

Troops shoot dead 11 suspected rebels in Aceh in fresh violence  
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The Indonesian armed forces have killed at least 11 suspected separatist rebels in the restive province of Aceh in fresh violence since Friday, the military said Sunday. Nine rebels were shot dead and four others arrested in five clashes between Friday evening and Saturday evening, Military Spokesman Colonel Ditya Sudarsono said. Two of the clashes were in Pidie district and one each in eastern Aceh, southern Aceh and southwest Aceh districts, he said without providing more details.

Meanwhile a field officer said that troops shot dead a local area commander of the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and one of his men in a clash in Suaq, southwest Aceh late on Saturday. Major Ikram, who led the troops in the clash, added that another rebel had already been shot dead in an earlier clash in the same area on Saturday. Troops, had been hunting for rebels who had pulled down Indonesian flags in the Blangpidie area and its surroundings on Thursday evening, he said.

Some 400 villagers in the area fled the violence and have sought shelter at the district town of Blangpidie, local residents said. Sudarsono said so far almost 700 guerrillas have been shot dead since the military operation was launched on May 19. A total of 694 rebels were killed and more than 1,500 others were captured or had surrendered to the authorities since the military operation was launched, Sudarsono said. But he could not say whether the figures included the 11 dead casualties he and Ikram have reported. The military lost 35 soldiers while the police lost 13 members. Another 93 soldiers and 60 policemen have been injured, he added. The GAM has been fighting for independence since 1976 but the military campaign was launched after Jakarta pulled out of a peace process accusing the rebels of bad faith.