

Items abridged in translation by TAPOL from Cenderawasih Pos.

[There appear to have been a number of incidents in West Papua involving clashes between well-armed police personnel and an OPM group, following the occupation of an airstrip on 20 May. Without independent confirmation, it is difficult to know whether claims by the police about the involvement of an OPM group are correct. TAPOL]

27 May 2009

[The following relates to an incident on 20 May]

One more combat (SSK) unit of Brimob (police mobile brigade) has been dispatched to Kampung Bagusa, not far from the Kapeso airstrip in Mamberamo Hilir District, following the dispatch several days earlier of two Brimob platoons as well as a team from Special Detachment 88.

Before departing, the men were given their instructions by chief of police FX Bagus Ekodanto Police. Police Commissioner Wenas who confirmed that the Brimob platoons were accompanied by medical personnel, intel agents as well as Detachment 88 to make sure the operation would achieve its goal.

'They have been sent as back-up to troops already there,' said Wenas. He would not say how long the operation might last.

He said negotiations were under way with the group led by Decky Imbiri, described as being the leader of the TPN-OPM (military wing of the OPM) who are currently in occupation of the airstrip. If negotiations dragged on too long, they would seek instructions on whether to take police actions.

Wenas said they were determined to free the airstrip as soon as possible. He described that group as a group from the community engaged in armed crimes.

27 May 2009

An armed group is reportedly becoming increasingly active. They are reported to have attacked a Brimob unit on the outskirts of kaumpungs Kosata and Subu. During an attack on the police in Sarmi, a member of the police force was hit by an arrow in his left temple, while four other policemen escaped injury. The incident occurred not far from the Kapeso airstrip (now occupied apparently by the military wing of the OPM). The attackers were able to disappear into the forest. The injured man was evacuated from the location of the incident.

The police chief later denied reports that local residents had been taken hostage by the TPN-OPM. He said he did not yet know which group had made armed contact with Brimob, replying to journalists who wanted to know whether it was the group led by Mathias Wenda.

Asked whether the men had used firearms, Ekodanto said they heard explosions which may have been from an SS1. But he couldn't confirm that this was true.