



LIVE

News | Conflict

Dozens of Maoist rebels killed in India gun battle

Three special commandos also wounded in the hours-long clash in the dense forests of Gadchiroli district.



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At least 26 Maoist rebels have been killed in a gun battle with Indian government forces in a remote forest, according to media reports on the latest clash in the long-running armed conflict.

Police said three commandos were badly wounded in the hours-long clash on Saturday in the dense forests of Gadchiroli district, some 1,000km (620 miles) east of Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra state. They were airlifted to the city of Nagpur for treatment.

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Gadchiroli is one of dozens of Maoist hotbeds dotting the mineral-rich districts of central and eastern India where tens of thousands of fighters are battling government forces.

Police said the gun battle erupted after special police commandos intercepted a group of rebels in the Mardintola forest.

“At least 26 Naxals are dead,” an officer from Maharashtra police told AFP news agency on condition of anonymity, using a local term for the left-wing rebels.

The Maoists are known as Naxalites because the left-wing rebellion began in 1967 in the Naxalbari village of the eastern West Bengal state.

The officer said special forces were still conducting a search operation in the area amid sporadic gunfire.

Gadchiroli police chief Ankit Goyal was also quoted as saying by the online edition of the Indian Express daily that 26 bodies had so far been recovered.

“The exact number of casualties and their identities will be known after the bodies are recovered,” he added.

A top rebel leader was suspected to be among those killed, domestic media reported.

The deadly clash in Gadchiroli is the latest in India’s long-running Maoist armed campaign that began in the 1960s, and has cost thousands of lives.

The government has deployed tens of thousands of forces to battle the rebels across the region known as the “Red Corridor”, which stretches across several central, southern and eastern states.

The conflict with Maoists, who claim to defend the rights of Indigenous tribes and other marginalised groups, is [one of India’s oldest](#) and affects vast swaths of the country.

It has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced many more since it began as an armed peasant rebellion in the Naxalbari village of the eastern West Bengal state in 1967.

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 10,901 people – including civilians, rebels and security personnel – have been killed in Maoist-related violence in India since 2000.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES