Measures for Health Care Providers to Mitigate the Risks Posed by the Use of Armed Drones in Myanmar

February 2025

Health care providers in conflict areas should anticipate and prepare for the need to protect health services from drone-delivered explosive weapons. The use of armed drones in conflict is expected to rise, driven by their lower costs and reduced risks to pilots compared to manned aircraft and ground troops.

Despite the protections granted under international humanitarian law, health services and community-based aid operations have been targeted by drone-delivered weapon systems. This trend is likely to persist, particularly as drones become more affordable and widely accessible.

Communication devices such as mobile phones, satellite phones, and radios may be monitored by drone operators to identify potential targets, making them a specific risk factor.

Security risk measures for the protection of health care should focus on the protection of health workers, health infrastructure, health services, patients, and access to health care.

As a general principle, mitigation measures to deal with drone use need to be tailored to the relevant risks and vulnerabilities. The proposed measures have been compiled for use in Myanmar in 2025 based on detailed context analysis. Context analysis is location specific and changes over time. The proposed mitigation measures may not all be appropriate for all contexts.

All decisions made on the basis of this document remain the responsibility of the organisations making the decisions. This document is an annex to Insecurity Insight's **Security Risk Management for Health Care Services** handbook

Context, risk and acceptance analysis

Activities and sites at risk

Based on examination of past events, activities and sites at risk of being attacked by drones are as follows:

- Health care infrastructure such as hospitals and rural health centres
- Outdoor activities that require gatherings of groups, patients or their families
- Movements of mobile health teams
- Ambulances, including those parked in hospital compounds or near hospital entrances
- Activities or objects that can be identified from the use of certain communication devices (see above)
- Health workers on their way to and from work, at home, or in public places
- Locations close to military activity or perceived military activity
- Locations that have been attacked previously
- Sites where protests are taking place and where health workers intervene to treat wounded individuals

Security Risk Management Practices focuses on:

Identify potential threats

Analyse vulnerabilities

Use data and evidence

Engage stakeholders

Proposed general steps that can be taken to protect health services at risk

- Put in place measures that protect staff providing and patients receiving health care.
- Provide advice to staff on how they can protect themselves outside of work.
- Put in place measures that strengthen the general resilience of essential health service systems.
- Put in place measures to maintain the continuity of critical services.
- Discuss these objectives with external supporters and seek their support.

Proposed measures to protect staff, critical infrastructure and services

The protection of health care services and facilities is complex and challenging, and it is not possible to provide full protection. Mitigation measures should be selected based on the level of risk, the level of vulnerability and the criticality of a particular health service. Mitigation measures have to be attainable and can be developed over time. The following steps are proposed activities designed to help the identification, development and implementation of mitigation measures appropriate for each situation.

Context, risk and acceptance analysis

- Carry out an assessment to identify the activities and structures that are both at high risk and critical for the provision of adequate health services.
- Identify necessary and realistic mitigation measures to protect staff, facilities, patients and critical services.
- Prioritise the measures based on a range of criteria from “easy to do” to “critical to the functioning of health services”.
- Develop a multi-step strategy for how to achieve individual elements of this strategy depending on available resources, support and general circumstances.
- For each element or group of elements of the strategy, define what is needed, share this information with external supporters, and ask them to supply what is needed.
- Develop guidance to implement the chosen mitigation measures.
- Develop contingency plans for when a drone is spotted in the vicinity of health facilities or staff activities.
- Develop contingency plans for how to respond should a drone attack occur.
- Train staff in emergency response and contingency plans.
- Develop clear signs and instructions that both staff and patients can understand, such as a warning system when a drone attack may be imminent and clear ways to deal with each risk.
- Monitor the context(s) in which your health service is operating and develop flexible and adaptive strategies.
- Take into account the fact that changes in attack strategies can change risk factors, which will then require new strategies to deal with them.

Awareness: Generating awareness of possible threats facing health and communicating ways of managing these threats to ensure as far as possible a violence-free environment in which health care services can function properly.

Preparedness: Assessing the risks and putting systems and procedures in to better prevent and cope with violence before it occurs.

Response: How to respond if a violent incident occurs.

Sustainability: Dealing with the aftermath of violent incidents and working towards sustainable health care provision and access to health care

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

General principles of risk mitigation

A mitigation measure is an action or strategy designed to reduce or minimise the negative impacts of a risk, threat, or harmful event. These measures can be applied to increase the safety and protection of individual workers, health buildings, health services, health supplies, patients, and access to health care. Mitigation measures need to be designed to respond to the specific threats your service is facing.

Below is a list of elements to consider when you are designing mitigation measures to protect all aspects of health care from drone attacks:

- Minimise staff time spent in exposed locations where drones have been seen or are active.
- Structure health system processes in ways that minimise patients' exposure to potential risks from drone attacks.
- Consider the specific points where health services, staff, and patients are exposed to risk during consultations, treatment, and care.
- Consider patients' needs for emergency procedures, including which patients may be able to evacuate and which ones are less mobile, e.g. patients in ICUs, surgical wards, and paediatric ICUs.
- Identify the critical processes in health care systems. This includes identifying equipment and devices that are critical to maintaining health services and placing this equipment in areas where it is less likely to suffer damage, such as in basements, underground, or further away from the health facility in unmarked buildings.
- Consider decentralising health processes by spreading services across multiple locations to spread risk and reduce the size of groups of people gathering in each location.
- Consider implementing a discharge system for patients that minimises the number of patients inside a hospital at any given time.
- Limit the number of health care staff inside the hospital. Consider possibilities for spreading staff and activities across multiple locations.
- Try to avoid creating routines that can be identified and exploited for a potential drone attack, such as providing a specific type of consultation always at the same time on the same day of the week.
- If and when relevant, consider building or reinforcing safe areas that could shelter health teams, patients, and their families during a drone attack.

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Early warning systems

Early warning mechanisms are important to provide an additional few minutes of warning that can be very important in saving lives. Experimenting with possible early warning systems is an important investment. However, not much is available to non-state users to provide localised early warning of the presence of drones. Below are approaches that can be tried:

- Spectrum analysers that measure the frequency response, noise and distortion characteristics of all kinds of radio frequency (RF) circuitry can be tried as an aid for early warning.
- Use binoculars to monitor the sky and listen for the sound of drone motors. The latter is easier at night than in the day. However, drones are becoming increasingly quiet, and hearing a drone likely means that it is only a few hundred metres away.
- Be aware of warning signs that drone attacks are more likely to occur such as increased military activity in the general area, unexplained failures of GPS coordinates, or radio/communications jamming.
- Consider building a network of “human spotters” further away from your facility who may be able to warn you when a drone has been spotted. Consider effective ways of communicating with these spotters, e.g. by using walkie-talkies.

Mitigation measures to protect health services, health access and patients

Mitigation measures to protect health services, health access, and patients are actions and strategies designed to reduce risks and minimise harm to health systems to ensure the continued delivery of essential health services.

- Consider your health services’ processes and procedures, identify related risks, and consider ways of adjusting these processes/procedures to mitigate possible risks.
- Consider health processes that take place in waiting areas, consultation rooms, operating rooms, physical therapy areas, laboratories, patient recovery areas, medical supply areas, waiting areas for patient’s families, and food preparation areas, and consider spacing them out over a wider area and measures to limit the number of people in each location to a minimum.
- Consider ways to keep patient groups separate from one another. If your health facility is treating injured combatants or protestors, consider providing care for them away from paediatric or maternity services.
- Consider reinforcing measures to keep patients’ identities confidential so that injured combatants or protestors are protected.
- Consider the risks involved when health teams travel from place to place.

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

- Consider the risk of possible double-tap attacks[1] if other civilian infrastructure in the vicinity is hit.
- Consider evacuation protocols that should be followed if a hospital needs to be evacuated. Consider which patients are mobile and can be easily evacuated and which are not.
- Consider access roads that people use to reach health centres and potential mitigation measures to reduce their exposure on these roads and to maintain the use of these access roads.
- Prepare for an emergency well in advance and consider medical and other supply issues, including fuel to power generators.
- Develop a protocol for the required staff behaviour in case of an attack and train staff accordingly.

> ***Early warning mechanisms are important to provide an additional few minutes of warning that can be very important in saving lives.***

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Table 1: Don’ts and do’s to protect health services, health access and patients from drone attacks

Do’s	Examples	Don’ts	Examples
Organise services for individuals rather than large groups to minimise risks.	Individually schedule appointments or assign patients for regular treatment to small, manageable groups.	**Don’t offer services for which crowds of people have to wait or gather in large groups outside.**	Don’t arrange things so that access to special feeding programmes for children or lactating mothers requires people to queue to receive their allocation.
Use waiting areas away from the health service.	Identify locations at some distance from the health facility where people can safely wait before approaching the facility at a specific time.	**Don’t offer services at regular, predictable hours.**	For example, don’t offer maternity consultations every Wednesday afternoon and require patients to wait their turn outside the health centre.
Limit waiting periods for patients outside a health facilities to a few minutes at most.	Allow individuals to enter the facility as soon as possible after their arrival.	**Don’t announce events on social media.**	Don’t issue a social media announcement like: “A batch of vaccines has arrived. Come next Thursday for your vaccination.”
Separate the various steps in the health care process geographically; i.e. the facilities that provide the various stages of the treatment process should be positioned at some distance from one another.	Organise initial consultations in a different location to where operations are carried out. Move patients requiring post-operative care to other facilities to protect operating rooms from becoming targets of drone attacks.	**Don’t schedule patient visits for times that require dangerous travel to and from the health centre.**	If there are growing tensions or armed clashes in your area, consider rescheduling the times when services are provided.

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Mitigation measures for health buildings and infrastructure

Mitigation measures for health buildings and infrastructure focus on reducing risks and ensuring the resilience of health care facilities against drone attacks in order to maintain service delivery and safeguard health care workers and patients.

- As far as is possible and appropriate, install passive security systems such as anti-blast film on windows and sandbags placed in front of windows, designate a safe room, and consider the use of bunkers or basements for both critical services and as shelter areas for patients' families and others.
- Ensure that designated safe or shelter areas can be supplied with water and electricity.
- Ensure that safe or shelter areas are stocked with sufficient supplies such as first aid kits and training materials; surgical supplies and medicines; post-exposure prophylaxis kits; and paediatric, obstetric, and gynaecological equipment.
- Ensure that safe rooms and shelter areas are fitted with appropriate communications equipment.
- Plan for contingencies if the first measures used to protect a building from a drone attack fail.

Mitigation measures for mobile health teams

Mitigation measures for mobile health teams focus on reducing risks and ensuring the safety and effectiveness of health care delivery in conflict-affected areas. These measures are both general to mitigate most risks and specific to drone attacks, and address security threats, logistical challenges, and operational disruptions in order to protect health care workers, patients, and medical supplies.

- Plan mobile health team movements in ways that limit risks and exposure.
- Choose appropriate communication tools that allow communication and contact without giving out suspicious signals that could attract a drone or other type of attack.
- Plan safe routes and consider the specific risk posed by "choke points" that expose teams to possible attacks, such as bridges, cuttings, and other deforested areas where travellers are more visible and there is less opportunity to evade or hide from a drone attack.
- If possible and appropriate, consider supplying mobile team members with personal protective equipment or other special clothing.
- Consider separating the travel trips of medical personnel and those carrying supplies and equipment to make the travel of health personnel less obvious and to decrease the impact on service delivery if attacks do happen.
- Cover or remove any flashing or reflective colouring on ambulances and the clothes of health care personnel.
- Do not park ambulances or medical vehicles immediately outside a hospital, but disperse them to pre-planned safe parking areas.

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Table 2: Don’ts and do’s to protect mobile health teams

Do’s	Examples	Don’ts	Examples
Plan several different schedules and routes for mobiles teams.	Plan the schedules and routes for mobile teams differently every week.	**Don’t use the same route at the same time for mobile health services.**	For example, the team should not leave the health facility at 9 a.m. every Monday in a northerly direction.
Use means of transport that blend in with civilian traffic on the same route.	Use motorbikes or private cars.	**Don’t use vehicles that resemble those used by armed entities.**	A car should not be painted with military-style camouflage to better hide it on the road, because it might be taken to be a military vehicle.
Take steps to ensure that health personnel and vehicles are not identified as such.	First responders should wear ordinary local clothes, and the reflective markings on ambulances should be covered with mud.	**Don’t identify ambulances and emergency teams with reflective markings.**	First responders should not wear reflective vests and be clearly identifiable in order not to attract a double-tap strike by a second drone.
Multiple transport vehicles should be spaced out so as not to appear like a convoy that could attract a drone strike.	Different individuals and teams should leave at different times to increase the distance between team members.	**Don’t travel in large groups.**	Avoid a situation where multiple cars travel in convoy.
Provide staff with guidance on best practice (see below).	Repeat the main principles of risk mitigation to staff regularly so that they are able to remember them during an emergency.	**Don’t send the mobile team off on a mission and hope for the best.**	Mobile health units should not be sent into a high-risk area without being informed about possible risks or trained to respond should they come under drone attack.

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Preparing and implementing mitigation measures

Effective mitigation measures require careful planning, coordination, resourcing and implementation. Below are some key steps for the preparation and implementation of mitigation measures .

Develop protocols

Once the key risks and vulnerabilities facing a health service are identified, you should develop protocols for the implementation of mitigation measures to deal with these risks/ vulnerabilities in your operating areas. The following aspects should be part of context-specific mitigation plans.

Identify individuals in charge and responsibilities for the following functions if an attack occurs:

- Key people should be assigned to monitoring the situation and reporting when it is safe to leave shelters.
- Ensure that those with monitoring responsibilities have access to appropriate communication tools that are connected to shelter areas and/or the person coordinating the overall response.
- Plan for crowd control by ensuring that people disperse and that those without serious injuries are removed from the health facility/ambulance/mobile clinic.
- Plan for patient communication. Identify in advance instructions that should be given to patients and ensure that the right people are able to remember and carry out the instructions during an emergency.

Establish emergency communication protocols that define who contacts whom to communicate particular kinds of information:

- Be aware of the risks of communications being intercepted. This is a risk for VHF/UHF radio, GSM and satellite phones, and potentially non-encrypted internet links.
- If possible, maintain a secondary means of communication in case the primary means is lost, damaged or compromised.

Supplies and logistics:

- Consider steps to ensure the safety of supply lines for the safe transport of goods and spare parts, as well as the storage of supplies and the maintenance of the cold chain.
- Consider gaining the support of commercial providers to maintain medical supplies.
- Plan ahead and consider any possible mitigation steps needed in terms of supplies and logistics to ensure the delivery of health care to those in need.

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Training

Training is critical for the successful implementation of mitigation measures, because it ensures that health care workers, security personnel, and humanitarian staff understand risks, know how to apply protective measures, and respond effectively in crisis situations.

- The essential principle for effective training is “Practice, practice, practice”.
- Consider and draw up contingency plans for issues such as blocked or unsafe exits, overcrowded shelters, high casualty events or panic.
- Decide how to manage agitated colleagues, patients and their families, and train staff to do this successfully.
- Discuss possible scenarios as a group.
- Don’t just talk to and lecture staff. Encourage them to be actively involved in thinking through, discussing and dealing with the issues that might arise from a drone attack.
- Play out possible scenarios, with different individuals taking different roles.
- If people have practised how to react, they are more likely to do the right things when under the extremely high stress of a real attack.
- Review incidents and planning sessions/exercises to identify and act on lessons learned and adapt plans accordingly.

Preparing staff for risks

Staff training has to be adapted to circumstances, but all training should stress the basic general principles:

- If staff members are at work during an attack, emphasise to them that it is important to follow the established protocols.
- Everyone needs to know their role in all foreseeable circumstances.
- Everyone needs to know where safe and shelter areas are located.
- If they are on the way to or from work or in a public place, staff should follow the general protection measures as far possible.
- If at home, staff should follow general indoor safety procedures.
- Discuss possible scenarios with staff and train them to respond effectively and efficiently.
- Provide staff with as much psychological support as possible.

> ***Identifying feasible, efficient and sustainable measures that protect staff and do not hinder or prevent access to health care***

Proposed measures to mitigate the risks posed by drone attacks

Communication with patients and their families

In addition to staff training, the right communication methods for patients and their families need to be identified.

- Ensure that staff, patients and their families are informed where they should or should not wait during normal processes through the use of clear and contextualised visual signs.
- Ensure that patients and their families are informed about how to disperse in as many directions as possible if an attack happens.
- Ensure that appropriate risk management procedures are communicated to staff and patients that are adapted to patients' specific needs. Consider the instructions for people with reduced mobility, children, heavily pregnant women, and injured people. Plan for steps to assist at-risk populations groups.

Practical guidance and training for personal safety and security when encountering armed drones

Personal safety

When outside and a drone is spotted Guidance for mobile health teams, health workers who travel to and from work, and all staff when they are outside (i.e. not in a health facility)	
Do's	**Don'ts**
If you are outside when a drone is present, seek cover.	**Don't try to outrun a drone. Drones travel faster than humans. Doing so may highlight yourself as something suspicious or a potential target.**
Get off any motorbike, leave the bike, and seek shelter. Get out of a vehicle and seek shelter.	**Don't try to outdrive the drone: it is not possible to drive faster than a drone flies.**
Take shelter, ideally in a solid structure, e.g. under a bridge or inside a building or any other structure that can provide in the best case "two wall" cover, i.e. where at least two solid walls separate you from the potential impact zone of a drone strike.	**Don't run through an open field or in the middle of a road.**
Take shelter, if possible, in a dip/fold in the ground (because explosions spread upwards in a "V" shape and not downwards).	**Don't stay close to any potential target.**
If in a group, disperse and run in different directions, ideally under the cover of trees or undergrowth.	**Don't move collectively as a group at the speed of the slowest group member.**
If travelling with children, the elderly or patients, assign a specific healthy adult to each vulnerable person before setting out and discuss how this person can be moved in an emergency.	**Don't leave one staff member to care for several people while all the others run off to seek shelter.** **Don't abandon children, the elderly or patients.**
Run in zigzags, changing direction as often as possible	**Don't run in a straight line.**
Once away from the immediate site where the drone was spotted, move slowly and deliberately, stay under trees or in shade, and avoid panicky or jerky movements.	**Don't wave to get the attention of friendly people. Movement attracts a drone's visual sensors.**
If appropriate and possible, lie flat, ideally under something that will screen your body from the drone's camera.	**If possible, don't expose your body. Advanced drones can detect heat signatures.**

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Practical guidance and training for personal safety and security when encountering armed drones

Personal safety

When inside and a drone is spotted Guidance for staff inside a health facility, health workers at home, and anyone who has sought shelter inside a building	
Do's	**Don'ts**
Ideally, find a room that provides two solid walls between yourself and the outside.	**Don't look out of the window.**
Sturdy furniture, such as tables or beds, can be used to form improvised shrapnel barriers to shelter behind.	**Stay a way from windows or wooden doors that may shatter.**
If they are available, sleeping mats with metal cores will provide an individual with limited protection from drones fitted with thermal cameras.	**Blankets do not provide effective cover to individuals during drone attacks.**
Keep away from windows, but if it is safe to do so, close curtains and shutters, or add barriers.	**Don't position yourself near windows or other openings to the outside.**
If a space is regularly used to shelter people, cover windows with blast film or duct tape to reduce the risk from flying glass.	**Don't hide close to windows that may shatter, even if they have been covered by blast film or duct tape.**
Remain aware of secondary hazards that may catch fire or explode during a drone attack.	**Don't hide near oxygen cylinders, which may explode following an impact nearby or in a fire.**
Try to ensure that there are at least two exits from any place of shelter.	**Don't stay in or use the upper floors of a building that might be targeted.**
Put in place the highest possible safety measures for patients, if possible, housing them in rooms that provide two-wall protection from the outside, and avoid places that might cause secondary hazards for health services personnel.	**Don't provide health services in exposed locations and do everything possible not to abandon patients during a drone attack.**

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Practical guidance and training for personal safety and security when encountering armed drones

Personal safety

Response during a drone attack	
Do's	**Reminders**
If a crowd is present, encourage people to disperse in as many directions as possible, which will make it harder for a drone operator to follow any individual for a targeted attack.	• **Make sure that all staff members are aware of emergency procedures.** • **Make sure communication methods have been agreed in advance and work properly.** • **Make sure that staff responsible for giving instructions to patients and their family members are well trained and know what to do in the event of a drone attack.**
Ensure access to coverage/ shelter for health workers.	• **Make sure all staff know where the safe/shelter areas are.** • **Make sure the shelter areas are big enough to protect all staff members.**
Ensure coverage/shelter for patients if possible.	• **Make sure patients are in safe areas.** • **Make sure instructions have been given for how to support vulnerable patients.**
Ensure that someone is in a position to monitor the situation and provide updates as it evolves.	• **Designate those responsible for monitoring the situation.** • **Train the responsible people what to look out for.** • **Establish clear communication lines and information requirements for what monitors should pass on to whoever is in charge or other personnel.**
Be prepared to provide emergency care as soon as it is safe to do so.	• **Make sure the necessary equipment is available to provide emergency care.** • **Remember the possibility of double-tap strikes and act appropriately.**

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Post-incident care and action

Immediate aftermath

This list of steps to be taken in the immediate aftermath of a drone attack covers activities related to the drone and does not include medical procedures.

Be aware of the following factors and inform staff and patients as part of general awareness-raising:

- Be aware of the possibility of what are known as “blinds” (i.e. munitions that fail to detonate). This may also include drones that fail to explode, or which get “stuck” in trees, electricity wires, etc.
- Be aware of potential secondary hazards such as collapsing walls, glass splinters or fires.
- Be aware of the possibility of double-tap drone attacks that follow after the initial attack and are specifically designed to target first responders.
- Be aware that the kill zone of many drone munitions can be seven metres or more, depending on the size of the munition, and that the munition may not have fully detonated.

Designate individuals and train them to do the following:

- Monitor the wider area for a potential second attack and communicate any threats to the designated person.
- Control the less seriously injured casualties who could become a threat/hinderance to dealing with more serious/existing casualties.
- Move patients and their families who do not need medical attention away from the facility.
- Ensure that all staff, patients and family members stay away from the site of the explosion at a safe distance and that nobody approaches the debris outside of the marked route.

Approaching the drone if it or its munition has not exploded:

- Do not touch any munition or any part of the munition. It may still detonate or may be booby trapped to detonate if it is touched.
- If in doubt, do not touch any part of the drone or its munition.
- Be aware that the drone operator may still be watching and may detonate the munition as someone approaches.
- Do not approach a drone or debris from the side the drone’s camera is facing (if it is still intact).
- Mark routes to the debris or unexploded munition (UXO[2]) as you would in a minefield, and ensure that only designated persons approach the debris/UXO.

Post-incident care and action

Documentation

Documentation is important for learning from the incident and sharing information with partners. It entails risks and has to be carried out correctly to ensure the safety of the person documenting an incident and the accuracy of the information documented.

NOTE: A knowledgeable person or expert needs to confirm that it is safe to approach a drone or debris before evidence is documented.

Don’ts and do’s of documentation		
Do’s	**Possibility**	**Don’ts**
Once the situation is considered safe, take photos without touching or leaning over the device/ debris.	Vehicle dashcams or discreet body cameras may be less visible ways of recording images, but are still not safe to use in all environments.	• **Don’t look outside to observe or video the drone in flight.**
Make sure before taking pictures that time and location metadata are enabled on your camera/ phone.	If possible, CCTV cameras could be installed inside and outside the hospital or health care facility to help with documentation and evidence collection.	• **Don’t overtly take photographs or videos of active drones, because this may antagonise armed actors controlling the drone.**
Coordinate witness statements/reports with any available imagery and share or disseminate this evidence as appropriate.	Be aware of the location of the drone camera if the drone is still intact. Be aware that the operator may still be watching as you approach.	• **Don’t touch any part of a drone on the ground, because it could still detonate.**

Post-incident care and action

Establish contact with donors and outside supporters

Establish a liaison system or, if one is already in place, connect with donors, sponsors and external supporters.

Seeking support

Carry out your context, threat and vulnerability analysis, and identify the required mitigation measures and the resources needed to develop protocols, train staff or equip buildings. Seek conversations with external supporters and ask for help where it is needed to implement the necessary protection measures.

Tell your supporters that health workers and health services have to be protected to ensure continued health services and to improve health outcomes for those in need.

Collective action to protect the humanitarian space from the use of armed drones

Collective action for the protection of the humanitarian space refers to efforts undertaken by groups of individuals and organisations where the security risk efforts of an individual organisation are insufficient to ensure safe humanitarian access to those in need.

- Collective action relies on cooperation, shared resources and a collective commitment to humanitarian principles.
- Collective action to seek protection of the humanitarian space can take the form of communications targeted at the UN and governments, in negotiations with conflict parties, or communications aimed at the general public.
- Depending on the context, collective action can take the form of public advocacy statements, confidential conversations, and the provision of technical information to support particular diplomatic positions.
- Collective action can involve the sharing of information and advice among aid agencies, and the provision of support by international aid agencies to national partner NGOs and volunteers organising front line aid.
- At the diplomatic level, collective action can communicate the impact of armed drones on humanitarian operations for consideration under the existing mechanisms of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).
- Reckless action by an aid agency can jeopardise humanitarian access for the agency itself – and for the entire aid community. All decisions related to collective action to protect the humanitarian space must take into account the possible consequences beyond any immediate needs and actions.

NGO collaboration to protect the humanitarian space from the use of armed drones

- NGO cooperation can provide safe and secure information-sharing mechanisms to report and inform others of suspicious drone activity.
- Agencies should monitor and report incidents/near misses to security risk managers and other relevant coordination groups.
- Conflict parties, authorities, and local leaders should be informed that aid agencies monitor and report threats and incidents for the purpose of internal risk management, and not to hold a conflict party accountable for particular actions. Authorities and conflict parties may also be informed that aid agencies do not investigate actions, but do review incidents to ensure better planning and risk management.
- Organisations must have clear protocols for information-sharing procedures in particular if critical incidents occur.

Endnotes

1 A double-tap attack is when a second attack on the same target occurs soon after an initial attack. These attacks often hit emergency responders and medical personnel who have rushed to assist the victims of the first attack, and may be specifically designed to do so.

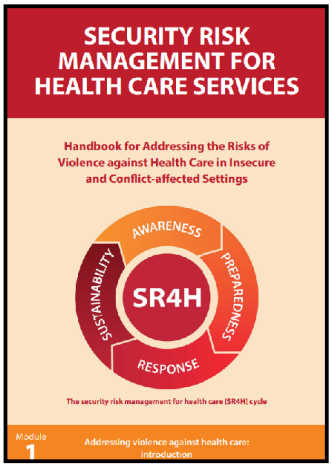
2 Unexploded ordnance, which includes all types of unexploded munitions.

Further Resources

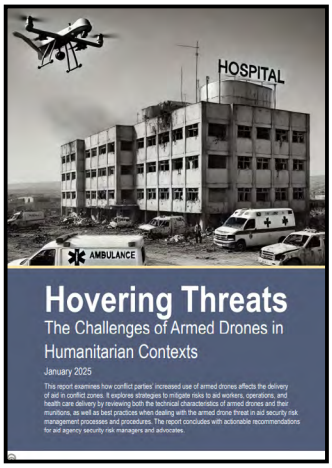
Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Factsheet (EN)

Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Factsheet (MY)

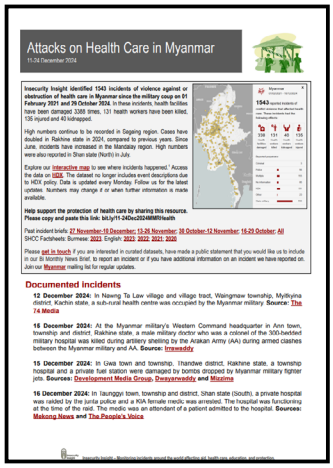
Security Risk Management for Health Care Services Handbook



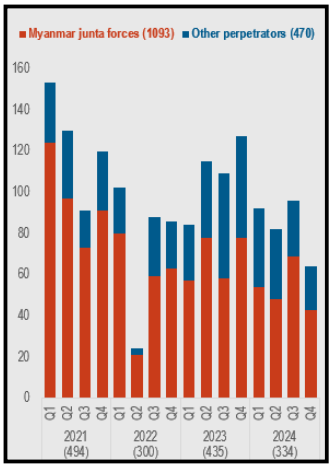
Hovering Threats The Challenges of Armed Drones in Humanitarian Contexts



Attacks on Health Care in Myanmar Incident Brief (bi-monthly)



Attacks on Health Care in Myanmar Incident Data (weekly)



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