

# The Role of the Military in Handling Covid-19 in Banjarmasin

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## Abstract

Has prompted many countries to involve various actors, one of which includes the military. Military involvement has been carried out since the beginning of handling Covid-19 until it enters a new normal era. Such involvement is indeed permitted in the context of military operations other than war (OMSP), as regulated in Law No. 34/2004 concerning the TNI. In the long history of the TNI, the contribution of the TNI to the Nation and the State is not only through military war operations but also through military operations other than war. The attitude of helping people who are facing natural disasters, including in dealing with the current Covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesian people express their highest appreciation and appreciation to the extended family and TNI institutions to the soldiers who are on duty anywhere are always at the forefront of humanitarian missions. , who is actively involved in handling victims of natural disasters and forest fires as well as an active role in handling the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, both in disciplining the application of health protocols and in treatment at TNI hospitals (President of the Republic of Indonesia, Ir. Joko Widodo, 2021). According to the President, if it is likened to a war, fighting the current Covid-19 pandemic is like a war that drains energy, mind, mentality, and fighting spirit. A war that requires vigilance, speed, synergy, and the use of science and technology.

**Keywords:** TNI; Pandemic; Covid-19; OMSP;

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## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic that has spread since the beginning of 2020 is one of the serious problems currently facing the world. The massive spread of the epidemic with the increasing number of deaths has created a crisis in various sectors. In limited resources owned by a country, not a few governments have decided to involve their military in dealing with the pandemic, including Indonesia.

In Indonesia, especially Banjarmasin, the involvement of the Indonesian National Army (TNI) in handling Covid-19 has been carried out since the beginning of the year even before the government officially announced the first corona case in Indonesia. Until August 2020, the TNI had been deployed for various tasks.

There are several tasks in question, such as overseeing the implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policies, to overseeing the implementation of health protocols in the new normal (new normal)<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to assisting in handling the implementation of government policies, the TNI is also actively involved as part of the team structure of the Covid-19 Handling Task Force and the Covid-19 Handling Implementation Committee and National Economic Recovery.

Related to this, there have been several publications that give meaning to the pattern of military involvement in handling Covid-19 in Banjarmasin, especially in the context of civil-military relations (Banjarmasin Mayor's rules, 2020). Some of them, such as (Chairil, 2020) who stated that the involvement of the TNI in handling Covid-19 shows the dominance of the use of the military paradigm in Indonesia, whereas what is needed is a health and scientific approach. (Anindya & Nugroho, 2020) further state that military involvement in various tasks the handling of corona shows that there is a fairly strong dependence of the civilian government on the military.

Meanwhile, (Laksamana & Taufika, 2020) stated that the involvement of the military in handling the epidemic in Indonesia was in the stage of partial militarization because the TNI was not fully mobilized in the formulation of political decisions (still in the hands of civilian authorities) or their implementation. (2020) stated that the crisis caused by the pandemic was used by the TNI, especially the Army, to push the TNI's institutional agenda. These various discourses reflect serious concerns about the disproportionate use of the military in handling the pandemic. This could have an impact on the return of the military's role in the civil and political sphere or the degradation of the military reform process that has been carried out by Indonesia over the last two decades. Apart from various important warnings regarding the tendency to expand the role of the military, no literature discusses how the supervisory response to military involvement in handling Covid-19 in Indonesia is.

In this context, this paper intends to discuss the involvement of the military in handling Covid-19.

## 2. Research Method

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative approach (qualitative research) to discuss the role of the military in handling COVID-19 in Banjarmasin. Qualitative content analysis is simply a descriptive content analysis, which only describes the aspects and characteristics of a particular message or text. The qualitative content analysis here is in the form of words, sentences, or narratives that can be obtained through observation (Kriyantono, 2012:196).

## 3. Discussion

Handling Covid-19 also involves elements of state defense with the main actor being the TNI. In Article 5 of Law No. 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Army, it is stated that the TNI plays a role as a state instrument in the defense sector which in carrying out its duties is based on state political policies and decisions (Idris & Muttaqin, 2021). Furthermore, according to Article 6, the TNI is the main component of the state defense tool. The deployment of the TNI in tasks other than war (OMSP) to assist the handling of Covid-19 is a practice that many countries have done recently.

The basis for the involvement of the TNI is the President's order which is implicit in the Presidential Decree. The order comes from the power of the President which comes from Article 4 of the 1945 Constitution as the holder of state government power, Article 14 of Law no. 3/2002 concerning the powers and responsibilities of the President for the deployment of TNI forces, and Article 3 of Law no. 34/2004 regarding the deployment and use of military force, where the TNI is under the President. The TNI in handling Covid-19 is involved in three fields, namely: (Stepi Anriani, 2021).

### a. Security field.

The TNI has facilitated the evacuation of Indonesian citizens (WNI) who are abroad so they can return to Indonesia, for example picking up 245 Indonesian citizens from Wuhan and then observing them on Natuna Island. In addition, KRI Dr Soeharso was also used to carry out humanitarian missions to assist the return of the TNI from Malaysia, which had implemented a lockdown. The TNI has been recorded to have carried out 13 evacuation processes for around 3,500 Indonesian citizens who work as crew members (ABK) on world cruise ships. For example, the evacuation of 188 Indonesian crew members of the World Dream, 324 Indonesian citizens of the MV Costa Mediterranea crew and 68 crew members of the Diamond Princess.

Especially for Banjarmasin, the TNI is also assisting the Banjarmasin Government by being directly involved in the Covid-19 Task Force.

### b. Health

TNI in the health sector, among others, by refocusing or reallocating a budget of Rp. 196.8 billion. This comes from the TNI Headquarters budget requirement of Rp. 25.7 billion which is allocated for the procurement of PCR equipment, the TNI AD budget of Rp. 39.9 billion is used for the allocation of the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), test kits and swabs with the need for smart helmets. The TNI AL budget of Rp 64.5 billion is allocated to increase the procurement of health facilities such as isolation rooms, procurement of raw materials for hand sanitizers, vitamins, ventilators and providing incentives for health workers. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Air Force budget of Rp. 69.5 billion is allocated to provide incentives for health workers in several air force hospitals.

Since July 2021 the TNI AL Banjarmasin through the Lanal Banjarmasin Medical Center has also opened its first vaccine for the community, followed by the successive Vaccine Assault event from August to October 2021. Distribution and logistics

The TNI also assists the government in distributing PPE and vaccines to various regions. The next role of the TNI is in the socio-economic field, such as assisting and encouraging food security programs. The TNI participated in overseeing the distribution and distribution of social assistance from the central government to the regions. Among them are the ranks of Dandim 1007/Banjarmasin and the Banjarmasin Police Chief who distributed basic food assistance to the people of Banjarmasin City who were affected by Covid-19 and who carried out self-isolation.

### c. Community social sector

The interesting thing about the TNI's efforts to protect the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia from Covid-19 is their hard work in fighting the Covid-19 Vaccine Misguided Narrative. To prevent this, TNI soldiers in regional units were also deployed to socialize the importance of the Covid-19 vaccine. The TNI also educates the public through better communication and approaches in communicating the Covid-19 vaccine and compliance with health protocol disciplines. Because, at this time there are still some people who are reluctant to comply with it. Misunderstandings related to vaccines and vaccination efforts must also be cleared up. This is where the important role of various elements in society, including community leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders, youth leaders, women's leaders, and so on and the TNI will always be ready to work together.

Referring to the four things above, there are two characters of OMSP by the TNI in the context of dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak in Banjarmasin, namely:

The civic action was held in a relatively stable situation as a form of social care by the military, such as the provision of medical services and the distribution of health logistics in affected areas.

The TNI's "assistance" tasks are to support or sustain the capacity of civilian institutions in dealing with impacts and anticipating social risks. This assignment includes assisting authorities in the fields of health, transportation, immigration and the police in enforcing rules or protocols to prevent outbreaks of transmission.

Since the beginning, the TNI has been actively involved in efforts to deal with Covid-19 in Banjarmasin. Starting from participating in the Covid-19 Task Force at the City to Kelurahan level, deploying medical personnel, implementing vaccines for the community, picking up and distributing medical equipment, helping with the distribution of basic necessities and medical equipment, as well as involving members in socializing official information related to Covid-19 in the community.

In handling the Covid-19 pandemic, the involvement of the TNI-POLRI is regulated in Law No. 34 of 2004 concerning the TNI, Law no. 2 of 2002 concerning the National Police, as well as Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2019 concerning Capacity Building in Preventing, Detecting, and Responding to Disease Outbreaks, Global Pandemics, and Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Emergencies. In carrying out humanitarian operations, the role of the armed forces is basically known as the task of assistance. The implementation of assistance tasks, especially for military organizations, is a form of response to emergency situations when civilian authorities have limitations in handling them. In an effort to support the mass vaccination program, Minister of Health Budi Gunadi Sadikin explained that 80,000 tracers are needed for 269 million Indonesians, even though the Ministry of Health does not have that many officers, so assistance from the TNI and Polri is needed.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were reached:

- The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) as the enforcer of state sovereignty law has a role in various sectors, namely the health sector, security sector, social sector, and logistics distribution sector.
- The urgency of the TNI's involvement in the handling of Covid-19 is made possible through Military Operations Other than War (OMSP) in Banjarmasin which is more of a service operation and assistance task.

#### 5. Suggestions

- The TNI plays a significant role in assisting the government through the role of OMSP but needs clarity in the operational tasks of military assistance in the field. Therefore, first, it is necessary to have a roadmap related to TNI involvement, which can be in the form of a grand design in preparing state political decisions regarding the duration of OMSP, the urgency of involvement, the scope of the role, the impact of involvement on the main task, to indicators of success.
- The involvement of the TNI in non-war tasks should still be limited to the scheme of Military Operations Other Than War which in certain sectors and can only be carried out based on state political policies to prevent abuse of authority

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