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Indian army attacks insurgents along border with Burma days after ambush

Army has been on high alert since last week's attack that killed 18 soldiers and military official says they struck after learning further attacks were planned

Associated Press in New Delhi

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The Indian army has attacked insurgent groups along its border with Burma days after the rebels killed 18 Indian soldiers in an ambush in the insurgency-wracked remote north-east, a top army officer said.

Major General Ranbir Singh, the officer, said the army was in communication with Burmese authorities on its operation and inflicted “significant casualties on the rebels”.

Last Thursday, the rebels ambushed the Indian army convoy in Manipur state, using rocket-propelled guns and automatic weapons.

The state has several active militant groups that operate from both sides of the border. None claimed responsibility for the attack, which also wounded 14 soldiers.

While Singh said the Indian soldiers acted along the border with Burma, a junior minister in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government said Tuesday: “We crossed over to Myanmar territory.”

“We have good relations with them, we carried out the strike,” junior information and broadcasting minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore told TimesNow television news channel in an interview.

Singh said in a statement at a briefing for journalists in New Delhi that the Indian army had been on high alert after Thursday’s attack.

In the course of last few days, “credible and specific intelligence” was received about further attacks that were being planned within Indian territory, he said. “In view of the imminent threat, an immediate response was necessary,” Singh said.

In April, insurgents armed with automatic weapons fired at two trucks carrying Indian paramilitary soldiers in neighboring Nagaland state, killing eight of them.

Most of the main rebel groups in Manipur state are not engaged in cease-fire talks with the Indian government, unlike those in other remote north-eastern states.

Separatist groups accuse the Indian government of exploiting the region’s rich natural resources while neglecting local development.

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