

Army chief of staff Gen. Agustadi Sasongko is flying to Sentani in Papua to meet the protesting soldiers that have put Papua in red alert.

Papua Military spokesman Lt. Col. Susilo said Thursday that Agustadi left Jakarta Wednesday night, soon after the soldiers violently protested against what they called the theft of their money by their commander.

"Last night Bapak (Agustadi) left Jakarta and this morning arrives here and will directly head to Sentani to meet the soldiers," Sasongko told Antara news agency.

Soldiers from Battalion 751 in Sentani staged a violent protest on Wednesday during the commemoration of West Papua's integration into Indonesia. The soldiers were demanding that the battalion's commander, Lt. Col. Labok Sihotang, be held responsible for his actions.

The soldiers questioned why their commander required them to provide funds for the burial of their fellow soldier, Private Joko, in his hometown in Nabire, Papua. The soldiers felt that the army should have paid for sending Joko's body home for burial, not them.

Local journalists said the soldiers went on a rampage and even started hunted down journalists covering the rioting.

The angry soldiers ransacked the reporters' belongings and confiscated a video camera used to film the riot.

The violent protest ended after Cenderawasih/Papua military commander Maj. Gen. Azmin Yusri Nasution met the soldiers and promised to hold their commander, Sihotang, accountable before law.