

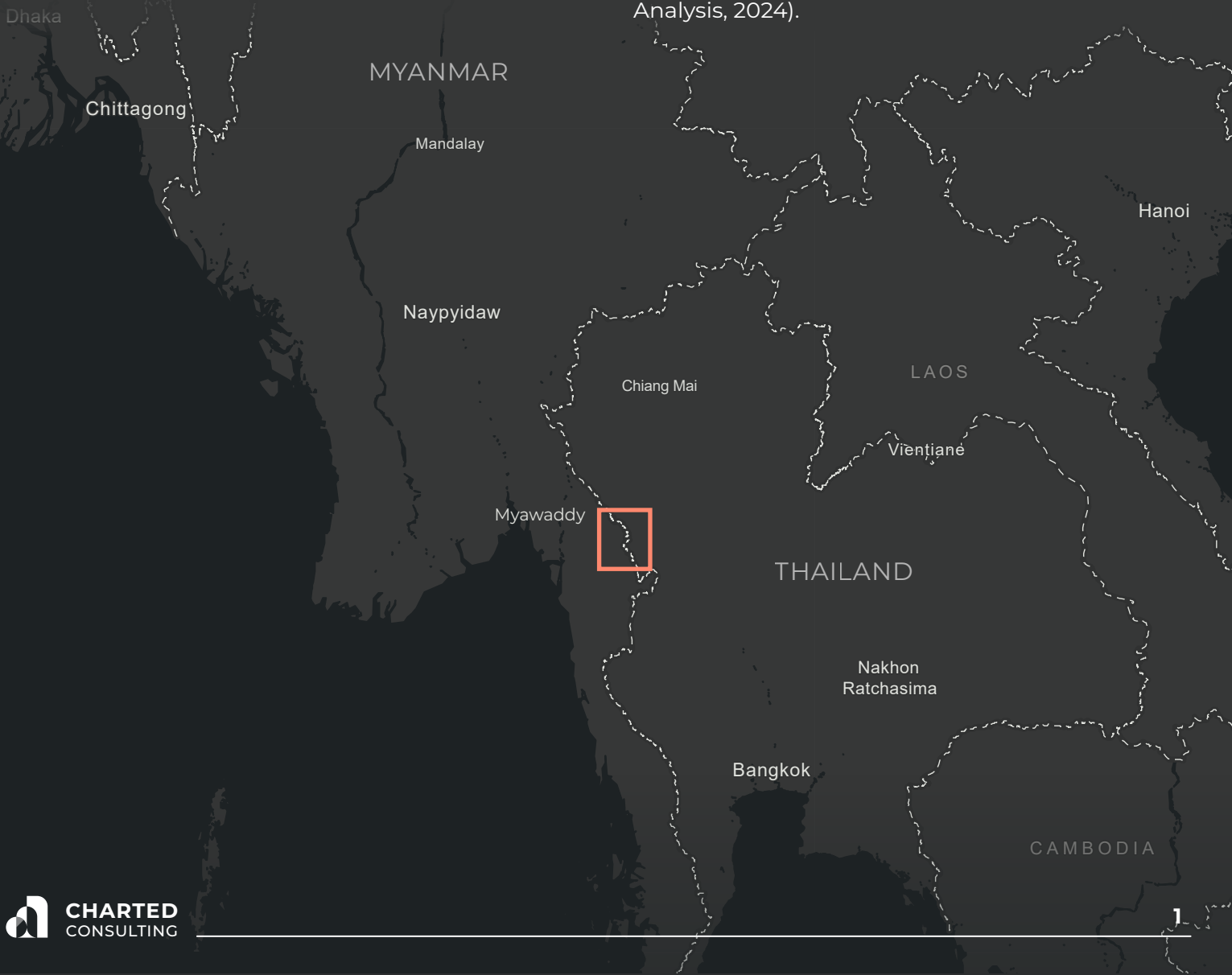
Cyber Scam Compounds and Forced Labor:

Analysis of the Myawaddy Region of Myanmar

The Thai-Myanmar border region – particularly around Myawaddy – has emerged as a global epicenter for cyber scam operations fueled by human trafficking. Thousands of people, many lured by false job offers, are held in guarded compounds and forced to carry out online scams known as **“pig butchering”** – schemes in which victims are lured into fake romantic or investment relationships and gradually manipulated into sending large sums of money, often through cryptocurrency. Despite a series of crackdowns in early 2025, including power cuts to scam hubs and cross-border raids, scam compounds have continued to expand, profit immensely, and online recruitment remains active.

Regional Trends

- Burmese and Chinese nationals continue to make up a large portion of those forcibly held in compounds in Myanmar; however, **the origin countries of trafficked individuals are expanding** beyond Southeast Asia to include South Asia, Africa, and even Latin America and Europe.
- **Myanmar's non-state armed groups** control key territories where scam compounds operate, benefiting financially and providing protection to traffickers.
- **Starlink receivers are known to be used** at multiple scam compounds in the Myawaddy region.
- **Crackdowns on Myawaddy's compounds in early 2025** followed cooperation between China, Thailand, and Myanmar, yet enforcement largely depended on non-state militias policing their own scam hubs.
- **Tether (USDT) is the most common cryptocurrency stablecoin used** to deposit into reported scammer accounts (Chain Analysis, 2024).



Known Scamming Compounds in the Myawaddy Region



Imagery: Google Earth; acquired between December 2024 and February 2025

Compounds, Irregular Border Crossings, and Casinos in the Myawaddy Region

Profits from scam compounds are funneled through unregulated cryptocurrency channels and gambling operations (both online and physical), enabling large-scale laundering and obscuring financial trails. Casinos in the Myawaddy region often have close ties to scam operations. Evidence suggests the ecosystem remains highly adaptable, transnational, and deeply entrenched. Severe human rights abuses take place.

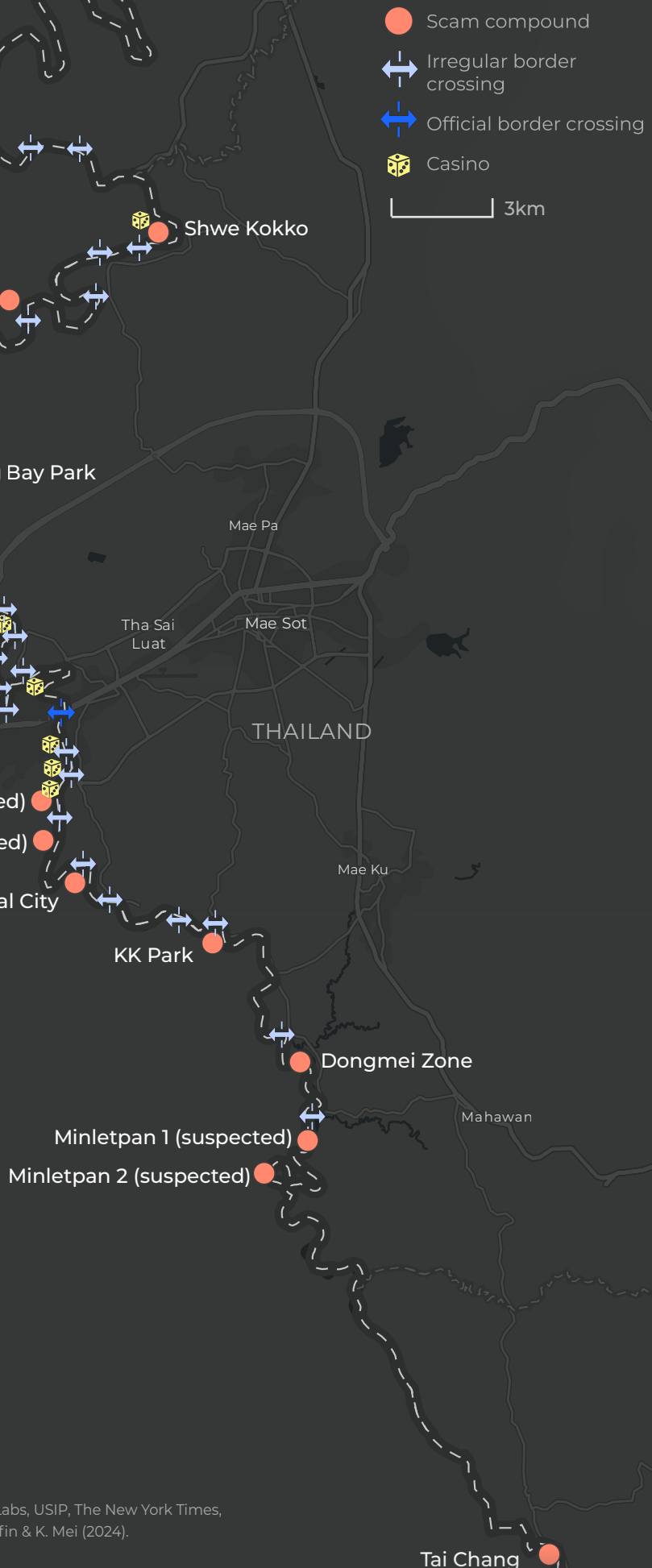
14+
known or
suspected scam
compounds

30-40
international
criminal gangs

9,000+
rescued from scam
compounds in
Myawaddy in the
first half of 2025

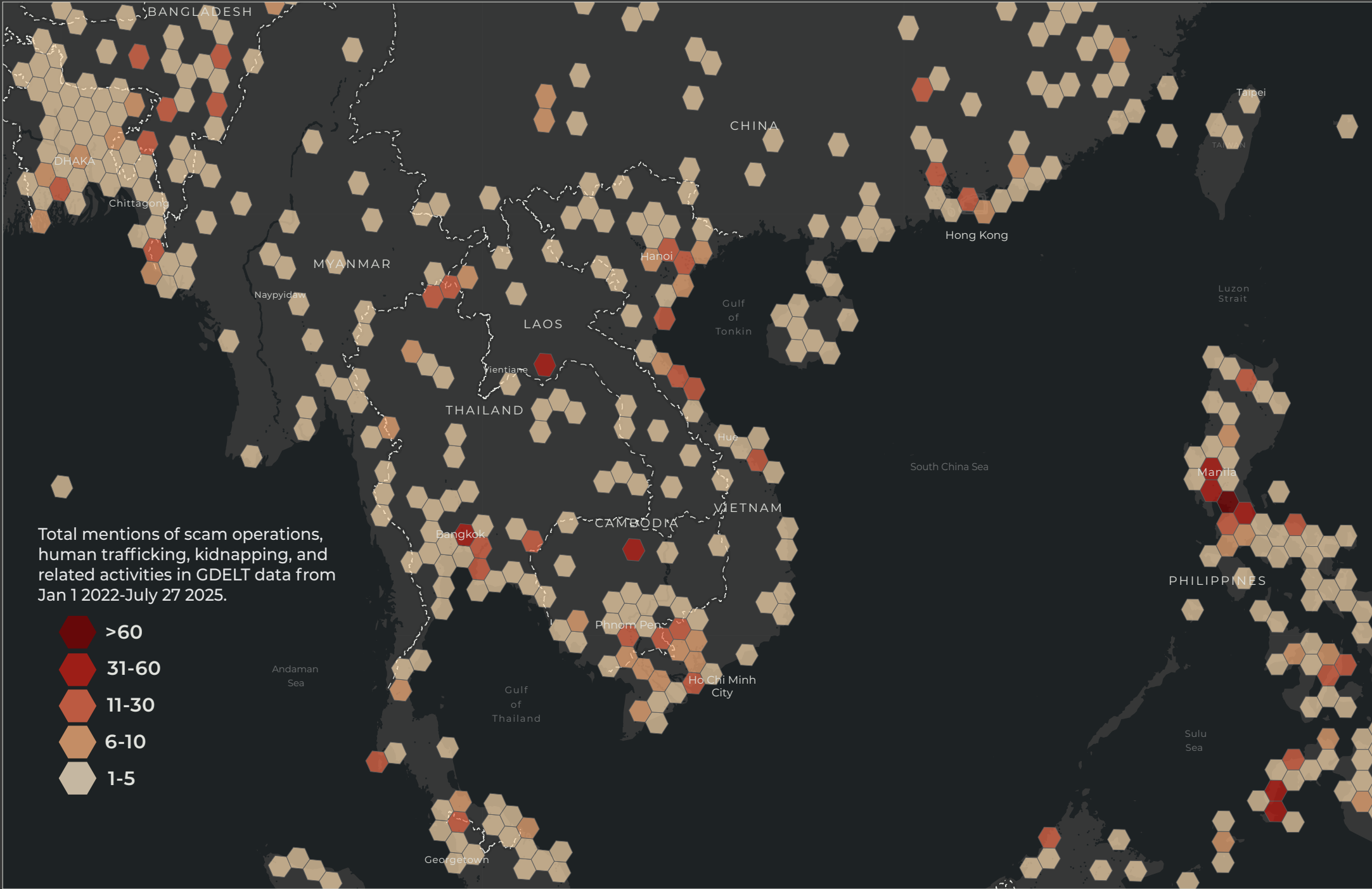
Geospatial analysis of scam compound locations and known irregular border crossings in the region suggests that irregular crossings may be frequently used and relied upon for the transport of goods and people – including those trafficked – between Thailand and Myanmar. **Of the 14 known or suspected scam compounds in the Myawaddy region, at least 12 are within one kilometer of an established irregular border crossing.**

Sources: UNODC, Global Initiative, Google Earth, Chain Analysis, Wired, TRM Labs, USIP, The New York Times, The Guardian, ACLED, Google Maps, GDELT, Nikkei Asia, Mizzima, BBC, J. Griffin & K. Mei (2024).



Hotspots of News Coverage Related to Trafficking and Scam Operations

Using GDELT Data Covering January 2022 - July 2025



Sources: GDELT