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Joan Lacio 'Mark' Encancion and Jolina 'Chloe' Martinez Sergio: NPA Couple Killed by Philippine Army

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The Philippines' multi-decade-long communist insurgency suffered a setback in late August when the most prominent couple of the New People's Army (NPA), Joan Lacio "Mark" Encancion and Jolina "Chloe" Martinez Sergio, were killed by the 94th Infantry Battalion in Negros Occidental Province on August 22 ([Digicast Negros](#), August 23). The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). According to another NPA member who surrendered to the Philippines' soldiers, Mark was the vice commander of NPA's Sentro De Grabidad platoon while Chloe was the platoon's political instructor.

Both Mark and Chloe acquired their aliases during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, it appears the couple took a year-long break from the insurgency, either to avoid the disease or assist NPA members who contracted it. COVID-19 had spread rapidly through the NPA's ranks and affected the group's highest-ranking

Executive Summary

- A prominent couple in the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, was killed on August 22. The two are believed to have been turned in by local villagers in the area around the city of Himamaylan, Negros Occidental Province, a known NPA hub.

members and allies. One of the leading commanders of the CPP, Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlow, for example, tested positive for COVID-19 after his death in a battle with Philippine security forces in 2021 ([RAPPLER](#), November 3, 2021; see [Militant Leadership Monitor](#), March 3, 2022).

After their hiatus, both Mark and Chloe returned to the insurgency in 2021 and operated for the next three years until their demise in August. Despite their commitment to the NPA's communist cause and their relatively rapid rise in the NPA ranks, Mark and Chloe did not have perfect records within the group. Mark, for example, was once caught sleeping while

on guard duty by a high-level commander ([Digital News Exchange](#), August 27). This did not lead to Mark's demotion, and as such he retained responsibility for NPA recruitment efforts.

For her part, Chloe was recruited by the CPP as a youth community organizer, likely identified as a potential recruit due to her leftist political inclinations. Chloe was made responsible for ensuring that CPP policies were being implemented in the villages under the NPA's control. These primarily rural communities extended all the way from Mindanao in the south to Luzon in the north ([South China Morning Post](#), February 23).

According to Roy Moreno, an individual who defected from the NPA, Chloe had been sexually abused by an individual in the NPA known as Ka Andres as far back as 2007, when she was 19 years old. The NPA, for its part, alleges that Moreno was an army intelligence asset ([Philippine Revolution Web Central](#), April 17, 2020). Ka Andres is known alongside a man named Ka Jose for being the first same-sex couple married by the NPA (and likely the Philippines writ large, as the country does not recognize same-sex unions). Andres and Jose were wed in a CPP ceremony in 2005, where they exchanged bullets instead of wedding rings. The former was known to be an "old gay," with several known boyfriends in the past ([Philippine Daily Inquirer](#), February 8, 2005). While his background and the fact that he was married at the time do not necessarily preclude what Roy Moreno has suggested, the situation is highly unclear. Whatever transpired, the NPA appears to have taken the accusation against Ka Andres seriously enough to reassign him to a different unit. Even this, however, would suggest that something else might be at play, as NPA guidelines state that Andres should have received the death penalty if the organization determined he had sexually abused Chloe ([Digital News Exchange](#), August 27).

Ultimately, it appears it was Mark and Chloe's lack of discipline that led Filipino

soldiers to locate them with the support of the local population in the city of Himamaylan, Negros Occidental Province. The area has been a known hub for NPA activity since at least 2020 ([DailyGuardian](#) [The Philippines], May 27, 2020). The Philippine Army claims that residents turned the couple in to security forces on patrol after they attempted to extort local villagers ([Philippine News Agency](#), August 23; [balita.com](#), August 24). These reports suggest that regardless of the NPA's claims to protect poor villagers, the group may be more exploitative than its propaganda and ideology suggest.

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Mir Bangulzai: Commander 'Returned From the Dead' to Boost Baloch Insurgency in Pakistan

Imtiaz Baloch

Executive Summary

- Mir Abdul Nabi Bangulzai is a well-known and well-liked Baloch guerrilla commander who gained renown for having been mistakenly declared dead in 2016 following a raid by the Pakistani military. Since then, Bangulzai has become a key figure in reconciling disparate Baloch militant groups in their struggle against the Pakistani state, particularly the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the United Baloch Army (UBA).

Mir Abdul Nabi Bangulzai is a well-known Baloch guerrilla commander. His political career started in the 1970s with the Awami faction of the Baloch Student Organization (BSO), a leading Baloch student group. Explaining his roots in Baloch ethnic

politics, Bangulzai stated that he had received a BSO pamphlet when he was in ninth grade. After graduating from college in his native Mastung District, he was nominated as the General Secretary of the BSO's operations in Mastung ([YouTube/Balochistan Affairs](#), August 29, 2020). As a student political leader, Bangulzai later became the BSO chairman. However, like many of his fellow students, Bangulzai preferred armed struggle over politics to address Balochistan's grievances ([The Balochistan Post](#), June 9, 2018).

In February 1973, Bangulzai and other Baloch political activists participated in Saffar Khan Baloch's guerilla war against the Pakistani government after the then-Civil Chief Martial Law Administrator Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto dismissed the region's first-ever elected government ([The Khorasan Diary](#), April 4, 2023). Before dismissal, Balochistan's government had been formed by the left-leaning National Awami Party (NAP). During the insurgency against Bhutto, Bangulzai's sole aim was the restoration of the NAP to the provincial government, following the directives of prominent NAP leader (and the ousted governor) Mir Ghous Baksh Bezenjo. Notably, Bangulzai did not advocate for Balochistan's separation from Pakistan ([Balochistan Affairs](#), August 29, 2020).

As the insurgency progressed, Bangulzai eventually went into self-exile in Afghanistan as political unrest under Bhutto's regime rose. Bangulzai remained there until the military coup led by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, which resulted in Bhutto's trial and execution in 1979. Bangulzai returned to Pakistan after General Zia announced a general amnesty for all political activists, particularly leaders and members of the NAP, many of whom had been imprisoned by Bhutto or forced into exile ([Voice of America Urdu](#), February 27, 2023).

Arrest and Release of Bangulzai

In September 2000, Bangulzai was apprehended in Mastung for the killing of a

Balochistan High Court Judge, Nawaz Marri ([Dawn](#), November 21, 2008). Bangulzai spent eight years in custody and was released from prison when then-President Asif Ali Zardari announced a reconciliation process in Balochistan ([Dawn](#), October 27, 2008). However, after the acquittal, Bangulzai told the media that "until and unless the issue of Balochistan is resolved, the Baloch people will continue to suffer from extra-judicial arrests." Furthermore, he noted that while his release had been secured, hundreds of Baloch youths and political workers were either still in jail or missing. To the latter point, he declared that his nephew "has been missing for the last seven months" ([Dawn](#), November 21, 2008).

After his release from prison, Bangulzai rejoined the Baloch insurgency. He later emerged as a significant figure in the ongoing fifth wave of unrest in Balochistan and joined the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) separatist group.

Bangulzai and Baloch Separatist Groups

Bangulzai's return in 2008 seems to have reinvigorated the separatist movement and brought renewed determination to the struggle. In 2012, the BLA underwent an internal split, which led to the formation of the United Baloch Army (UBA). This occurred when Harbiyar Marri, the BLA head, and Mehran Marri, his younger brother, parted ways after developing differences over who should lead and how funds were to be allocated. At that time, Mir Bangulzai leaned toward the UBA over the BLA ([The Balochistan Post](#), June 9, 2018).

At the time of the split, Nawab Khair Baksh Marri entrusted Bangulzai with leading the negotiations between the BLA and the UBA ([Humgaam News](#), October 27, 2014). Nawab Khair Baksh Marri became an influential ideologue in the Baloch insurgency and was the father of Harbiyar and Mehran Marri. Bangulzai was unable to secure a successful agreement between

the two groups. This event only solidified Bangulzai's belief, however, that unity among the various Baloch armed groups is essential for gaining international support for their separatist cause ([The Balochistan Post](#), September 19, 2023). On the other hand, Bangulzai's endorsement of the BLA's tactics, particularly the use of women as suicide bombers (in attacks against Pakistani security forces and Chinese interests) would likely hinder any such acceptance on the international stage ([The Balochistan Post](#), June 28, 2023).

Claims of Bangulzai's Death

In 2016, several of Pakistan's top government officials, including the then-provincial home minister, Sarfaraz Bugti, and the former spokesperson of the Balochistan government, Anwaar Kakar, told the media that Bangulzai and 34 other militants were killed. This was said to have happened in the Johan Area of Kalat District in Balochistan Province during a three-day operation by Pakistani security forces ([Daily Jang](#) [Pakistan], April 10, 2016; [Reuters](#), April 9, 2016). However, these claims were later debunked when Bangulzai himself refuted the reports of his death and asserted that the Pakistani security forces had actually killed innocent nomads ([BBC Urdu](#), April 18, 2016). It is possible that the government deliberately spread misinformation about Bangulzai's death to demoralize Baloch separatist groups.

In 2015, the UBA claimed responsibility for an attack near Mastung District, Balochistan Province, where at least 22 passengers were killed after being forcibly removed from a bus traveling from Karachi to Quetta ([Geo News](#), May 30, 2015). Pakistani authorities subsequently charged UBA commanders, including Bangulzai, with orchestrating the attack ([Express Tribune](#), June 2, 2015). This suggests that the government considers Bangulzai to be a key mastermind behind said insurgent activities.

Conclusion

Bangulzai has become a trusted and influential figure within Baloch armed groups due to his unwavering commitment to the separatist cause in Balochistan. His extensive experience in guerrilla warfare and leadership has strengthened the Baloch insurgency, especially during its current fifth wave. Bangulzai is highly respected among both the middle-class youth and tribal leaders involved in the Baloch struggle. His deep-rooted influence and status may enable him to bridge differences within the various Baloch armed factions. By leveraging his veteran status and respected authority, Bangulzai has the potential to foster unity among these groups and present a more cohesive and formidable front in their pursuit of separation. **[1]** In sum, the role played by Bangulzai is crucial, not only for his contributions to the insurgency, but also for his potential to unite the diverse Baloch separatist groups toward their common goal.

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Notes:

[1] Personal interview, Zia Ur Rehman, a Karachi-based Journalist covering insurgencies in Pakistan, 2024.

Raed al-Karmi: Twenty Years Dead, Second Intifada Leader's Legacy at Core of New 'Rapid Response Battalion' in Tulkarem

Daniele Garofalo

Executive Summary

- The legacy of Raed al-Karmi, a Palestinian militant who fought in the Second Intifada and was killed in 2002, continues to have an impact on the minds of West Bank militants, especially in the city of Tulkarem. Since October 7, 2023, a broad coalition of militants from different groups have fought the IDF in Tulkarem under the banner of the Tulkarem Rapid Response Battalion, which draws significantly from both the tactics and the legend of Raed.
- The Tulkarem Rapid Response Battalion and similarly aligned forces in the cities of Jenin, Tubas, and Nablus seek to trigger a mass uprising in the West Bank against the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), even if it provokes a conflict with the Palestinian Authority.
- This new wave of armed clashes involves battalions that operate without being linked to any central leadership. These groups cooperate but are otherwise independent, making it difficult for the IDF to destroy them by eliminating their leaders.

As part of the al-Aqsa Flood operation on October 7, 2023, Palestinian battalions in the West Bank connected with those in

Gaza rose in several cities, and have conducted numerous military operations against the IDF for nearly a year ([Al Aan TV](#), December 12, 2023). One of the areas where the clashes have been the most heated is Tulkarem. On June 23, yet another operation against the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was conducted. At dawn, a group of Palestinian fighters shot at a group of Israeli soldiers at the Nitzanei Oz checkpoint. **[1]** The Tulkarem Rapid Response Battalion claimed to have conducted the attacks. The Palestinian militant group consists of several fronts affiliated with the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (the unofficial military wing of Fatah) and the al-Quds Brigades (the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)).

On August 28, the Israeli army launched the largest military operation since 2002 in Tulkarem, killing dozens of Palestinians. Israeli forces withdrew after 48 hours of raids and arrests, failing to interrupt the operation of the Palestinian battalions in Tulkarem or arrest their leader ([Anadolu Agency](#), August, 28). The IDF have had little success over the last year in its efforts to dislodge the Tulkarem-based Rapid Response Battalion. Two key figures behind the budding insurgency in Tulkarem were Raed al-Karmi and Ameer Abu Khadija. Both are now praised and venerated as martyrs. Thousands of Palestinian fighters consider their deeds to be the true essence of Palestinian resistance and struggle, and many have been convinced to join the jihad by following the stories of Raed al-Karmi and Ameer Abu Khadija's military exploits and courage.

Rise of the Rapid Response Battalion

Tulkarem is a city of about 150,000 inhabitants located in a historically agricultural region of Palestine. The city found itself right on the border of the ceasefire line after the 1948 war. Raed al-Karmi was the most famous figure of the Palestinian armed resistance of the 2000s in Tulkarem, and he is critical if one wishes to understand the current situation. Raed was the leader of the then-armed wing of

Fatah, the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, until Israeli special forces killed him in January 2002.

Raed was known as the "Hawk of the Brigades" and was the most wanted man in Palestine. He became famous for his modus operandi of "revenge and liberation." He was likewise famous as a "master of rapid response," conducting revenge operations within 24 hours of the burial of a Palestinian militant killed by Israeli security forces. [2] In 2001, the IDF attempted to assassinate him three times. The Palestinian Authority itself, following an agreement with the United States and Israel, tried and failed to arrest him in 2001. The IDF finally succeeded in killing Raed with an explosive planted near his home in Tulkarem on January 14, 2002 ([Haaretz](#), September 29, 2020). Raed's killing led to an uprising across the entire West Bank, with the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades sending their fighters to carry out suicide attacks. In just one month, 133 Israeli soldiers and settlers were killed in these operations.

Remembering Raed

Raed was elevated by the Palestinians as a martyr, and his legacy has inspired new leaders to establish new battalions. Almost two decades after his death, in late 2021, a 20-year-old Palestinian, Seif Abu Labadeh, created an armed cell of the al-Quds Brigades in Tulkarem, forming it around the legacy of Raed ([The New Arab](#), January 19). Labadeh was killed in an Israeli ambush between Tulkarem and Jenin in April 2022. However, shortly afterward, in October 2022, another group emerged called the "Nest of Falcons." This group represented another attempt by two Palestinian fighters to revive the legacy of Fatah's armed wing in the city, the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

One of the leaders of "Nest of Falcons" was 24-year-old Ameer Abu Khadija, who had worked as a policeman in the Palestinian Authority security forces. After being dismissed, he decided to join the

Palestinian armed battalions. The other leader was another 24-year-old, Jihad Shehadeh, the son of a Fatah loyalist and a former member of Fatah's famous "Black Panthers" group in the 1980s. Shehadeh and Abu Khadija formed a cell of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades called "The Rapid Response," a reference to Raed and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Tulkarem during the Second Intifada. Shehadeh and Abu Khadija's choice of this branding for their group indicates that a new generation has taken up the legacy of armed resistance by Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Tulkarem.

The New 'Tulkarem Battalion'

In late February 2023, three armed groups from Tulkarem decided to unite and form the "Tulkarem Battalion-Rapid Response Forces" in response to attacks and arrests by the IDF. The battalion came into being at the behest of Abu Khadijah, who was determined to renew the confrontation with the IDF in Tulkarem. In early March 2023, a group of masked gunmen read the Battalion's first statement before a small crowd in the main square of Tulkarem ([The New Arab](#), March 23, 2023). The man reading the declaration was Abu Khadija, who stated he did not care about factions, but prioritized resistance by fighters from all factions, including those from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and PIJ. The colors and symbols chosen for the new battalion, however, as well as the political connections, were those of Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

Exactly one month after the battalion's formation, Abu Khadija was killed in a firefight with the IDF ([Al-Manar](#), March 23, 2023). After Abu Khadija's death, other leaders emerged, such as Samir al-Shafi and Hamza Khreyoush, both of whom were killed in May 2023 after leading several ambushes together. Their deaths were followed by Shehadeh, who was killed in November 2023. That left the leadership of the Battalion to Mohammad Jaber, but the Israeli army announced that it had killed

him on April 19—only to discover a few days later that he was still alive. Jaber had appeared at a funeral inside the local refugee camp, later criticizing the Palestinian Authority for collaborating with Israeli authorities in a long video ([Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs](#), May 2; [Al Jazeera](#), April 20; [The New Arab](#), April 22). On August 29, however, the IDF succeeded in killing Jaber in Tulkarem and, on August 31, the al-Quds Brigades media published a eulogy and celebrated him as a martyr ([MTV Lebanon](#), August 29). The cases of Jaber and his predecessors nonetheless show that the leadership of the battalion, and of the brigades to which the battalion is attached, are intent to wage a constant war against the IDF. They are committed to preventing the IDF from penetrating the Tulkarem and Nour Shams camps, as well as taking action against the Palestinian Authority and responding to incursions by the group's security forces.

Conclusion

The refugee camps of Nour Shams and Tulkarem have been the focus of almost daily battles and military operations since October 7, 2023. The management of the Rapid Response Battalion is very similar to the "Hornet's Nest" operations room in Jenin, where several brigades work together to conduct attacks and ambushes on Israeli convoys ([Al Aan TV](#), March 3). Tulkarem and Jenin have emerged as hotbeds of insurgency and have become a model for other cities looking to rise up in insurgency. The goal—declared quite openly by insurgent leaders in Tulkarem, Tubas, Jenin, and Nablus—is to mobilize the entire West Bank and convince them to join their struggle, even if this means clashing with the Palestinian Authority. Critically, this new wave of armed clashes involves battalions that operate without being linked to any central leadership. Rather, they cooperate but are otherwise independent, making it difficult for the IDF to destroy or stop such groups by identifying and eliminating their leaders. This strategy too is precisely due to the lessons and types of activities carried out

by Raed and Abu Khadija. The "rapid response" actions being conducted in Tulkarem today are their operational and military legacy.

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Notes:

[1] This claim was disseminated on the Battalion's Telegram channel.

[2] In a brief statement, Raed asserted: "We will respond to any act committed against a Palestinian with an immediate and direct response." From this statement came the idea for the name of the future Battalion.

Abu Bakar Kogoya: A Post-Mortem of TPNPB–OPM Guerilla

Irma Rahim

Executive Summary

- Mobinus Abu Bakar Kogoya, a guerilla fighter with the West Papua National Liberation Army–Free Papua Movement (TPNPB–OPM), was killed in an operation by the Indonesian military in April. Abu's death will likely impede TPNPB–OPM operations in the remote areas where he operated.
- The TPNPB–OPM responded to Abu's death by killing a local policeman, and has threatened to target native Papuans believed to be working with the Indonesian government. Further reprisal attacks are likely.

The spokesperson of the West Papua National Liberation Army–Free Papua Movement (TPNPB–OPM), Sebby Sambo (Sebby) declared that he was outraged to learn of the death of Major Mobinus Abu Bakar Kogoya (Abu) in April (mcwnews.com, April 5; tempo.co, April 8). Sebby retaliated by claiming that the TPNPB–OPM would launch multiple assaults in three territories: KODAP (TPNPB–OPM territorial command) VIII Intan Jaya, Tembagapura District, and KODAP XVIII Ilaga. He likewise declared that the group would also target native Papuans believed to be Indonesian spies (seputarpapua.com, April 15).

Abu had previously been shot during an exchange that occurred during the first attack of his career as an insurgent, which had been conducted against two Indonesian police officers on October 21, 2017. Since then, Abu had been listed as a fugitive, until his death in Indonesia’s joint police and army Operation “Cartenz Peace” in April. Abu was extracting sand to mine gold at Mile Point 69 in Tembagapura District, Mimika Region. Sebby claimed that Abu was killed in order to safeguard the interests of the U.S. Freeport gold mining corporation active in the area, with the insurgent having been present in order to ensure the safety of local gold miners (Indonesian National Police, April 9; seputarpapua.com, April 15).

Life of Abu

Abu was a Lani tribal member from the village of Utikini in Tembagapura District, Mimika Region. He was 28-years-old when he died (detik.com, April 6). He was stationed in Kemabu, Ugimba District under the late TPNPB–OPM commanders Ayub Waker and Sabinus Waker.

Before his death, Abu was a rising star in the TPNPB–OPM. He had followed in the footsteps of Egianus Kogoya, the internationally recognized TPNPB–OPM who has held New Zealander pilot Philipp Mehrtens hostage since February 2023, refusing to release him until West Papua

gains independence (seputarpapua.com, April 13; see Militant Leadership Monitor, June 2, 2023; Terrorism Monitor, February 21). Abu gained notoriety with his aforementioned October 2017 attack. Although both police officers survived their injuries, Abu was able to pilfer two Steyr AUG firearms.

On November 14, 2017, at the same location, Abu launched his second attack, where he shot at a van, injuring one of the passengers (Indonesian National Police, April 9). Abu was immediately added to Indonesia’s most wanted list, but was permitted to join TPNPB–OPM’s operations in the territory led by Major General Lekagak Telenggen, who is in charge of the group’s operations in the Puncak, Mimika, and Intan Jaya regions. Abu had been moving between the three locations ever since 2017 in an attempt to elude identification and apprehension (KOMPAS.com, April 6). Presumably, Abu’s decision to avoid conducting any attacks until March 2020 was intended to prevent his detection (detik.com, April 6).

Abu’s Appearance in 2020

Abu resurfaced in March 2020 when he attacked the Freeport corporation office in the Kuala Kencana District, Mimika Region. These attacks claimed the lives of one New Zealander resident and injured two Indonesians (Indonesian National Police, April 9). In April 2021, Abu and other TPNPB–OPM militants shot and burned down a helicopter belonging to a private company stationed at Aminggaru Ilaga Airport in Puncak District, Central Papua Region (GridHotID.id, April 9, 2023). These attacks elevated Abu and established him as a key militant in the region, he ascended in status and established himself as a key militant in General Telenggen’s territory.

Consequently, Abu’s death caused concern among TPNPB–OPM members that they might become the next target of Operation Cartenz Peace. Sebby speculated that a traitor had leaked Abu’s whereabouts, leading to his death (seputarpapua.com,

April 15). Nevertheless, Operation Cartenz Peace might have failed to identify Abu if his photo hadn't surfaced on social media. Once this occurred, Jeffrey Bomanak, TPNPB-OPM chairman in Australia, immediately issued an order prohibiting the organization from sharing the photo or identity of anyone in the militant group on social media unless they were preparing for a suicide mission ([DISWAY.ID](https://www.disway.id), April 5).

In retaliation for Abu's death, the TPNPB-OPM assassinated Second Lieutenant Oktovianus Sogalrey, the Indonesian military commander of the 1703-04 Aradide sub-district. This was overseen by TPNPB-OPM Brigadier General Mathius Gobay of KODAP XIII Kegeya Nipouya Paniai and carried out by Major Osea Satu Boma at Trans Road Paniai-Intan Jaya in the late afternoon of April 10. The TPNPB-OPM justified the killing of Sogalrey by accusing him of attempting to enlist the group's members in the Indonesian police and military ([VIVA.co.id](https://www.viva.co.id), April 13). Sogalrey was unarmed and on a motorcycle without backup. His assassination was recorded and subsequently posted on social media ([BBC Indonesia](https://www.bbc.com/news/indonesia), December 20, 2023).

Conclusion

Abu's death will impede TPNPB-OPM operations, likely reducing the number of attacks it launches in the remote areas he operated in. The Indonesian Army accused Abu of having targeted civilians, including construction workers, medical personnel, and educators, which they argue are now safer ([Indonesian Army Information Service](https://www.indonesianarmy.info), March 31). Nonetheless, the TPNPB-OPM will almost certainly launch reprisal attacks in order to dispel any notion that they have been weakened.

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