

Deployment Strategy Of Army Aviation Forces For Securing Vulnerable Areas In Papua To Achieve Security Stability

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Abstract

This study analyzes the deployment strategy of Army Aviation (Penerbad) forces in securing conflict-prone areas in Papua to achieve security stability. The research employs a case study approach using a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through interviews with key stakeholders and field observations. The findings indicate that the deployment of Penerbad forces in Papua is carried out through several strategic steps, including the reinforcement of security posts, personnel training, and enhanced cooperation with local security agencies. However, various challenges are encountered, such as difficult geographical conditions and cultural differences. Nevertheless, a comprehensive, community-based deployment approach has shown positive outcomes, including a reduction in crime rates and increased public trust in security forces. The study concludes that the strategic deployment of Penerbad forces in Papua's vulnerable regions requires a targeted and sustainable approach. This strategy must include improvements in logistical support, personnel readiness, base infrastructure development, and the utilization of technology to effectively and sustainably ensure long-term security stability.

Keywords: Strategy, Force Deployment, Army Aviation, Security, Security Stability

INTRODUCTION

The separatist movement in Papua has become an increasingly complex issue that has yet to find a comprehensive solution aligned with the evolving conditions in the region. As an area frequently facing symptoms of disintegration, the political and security dynamics in Papua are more intense compared to other regions in Indonesia. Since the reform era, the Papua issue has resurfaced at national, regional, and global levels. This phenomenon is not only influenced by the adverse impacts of globalization but also by the growing interests of individuals and groups, as well as increasing demands for the state to play a stronger role in protecting its citizens.

Negotiation processes regarding the Papua conflict continue, although the outcomes remain far from ideal. Nonetheless, negotiation is still regarded as the most viable means to seek a mutually acceptable resolution to this prolonged conflict. The conflict in Papua involves multiple actors with diverse demands and underlying causes. A notable development is the shift in tactics by the Free Papua Organization (OPM), which has begun to adopt non-violent approaches, presenting an opportunity for the Indonesian government to engage them in dialogue and negotiation.

Over the past five years, the OPM has carried out several attacks in Papua. According to data from National Police Chief General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, there were 199 recorded attacks by the OPM in 2023, including 40 shooting incidents and 136 other forms of disruption. These attacks resulted in 146 casualties—64 people were killed, 81 injured, and one taken hostage. The OPM also conducted 234 security disturbances associated with political criminal groups, both domestically and abroad. Barry Buzan (1991) asserts that ideal security stability is achieved when a state can safeguard its resilience against a wide range of threats—military, political, economic, social, and environmental. He emphasizes the importance of comprehensive security, which includes protection against non-traditional threats such as terrorism, climate change, and economic crises.

The Indonesian Army (TNI AD) has undertaken various efforts to maintain stability in Papua, including securing border areas, outer islands, national vital objects, and conflict-prone regions. As part of the Indonesian Army, the Army Aviation Command plays a significant role in securing Papua, particularly in logistical support, air transport, evacuation, and providing fire support for ground troops. However, challenges arise due to limited helicopter availability, as most of the fleet must be deployed from Java and Sumatra. This situation affects the timeliness of logistical support and the combat effectiveness of troops in the field. Therefore, this study aims to formulate an effective strategy to optimize the role of Army Aviation in securing Papua.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to describe and analyze the deployment strategy of Army Aviation forces in securing conflict-prone areas in Papua to achieve security stability. The research was conducted from May 2024 to October 2024 at the Army Aviation Task Force in Timika, Mimika, Central Papua, and at the Army Aviation Center, Jl. Pondok Cabe Raya, South Tangerang, Banten. The research subjects included key informants such as Lieutenant Colonel Cpn Bayu Anindito and several Army Aviation team commanders in Papua, including Major Cpn Metrio and Major Cpn M. Iqbal. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, document studies, and observation, with data validity tested using triangulation methods. The data were then analyzed through the steps of data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification based on the method proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Deployment Of Army Aviation Operations In Conflict-Prone Areas Of Papua

The deployment of army aviation operations for securing conflict-prone areas (pamrahwan) in Papua involves the strategic composition and disposition of air assets, particularly helicopters, to support security operations in regions with difficult terrain. Currently, six helicopters are stationed in Timika, Central Papua; one in Sentani, Papua; and one in Sorong, West Papua. The significant helicopter placement in Timika is due to the area being a strategic point with a higher threat level, as well as serving as the logistical hub for operations in Central Papua, Papua Highlands, and surrounding areas. The helicopter in Sentani is focused on supporting security operations in Eastern Papua, given its proximity to Jayapura, the provincial capital and a center of governmental and military activity. Meanwhile, the helicopter in Sorong supports security efforts in West Papua, particularly for controlling coastal and island areas.

Operational areas of the army aviation task force in Papua

The operational areas of the army aviation task force (satgas penerbad) in support of security in conflict-prone zones are divided into three main locations: Timika in Central Papua, Sentani in Papua, and Sorong in West Papua. Each of these serves as a strategic base providing air mobility support for army units operating in regions with terrain inaccessible by land. In Timika, the task force supports the security of national vital objects and conducts patrols in high-risk conflict areas. Sentani serves as a central aviation hub for personnel transport, logistics delivery, and air evacuation in Papua. Sorong plays a key role in the security of West Papua, including maritime border surveillance and support for outer islands. With this division of roles, the task force can respond quickly and effectively to support security in various critical points across Papua and West Papua.

The operational area of the task force in timika is divided into three main sectors with clearly defined boundaries. The western sector encompasses a vast area characterized by mountainous terrain and dense forests, while the eastern sector shares similar geographical traits but with slightly gentler topography. Between these sectors lies the area of national vital object security (pamobvitnas), which functions as the logistical and operational center. Each sector is supported by infantry task force posts, including battalions such as yonif 509, yonif 323, yonif 503, and yonif 433. The challenging geography—steep terrain and extreme weather—makes flight operations in papua among the most complex in indonesia.

The operational area surrounding sentani features complex geography, including land, mountains, and waterways. Sentani has become a vital hub supporting various indonesian army operations in papua, particularly in security and logistics. Strategic locations such as dabra, senggi, and oksibil play crucial roles in the operational network, where air support is essential for troop deployment, logistical distribution, and humanitarian assistance to remote areas. Sentani airbase, serving as the main base, plays a key role in coordinating aerial operations throughout papua. The diverse terrain, from highlands to coastal regions, demands high flexibility from aviation units. Helicopters operating in this area must contend with extreme weather and rugged terrain, often acting as the only lifeline for hard-to-reach outposts.

The task force's operational area around sorong holds strategic value in supporting military operations in west papua. With the presence of helipad 762 and coordination points in the maybrat complex, aviation units can respond rapidly to various situations, especially along the indonesia–papua new guinea border. The primary missions include logistical support to frontline posts, aerial evacuation, and aerial patrols to monitor border security. Frequent adverse weather in coastal regions and challenging hilly terrain pose major obstacles to operations. To address these challenges, the task force operates various helicopter types equipped with advanced navigation and communication systems, ensuring safe and efficient mission execution. Thanks to the aviation unit's flexibility, sorong has become a critical point for maintaining security stability in west papua and ensuring smooth execution of military tasks.

Factors affecting the deployment of army aviation forces in conflict-prone areas of papua

The deployment of army aviation forces in securing conflict-prone areas, particularly in papua, faces numerous challenges and obstacles. These influencing factors can be categorized into internal and external factors, which include both strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats.

Internal factors, which contribute to both strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the pamrahwan (securing conflict-prone areas) operations in papua, are as follows:

Strengths:

- a) Well-trained personnel with high operational competence.
- b) Advanced technology and sophisticated equipment provide operational superiority.
- c) High mobility and rapid response capability enable penerbad to address threats efficiently, especially in urgent situations.
- d) A well-organized command structure facilitates optimal coordination during field operations.
- e) Extensive experience in conducting operations in difficult terrain.

Weaknesses:

- a) Limited number of personnel trained for operations in rugged environments.
- b) Shortage of equipment and helicopter assets.
- c) Inadequate supporting facilities, such as bases and aircraft maintenance sites in deployment areas.

- d) Existing operational doctrines may not yet be fully adapted to the specific characteristics of operations in papua.
- e) Limited availability of specialized training tailored to papua's terrain and conditions.
- f) Meanwhile, external factors are categorized as opportunities and threats in the deployment of army aviation forces in papua.

Opportunities:

- a) Local support from indigenous communities.
- b) Collaboration with international organizations to enhance personnel capacity.
- c) Government programs and funding support for operations and infrastructure development in papua.
- d) National initiatives to strengthen security in eastern indonesia.
- e) Security cooperation agreements with regional actors.

Threats:

- a) Ongoing threats from separatist groups and armed insurgents.
- b) Extreme weather conditions and challenging natural terrain.
- c) Potential sabotage targeting aviation infrastructure.
- d) Limited logistical support and maintenance capability for air assets.
- e) Escalating socio-political tensions in the region.

Deployment strategy of army aviation (penerbad) in conflict-prone areas of papua

The deployment of army aviation (penerbad) forces in securing conflict-prone areas in papua requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, considering the geographical challenges and complex security dynamics. To enhance operational effectiveness, the following strategies are proposed:

- a) Enhancement of personnel capability and training
- b) This strategy aims to improve both the quality and quantity of penerbad pilots and personnel by expanding comprehensive and in-depth training programs.
- c) Optimization of equipment and defense assets (alutsista)
- d) This includes improving the effectiveness of existing defense equipment and conducting modernization aligned with the specific operational needs of the papua region.
- e) Development of strategic support facilities
- f) Focus is placed on the construction and improvement of vital infrastructure necessary to support penerbad operations in papua.
- g) Collaboration with local communities and governments
- h) This emphasizes the importance of close cooperation with indigenous papuan communities and local government authorities to create a conducive environment for regional stability and security.
- i) Adjustment of military doctrine and operational tactics
- j) A re-evaluation of existing military doctrine is necessary to adapt to the specific geographical and socio-political conditions of papua.

Ends (goals)

The primary objective of penerbad force deployment in conflict-prone areas of papua is to support operational readiness for both tactical and strategic missions. Force development is carried out by organizing and preparing personnel and defense assets in accordance with the organization's needs and assignments.

Ways (methods)

To maximize potential and available resources, the deployment strategy focuses on operational strengthening, personnel preparedness, equipment modernization, and cross-agency collaboration. Continuous training and certification programs are essential to ensure mission success, especially in papua's challenging terrain and operational scenarios—such as high-altitude flying, adverse weather navigation, and uncharted terrain missions.

Collaboration with government and private sectors in the procurement and maintenance of equipment is critical for operational sustainability. Strengthening penerbad's organization through the formation of a new squadron based in papua will enhance operational flexibility and responsiveness. This dedicated squadron will improve resource management, mission planning, and execution, especially for security operations, disaster response, and logistical support.

Technology and information system integration

Adopting advanced technologies and information systems is vital for effective asset management. Real-time data on asset condition, maintenance needs, and mission execution will significantly improve decision-making accuracy and speed, enabling faster responses to emerging field situations.

Deployment location

Currently, timika, papua is recommended as the central location for penerbad force deployment, as it already functions as an operational base for penerbad task forces. The development of airport and helipad infrastructure in this area is strategically important to support asset mobility. Given papua's remote and hard-to-access regions, improved aviation facilities are crucial to reduce travel time and enhance accessibility—especially for humanitarian missions, air evacuations, and military operations. These facilities will also facilitate coordination with agencies such as the national disaster management agency (bnpb) and non-governmental organizations during emergency response operations.

Once infrastructure in timika is fully developed, the location can be upgraded into a new squadron base under puspenerbad for more structured support of operations in papua.

Proposed action plans

- A. Enhancement of personnel capability and training
 - 1) Local recruitment and training
Develop pilot recruitment programs targeting individuals from papua or those with local geographic and cultural knowledge to enhance operational effectiveness.
 - 2) Terrain-specific training
Conduct specialized training for papua's unique geographical conditions, including jungle navigation, flying in mountainous terrain, and handling localized conflict situations.
- B. Optimization of equipment and alutsista
 - 1) Helicopter modernization and maintenance
Utilize aircraft suited for papua's challenging terrain—such as those capable of operating in mountains, dense forests, and extreme weather—while ensuring regular maintenance to maintain readiness.
 - 2) Use of unmanned aerial vehicles (uavs)
Employ uavs (drones) for surveillance, terrain mapping, and monitoring high-risk areas without direct field exposure.
- C. Development of strategic support facilities.
 - 1) Construction of forward operating bases and support stations
Establish helicopter bases in strategic locations across papua to reduce emergency response times and ease mobility.
 - 2) Logistics and communications reinforcement
Strengthen logistics for sustained operations and establish robust communication networks that withstand extreme geographical and weather conditions.

- D. Collaboration with local communities and government
 - 1) Humanitarian approach and territorial development
Engage indigenous communities in territorial development programs through cultural engagement and awareness of penerbad's role in maintaining peace.
 - 2) Coordination with local authorities
Work with regional governments, local security forces, and related institutions to ensure synergy and avoid overlapping responsibilities in operations.
- E. Adjustment of doctrine and operational tactics
 - 1) Doctrine adaptation to papua's realities
Military doctrines should be revised to align with ground realities, including fast-response strategies for emergencies and conflict-resolution techniques tailored to papua's geography.
 - 2) Adoption of mobile and flexible tactics
Implement strategies that prioritize mobility and flexibility—such as sustained aerial patrols, quick reaction forces, and intelligence-driven airborne surveillance.

Problem-solving strategy using swot analysis

In the strategy for the deployment of army aviation (penerbad) forces to secure high-risk areas in papua to achieve security stability, swot analysis is used to understand and identify various internal and external factors that may influence the success or failure of the mission. In response to the increasing security challenges in papua, the elevation of the aviation operational status in timika to a full army aviation squadron is necessary. This aligns with the growing number of personnel, defense equipment (alutsista), and the need for adequate supporting infrastructure to support security operations in high-risk areas (pamrahwan).

From the swot matrix table, the strength–opportunity (so) strategies can be summarized as follows:

- A. Strengthening collaboration with indigenous communities. Utilize trained personnel and advanced equipment to build strong relationships with indigenous communities. (s1-o1)
- B. Cooperation with international institutions for training. Leverage experience in challenging terrain operations and organized command structure to develop joint training programs with international institutions. (s2-o2)
- C. Utilizing government aid and funding programs. Take advantage of technology and advanced equipment to optimize the use of central government aid for security enhancement programs. (s3-o3)
- D. Enhancing security in the eastern region. Use mobility and rapid response capabilities to support government initiatives in strengthening security in the eastern region. (s4-o4)
- E. Agreements with regional security actors. Maximize the organized command structure and operational experience to establish strategic agreements with regional security forces. (s5-o5)

From the swot matrix table, the strength–threat (st) strategies are as follows:

- A. Utilizing well-trained personnel to counter separatist and armed group threats. Personnel experienced in difficult terrain operations can be empowered to handle security threats using adaptive strategies and tactics. (s1-t1)
- B. Use of advanced technology and equipment to mitigate infrastructure vulnerabilities and sabotage. By utilizing surveillance technology, drones, and early detection systems, sabotage potential can be identified earlier, and infrastructure vulnerabilities addressed more effectively. (s2-t3)
- C. Mobility and rapid response to extreme weather and harsh natural conditions. The ability to quickly mobilize enables efficient operations in challenging environments and reduces operational delays. (s3-t2)

- D. Organized command structure to counter socio-political threats. With a solid command structure, responses to socio-political threats can be well-coordinated with quick and accurate decisions. (s4-t5)
- E. Experience in operating in difficult terrain to overcome logistics and maintenance limitations. This experience enables innovative solutions to logistical and maintenance challenges, ensuring continued operational effectiveness despite limited resources. (s5-t4)

From the swot matrix table, the weakness–opportunity (wo) strategies are as follows:

- A. Pilot training in mountainous terrain through international cooperation. Utilize international partnerships to conduct specialized flight training in mountain terrain, increasing the number of trained pilots. (w1-o2)
- B. Procurement of equipment and alutsista through government aid and funding programs. Central government initiatives to strengthen eastern security can be used to improve helicopter and support equipment procurement. (w2-o3)
- C. Development of support facilities through government infrastructure initiatives. Overcome base and maintenance facility limitations by utilizing government infrastructure programs for eastern security. (w3-o4)
- D. Doctrine adjustments through support from regional and international security institutions. Use partnerships with security organizations to update operational doctrines tailored to papua's unique characteristics. (w4-o5)
- E. Development of specialized training areas with support from indigenous communities and local government. Leverage local support to access specific areas in papua's mountains for training grounds. (w5-o1)

From the swot matrix table, the weakness–threat (wt) strategies are as follows:

- A. Improving pilot training in difficult terrain to counter separatist and armed threats. Address the lack of trained pilots by accelerating special training programs for difficult terrains like papua's mountains. (w1-t1)
- B. Development of weather-resistant equipment and alutsista. Address equipment limitations by modernizing helicopters and combat tools suited for extreme weather and harsh natural conditions. (w2-t2)
- C. Strengthening support facilities to mitigate infrastructure vulnerability and sabotage risks. Improve base and maintenance facilities to ensure better protection from sabotage and maintain operational readiness. (w3-t3)
- D. Doctrine adaptation to respond to escalating socio-political threats. Modify operational doctrine to reflect papua's terrain and socio-political dynamics for better response to separatist threats and local conflicts. (w4-t5)
- E. Procurement and development of training areas suited to harsh environments. Develop training areas that simulate papua's extreme conditions, enhancing troops' adaptability and reducing operational failures due to environmental challenges. (w5-t4)

CONCLUSION

In security operations in high-risk areas (Pamrahwan) in Papua, the Army Aviation of the Indonesian Army (Penerbad) plays a vital role through the deployment of helicopter assets. These helicopters are utilized for logistics support (duklog), air transportation, medical evacuation, and aerial fire support for ground troops. Speed and precision in action are key to Penerbad's success in supporting such operations. However, the main challenge lies in the limited number of helicopters deployed by Puspenerbad, most of which are based in squadrons located in Java and

Sumatra. Deploying helicopters from outside Papua entails very high operational costs and significant transit time.

Therefore, to effectively and efficiently support the success of operations, a more strategic plan for the deployment of Penerbad forces in Papua's high-risk areas is needed. The strategy should include the appropriate placement of assets in strategic areas of Papua, strengthening local operational capabilities, and ensuring adequate logistics and evacuation support. The plan to establish a Penerbad Squadron in Timika is a strategic step aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of military operations in Papua, particularly in overcoming the challenges posed by difficult terrain, separatist threats, and extreme weather conditions.

The proposed Penerbad Squadron in Timika is expected to become a reliable air power component in supporting various military and non-military operations, such as border security, aerial patrols, medical evacuations, and humanitarian assistance missions.

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