigger commitments under 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty. Manila 19 Aug vowed to resume supply missions to BRP *Sierre Madre*, raising prospect of further interceptions by China; Philippine vessels 22 Aug reached Second Thomas Shoal. Amid spat, Philippines 9 Aug announced it will conduct joint patrol with the U.S. this year in SCS and next day revealed plans to deploy maritime militia and establish reserves unit in SCS; Philippines 20 Aug announced U.S., Japan and Australia will organise joint navy drill off its waters. After China's annual summer fishing moratorium ended 16 Aug, Philippines said it was ready to "take law enforcement measures" as Chinese fishing activities are expected to increase in SCS.

China and U.S. traded criticism as Manila mulled maritime deal with Vietnam. Chinese FM Wang Yi 11 Aug blasted U.S. for being "the biggest source of instability" in world and for "fanning flames" at Second Thomas Shoal. At historic Camp David summit, U.S., Japan and South Korea 18 Aug criticised China's "dangerous and aggressive behaviour supporting unlawful maritime claims" in SCS. Philippine President Marcos Jr. 10 Aug revealed govt is considering maritime agreement with Vietnam to "bring stability" to SCS. Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia late Aug protested new Chinese govt map laying claim to vast areas of SCS.

Covert construction continued on disputed islands. Planet Labs satellite imagery 17 Aug revealed China appears to be building airstrip on Triton, an island in Paracel group also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan. Philippine media 19 Aug reported that Vietnam is planning to fortify its presence on Spratlys.

➡ **Thailand Parliament appointed PM from opposition Pheu Thai after forging coalition with pro-military parties, raising prospect of protests and unstable coalition; insecurity persisted in deep south.**

Pheu Thai joined forces with establishment parties to form next govt. Pheu Thai, which came second in May elections, 2 Aug abandoned eight-party coalition led by election winners Move Forward Party, citing latter's promise to amend lèse-majesté law; Pheu Thai nominated real estate tycoon Srettha Thavasin as its candidate for PM. Pheu Thai 21 Aug announced it had formed 11-party coalition comprising pro-military parties, which essentially pairs party with same pro-military coalition that was rejected in May polls, breaking Pheu Thai's election promise not to join forces with 2014 coup plotters. Joint sitting of parliament 22 Aug appointed Srettha as PM, ending months of jockeying; all signs, however, point toward unstable coalition hobbled by mutual mistrust, as well as possible street protests by disaffected voters.

Authorities arrested self-exiled former PM upon his return. Pheu Thai de facto leader Thaksin Shinawatra 22 Aug returned to Thailand after 15 years in self-imposed exile to escape abuse of power trials following 2006 coup that deposed his govt. Arrested upon arrival, Thaksin appeared at Supreme Court before being taken to Bangkok Remand Prison to begin eight-year sentence for three convictions; local media late Aug reported Thaksin applied for royal pardon.

Southernmost provinces witnessed slight uptick in attacks. In Narathiwat province, motorcycle-borne gunmen 3 Aug killed Muslim man in Cho Ai Rong district. Motorcycle-borne assailants 7 Aug attacked eight-strong army patrol in Tak Bai district with pipe bombs and small arms, killing soldier. IED attack 17 Aug killed ranger in Si Sakhon district. Gunmen 19 Aug killed off-duty paramilitary ranger in Chanae district. Militants strung banners in Bacho, Cho Ai Rong, Rangae, and Yi Ngo districts with message, "Is there lasting peace?". In Pattani province, IED attack on military truck 3 Aug killed soldier and wounded five others in Yaring district; gunmen next day killed retired army colonel in Yaring. Combined army, police and defence volunteer force 16 Aug surrounded suspected insurgents in Nongchik district, ensuing gunfight killed two suspects. Gunmen 27 Aug killed former village headman in Saiburi district.