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India 'attacks rebels in Myanmar'

10 June 2015



The Indian army has attacked rebel camps inside Myanmar, days after at least 20 of its soldiers were killed in an ambush on a troop convoy in north-east India, a minister has said.

Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore said the troops had destroyed two rebel camps in Myanmar and "returned safely".

Senior army officer Ranbir Singh said the operation "inflicted significant casualties" on the Indian rebels.

Last week's ambush occurred near the border with Myanmar in Manipur state.

The Indian army had launched a massive search involving hundreds of soldiers and helicopters to track down the rebels, who were reported to have crossed the porous border into Myanmar (also known as Burma) from Manipur's Chandel district after the ambush.

Authorities in Manipur have struggled for years with an insurgency involving several militant groups.

While the Indian army said its soldiers had operated along the border with Myanmar, Mr Rathore said the troops had "crossed over to Myanmar territory" during Tuesday morning's operation.

"It was a much-needed decision that was taken by the prime minister. This decision was extremely bold in nature. And it involved our Special Forces crossing the border and going deep into another country," Mr Rathore, who is the junior information minister, told The Indian Express newspaper.

The Press Trust of India news agency quoted unnamed sources as saying that Indian troops had killed some 15 rebels in the "cross-border" attack.

Major General Ranbir Singh of the Indian army said in a statement that they were "in communication with the Myanmar authorities on this matter".

"There is a history of close co-operation between our two militaries. We look forward to working with them to combat such terrorism," he said.

The rebels had used rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles to target the soldiers in Manipur last Thursday.

Manipur has been relatively peaceful in recent years and the attack took authorities by surprise.

Along with other north-east Indian states, Manipur is poorly developed and has long complained of neglect by the federal government, fuelling unrest, correspondents say.

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