

Beat: Miscellaneous

Suspected separatists kill 8 Indonesian soldiers in Papua

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USPA News - Eight Indonesian soldiers were shot and killed Thursday in two separate attacks by suspected separatists in the country's Papua province, local authorities said on Friday. It represents the deadliest attack on security forces in the past two years.

The first incident occurred at around 9:30 a.m. local time when a group of armed men opened fire at military post Puncak Jaya in Tinggimambut, a village located in Puncak Jaya district. Papua province military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Jansen Simanjuntak said two soldiers were shot, including First Pvt. Wahyu Prabowo who died from a gunshot wound to the chest. The other soldier was wounded. The second incident happened about an hour later when a group of soldiers was ambushed by armed men while traveling from Sinak in Puncak Jaya to the Ilaga Air Base. A spokesperson for Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said 10 soldiers were fired at, resulting in the deaths of seven of them. Two civilians were also shot in the crossfire as soldiers returned fire, but their conditions were not immediately known. Officials in the capital Jakarta have blamed separatists with the Free Papua Movement (OPM) of being behind the attacks, but there were no immediate claims of responsibility. Yudhoyono instructed authorities in the region to find those responsible for the attack, and his office said he would convene an emergency meeting to discuss the incident. "This is a form of reality in our society in which there are still armed groups," presidential spokesman Julian Aldrin Pasha said. "The duty of the state is to stop them from performing these inhumane actions." Violence has plagued Papua since 1969, when Indonesia took over control of the region from the Dutch, ignoring Papuan demands for political sovereignty. Jakarta granted the region special autonomy in 2001, but this failed to quell widespread separatist sentiments.

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