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INDIA

# Indian Army Attacks Militant Camps in Myanmar

Special-forces teams carried out strikes in two separate locations in Myanmar



Weapons of the Indian army personnel, who were killed by militants in an ambush, lay at the scene of the attack in India's Manipur state on June 4. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

By *Niharika Mandhana*

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NEW DELHI—India's army crossed into neighboring Myanmar and attacked two militant camps early Tuesday, the Indian government said, days after its soldiers were killed in an ambush near the country's northeastern border.

Special-forces teams carried out strikes in two separate locations in Myanmar that “annihilated the entire camps,” said Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, a minister of state in India's Information Ministry. Myanmar's military didn't directly participate in the operation, but the two sides were in close touch, Mr. Rathore said.

Mr. Rathore said Tuesday's operation was approved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and was a sign of tough new approach toward security, especially along the country's long border. When running for office last year, Mr. Modi accused his opponents of being soft on terror and pledged a more muscular policy.

Zaw Htay, director of the office of Myanmar President Thein Sein, confirmed Wednesday that Indian troops had entered his country. He said that there was “coordination and cooperation” between the Indian troops and Myanmar's armed forces based in the area of the raids, but added that no Myanmar soldiers were directly involved.

“We will never allow or support insurgents, whether [they are] against Myanmar or against our neighboring countries,” Mr. Zaw Htay added.

Maj. Gen. Ranbir Singh, an additional director general of military operations in India, said that “significant casualties have been inflicted on the militants.” The government and the military have declined to identify the group that was attacked or offer details on the number of militants killed.

Gen. Singh said the army had been on “high alert” since last week, when insurgents ambushed a military convoy in India's Manipur state, killing 18 and injuring several others. He said the decision to go into Myanmar was prompted by “very credible and specific intelligence” that more attacks were being planned.

India's northeast, home to ethnic minorities who speak Tibeto-Burman languages, has suffered a violent insurgency for decades, with several groups demanding greater autonomy or outright independence.

"It is become kind of a habit for these militants to strike at the Indian army or paramilitary forces or the citizens of the nation and then cross over into safe havens, being confident of the fact that the India armed forces won't pursue them," said Mr. Rathore in a televised interview late Tuesday. "I think this message is now very clear to all those who harbor intentions of terror on our country."

For years, India's army also has battled a deadly insurgency in India's northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, abutting Pakistan. New Delhi has accused Islamabad of harboring militants who launch attacks in India. Relations between the two nuclear-armed nations grew tense in 2013, when five Indian soldiers were killed in an ambush along the Pakistan border, an attack that India alleged involved Pakistani soldiers. Pakistan denied any role in the killings.

"If there are groups within a country that harbor terror intentions, we will choose a time and place of hitting them," Mr. Rathore said.

—*Shibani Mahtani contributed to this article.*

**Write to** Niharika Mandhana at [niharika.mandhana@wsj.com](mailto:niharika.mandhana@wsj.com)

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