

AFTER ACTION REPORT
REFUGEE RELIEF INTERNATIONAL, INC.
KAREN COMBAT TRAUMA COURSE 2025

In late August, through early September 2025, a two-person team consisting of Vicki Chan-Padgett, MPAS, PA-C Emerita and John Padgett, PA-C Emeritus, PhD, deployed to northwest Thailand, the Thai-Burma border, to train medics from the Karen National Union (KNU) Department of Health and Welfare in combat trauma skills. This accelerated course was taught in conjunction with two trauma surgeons from the Austere Surgical Network, an organization that has been performing life-saving surgeries on wounded Karen in a denied environment. The objective of the class was to add to the trauma skills of the ten medics selected for the training, and to impart proficiency in new techniques used to care for trauma patients.

For the first time in decades, the ethnic factions in Burma (called Myanmar by the junta) have agreed to unite and concentrate on the common enemy: the Burmese (Myanmar) military dictatorship. This has led to increased fighting and more casualties. And the need for an intensive trauma course to train medics to treat those casualties, military and civilian.

After a change in teaching locations due to the Burmese Air Force having bombed the Karen hospital, the course began with a review of the medical history and physical, followed by specific trauma problems such as chest and abdominal wounds, care of gunshot and fragmentation wounds, burn care, drone awareness, mine injuries, evacuation of the wounded, and more. The Karen medical system uses Ketamine extensively for general surgery, and this and other types of anesthesia were reviewed. A recent development is the use in the field of ultrasound, using hand-held scanners and laptop computers.

While mornings were dedicated to classroom learning, the afternoons were used in practical application of lessons learned. The students were engaged, interested, and demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter.

As the instruction was concluding, the KNU Minister of Health requested a surgical techniques and wound management course, the same as RRII taught ten years prior. This will be taken into consideration.

A peaceful resolution and possible regime change seem a long way off. In the meantime, RRII will do what we can to help the Karen take care of their wounded.



The students with the instructors from the Austere Surgical network (L) and Refugee Relief International, Inc. (R).



Suturing class. Note the gift suture sets from the Austere Surgical Network.



Practicing the saddle patient carry technique.