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Non-Kinetic Counterinsurgency Strategy In Papua: Economic And Social Approaches Of Yonif 733/Masariku

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Abstrak

The insurgency led by the Free Papua Movement (OPM) represents a multidimensional challenge that affects not only security but also the economic and social life of communities in conflict-affected regions. This article analyzes the non-kinetic approach implemented by the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force in Kenyam District, Nduga Regency, Papua, from April to July 2025, through two primary programs: Borong Hasil Tani (Crop Purchase Initiative) and Minggu Kasih (Sunday Fellowship). These approaches aim to reduce the influence of the OPM by strengthening the local economy and building social trust. The research employs a qualitative-descriptive method through field observations, limited interviews, and documentation of unit activities. The findings indicate that direct purchasing of community agricultural products resulted in increased local farmer income and reduced their reliance on illegal supply chains. Meanwhile, joint worship activities between soldiers and residents strengthened social cohesion and increased public trust in the state. These findings reinforce the relevance of population-centric counterinsurgency and social capital theory within the Papuan context. This study recommends strengthening the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) humanist approach to expand long-term stabilization effects, as well as the importance of cross-sectoral synergy in empowering communities in conflict areas.

Keywords: OPM, TNI Task Force, Non-Kinetic Approach, Crop Purchase Initiative, Sunday Fellowship, Papua Insurgency

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INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Papua, particularly involving the Free Papua Movement (OPM), is one of the most complex forms of insurgency in Indonesia. This issue relates not only to military and security aspects but is also influenced by economic inequality, regional isolation, and the lack of a tangible state presence in the lives of Papuan society. The OPM actively exploits social dissatisfaction and economic backwardness to garner sympathy and support from local communities, especially in remote areas such as Nduga Regency (Setiawan & Widodo, 2022). Therefore, handling the insurgency in Papua cannot be achieved solely through a hard approach; it requires strategies that address the root of the problem, including social and economic aspects.

In this context, the TNI, through its Territorial and Combat Task Forces, plays a vital role as the front line in maintaining stability in conflict-prone areas. One unit actively involved is the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force, which, from April to July 2025, implemented various non-kinetic approach programs in Kenyam District, Nduga Regency. The two main programs carried out were *Borong Hasil Tani*, which involves direct purchase of local agricultural produce, and *Minggu Kasih*, which consists of joint worship activities between soldiers and the community in churches. Both programs have strategic missions: to improve community welfare, strengthen social ties between the military and residents, and sever the community's economic dependence on networks controlled by the OPM (Sihombing & Irawan, 2023).

Theoretically, non-kinetic approaches in counterinsurgency align with the *population-centric counterinsurgency* concept, which emphasizes the importance of winning hearts and minds as part of a long-term strategy for handling insurgency. This approach has proven effective in various global conflict studies and is also beginning to be applied in the Papuan context (Priyambodo, 2021). Furthermore, social interventions such as joint worship are part of strengthening the *social capital* of the community, which serves as a vital foundation for creating social cohesion in conflict-prone areas (Putnam, 2020).

However, the implementation of this approach still faces various challenges, ranging from logistics limitations and community resistance due to trauma from conflict to a lack of cross-sectoral synergy. Therefore, it is important to comprehensively evaluate how the approach taken by the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force impacted the social and economic dynamics of the Nduga community during the assignment period. This evaluation is relevant not only for the development of future TNI strategies but also for enriching academic literature regarding local-based insurgency handling in Indonesia.

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RESEARCH METHODS

Approach and Type of Research

This research utilizes a **descriptive qualitative** approach to describe and analyze the implementation of the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force's non-kinetic strategy in facing insurgency dynamics in Nduga Regency, Papua, specifically in Kenyam District. This type of research was chosen because it is capable of uncovering social meanings, values, and perceptions that develop in the community through direct interaction between soldiers and civilians. This approach also allows the researcher to understand the local context fully, not just in terms of security but also regarding economic and spiritual aspects.

Location and Subjects of Research

This research was conducted in **Kenyam District, Nduga Regency, Papua**, during the period from April to July 2025, coinciding with the deployment of the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force. The subjects of this research consist of: a) TNI soldiers from the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force involved directly in the non-kinetic programs, b) local community and religious leaders, and c) civilians who are beneficiaries of the "Borong Hasil Tani" and "Minggu Kasih" programs.

Data Collection Techniques

Data in this study were obtained through several complementary data collection techniques to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information. First, field observations were conducted directly by the author on the implementation of the two main Task Force programs. Through these observations, the author could record various phenomena occurring in the field, such as social interactions between soldiers and the community, the level of community involvement in activities, and the social dynamics that developed while the programs were ongoing. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with soldiers executing the programs, community leaders, and beneficiary residents. The interviews were semi-structured so the author could dig for information more flexibly regarding community perceptions, the perceived impact of the programs, and the various obstacles faced during the execution of activities. Third, documentation techniques were used by collecting various supporting documents, such as internal Task Force reports, visual documentation in the form of activity photos, and local media publications related to Task Force activities during the research period.

Data that had been collected were then analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The first stage in the analysis was data reduction, which is the process of selecting and focusing on

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information relevant to the research objectives, especially those related to the socio-economic aspects of the community and residents' responses to the Task Force programs. The next stage was categorization and coding, where the obtained data were classified into main themes, such as increased community economy, social cohesion, and the influence of the programs on regional stability. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn based on the relationships between themes discovered to answer the research questions and objectives. This analysis process was strengthened by the use of primary theories, namely *Population-Centric* Counterinsurgency by Kilcullen (2020) and Social Capital Theory by Putnam (2020), which served as the conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between social intervention and regional stability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of the "Borong Hasil Tani" Program on Community Economic Resilience

The "Borong Hasil Tani" program is an initiative of the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force aimed at increasing the income of local farmers through the direct purchase of agricultural products such as tubers, vegetables, and local fruits from the people of Kenyam District. This program was carried out every two weeks and involved farmers from five villages surrounding the Task Force Post. Based on interviews with 15 local farmers and internal Task Force documentation data, the following data were obtained:

Table 1. Economic Impact of the "Borong Hasil Tani" Program (April-July 2025)

No.	Indicator	Before Program (March 2025)	After Program (July 2025)
1	Average farmer income/week (Rp)	150.000	420.000
2	Cargo Plane Extortion	1 Kali	2-3 Times
3	Number of farmers selling to	0	34 Farmers

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	Task Force		

Source: Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force, April-June 2025

Analysis of Table 1: Data shows a 180% increase in weekly farmer income since the program was launched. Additionally, economic interaction increased, demonstrating that the presence of the Task Force served not only as a military entity but also as a micro-economic stimulant. This aligns with the theory of "*Economic Stabilization in Counterinsurgency*" by Berman et al. (2020), which states that local economic intervention can reduce the potential for community support for armed groups, especially when basic needs are facilitated by the state or its apparatus.



Source: Documentation Of Task Force Yonif 733 / Masariku April-June 2025

Figure 1. (Warriors Masariku Buy Produce From Local Farmers Papua To Improve The Economy In The Program Wholesale Agricultural Products)

The "Borong Hasil Tani" program, implemented by the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force in Kenyam District, Nduga Regency, Papua, serves as a humanist (non-kinetic) approach strategy to improve community welfare while simultaneously weakening support for the separatist OPM movement. From April to July 2025, Task Force soldiers actively purchased local produce at fair prices and redistributed them to other posts, local markets, and logistics centers. The main objective of this program was to create economic stimulus amidst regional isolation and farmers' low access to markets.

Before this program, farmers could only sell their produce once a week, often at very low prices due to a lack of buyers. However, once the TNI was present as a steady buyer, the transaction frequency increased to an average of two to three times per week. This directly

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increased farmer income from approximately Rp 150,000 to Rp 420,000 per day. This activity also reduced the farmers' vulnerability to pressure from armed groups that frequently exploit economic hardship as a recruitment tool.

From a theoretical perspective, this program is closely related to the *Conflict Economics Theory* (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), which states that poverty and economic inequality are root causes of armed conflict. By improving citizen welfare through a stable market and fair prices, the incentive to join or assist the insurgency movement automatically decreases. Furthermore, this approach is in line with the *population-centric counterinsurgency* strategy (Kilcullen, 2020), where improving the people's welfare is part of competing for legitimacy between the state and separatist groups.

Observations and interviews with the community show that this program successfully cultivated new hope. Farmers felt valued because their harvests were no longer bought at unequal prices. They also began to feel safe seeing the TNI present not just as security guards, but as economic partners. A farmer from Alguru Village stated, "We used to plant but were confused about where to sell, now the soldiers come and buy, and we are enthusiastic to work." This testimony demonstrates the program's success in building local economic resilience and changing the image of the TNI in the eyes of the community.

Overall, the "Borong Hasil Tani" program had a real impact on the micro-economy of the Kenyam community. With increased income, the community became more independent, and reliance on separatist groups which previously provided illegal economic access could be suppressed. This program serves as a clear example that an economy-based humanist approach can be an effective weapon in the sustainable handling of insurgency.

The Impact of the Insurgency on Social Stability in Nduga

In addition to economic strengthening, the Task Force carried out a spiritual program called "**Minggu Kasih**," which involves joint worship activities between soldiers and local residents every Sunday morning. This activity aimed to build emotional closeness, erase conflict trauma, and strengthen the sense of togetherness between the military and the residents.

From interviews with 8 religious leaders and 20 congregants, it was found that: 90% of residents felt the presence of soldiers during worship strengthened social ties. 75% of residents said they felt safer during worship due to the TNI's presence. 60% of respondents admitted that past trauma regarding the state apparatus was gradually recovering because of this humanist approach. This activity indirectly fostered *trust* between the community and the state apparatus,

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which is part of building *social capital* as described by Putnam (2020). In the context of insurgency, trust in the state apparatus is an important asset to distance the community from the influence of separatist groups.



Source: Documentation Of Task Force Yonif 733 / Masariku April-June 2025

Figure 2. (Soldier Yonif 733 / Masariku following worship with the community at Nduga Church in the Love Week Program)

The "Minggu Kasih" program is a humanist approach carried out by the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force through joint worship with the community in local churches. The presence of soldiers in these religious activities strengthened emotional ties between the security apparatus and civilians, building trust amidst the post-conflict situation. This strategy proved effective as a form of *soft approach* in military operations other than war (OMSP), while strengthening social stability as a foundation for economic recovery and peace in insurgent-prone areas.

One of the non-kinetic approaches carried out by the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force in handling social conflict and insurgency in Kenyam District, Nduga Regency, Papua, was the "Minggu Kasih" program. This program was implemented from April to July 2025, where TNI soldiers routinely attended worship with the community in local churches every Sunday. This approach not only showcased the humanist side of the soldiers but also served as a means of *trust-building* between the TNI and the community, which had previously been clouded by suspicion due to propaganda from the separatist OPM group.

Before this program was implemented, community participation in worship activities was observed to be low. Many residents were reluctant to come to church due to insecurity and trauma from prolonged conflict. However, after the "Minggu Kasih" program ran consistently, a significant increase in congregant participation was recorded, reaching over 80% of church capacity. TNI soldiers attended without weapons, wore simple civilian clothing, and sat alongside the residents, showing that their presence was not to intimidate, but to integrate spiritually.

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Interviews with a local church leader, Reverend Yohanes Lani, revealed that residents felt more peaceful and protected during worship due to the presence of soldiers who were polite and respected the worship procedures. He also mentioned that, until recently, some of the community was still influenced by the narrative that the TNI was an enemy of the Papuan people. But through this approach, that narrative slowly began to fade.

Theoretically, this program aligns with the *soft power* approach (Nye, 2004), where the TNI uses cultural approaches and shared values to create influence rather than coercion. Furthermore, this program reflects the *population-centric counterinsurgency* theory (Kilcullen, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of civilian support in handling insurgency. The presence of the TNI in a religious context adds strategic value because Papua possesses a strong religious identity, making spiritual approaches better received compared to conventional military approaches.

Overall, the "Minggu Kasih" program provided a positive impact on social tranquility in Kenyam. In addition to creating a sense of security during worship, this activity opened spaces for dialogue between the community and the Task Force. Residents began to open up to convey complaints, needs, and even hopes to the soldiers directly after worship. This became an important indicator that the TNI's presence successfully broke through the psychological barriers that previously limited communication. Such an approach not only strengthened civil-military relations but also became one of the long-term strategies effective in severing community sympathy for separatist groups.

Correlation of Non-Kinetic Programs to OPM Insurgency Dynamics

Based on documentation and interviews with village officials and community leaders, it was found that after the Task Force programs were implemented, there was a significant decrease in provocation activities usually carried out by OPM sympathizers. The majority of the community chose to sell their produce to the Task Force and participate in social activities, thus leading to a shift in loyalty that had previously been ambiguous.

This aligns with the concept of "*Population-Centric Counterinsurgency*" (Kilcullen, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of winning the hearts of the people so that the insurgency loses its social base. When the economic and spiritual needs of the community are met by the state, the insurgency loses its primary reason for existing and growing.

The "Borong Hasil Tani" and "Minggu Kasih" activities proved to strengthen the economic and social resilience of the Kenyam District community. This had a direct impact on the cooling of tensions and a reduction in sympathy for the OPM. This non-kinetic approach demonstrated its

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effectiveness as a complement to military operations in the context of asymmetric warfare.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the non-kinetic strategy applied by the Yonif 733/Masariku Task Force, particularly through the *Borong Hasil Tani* and *Minggu Kasih* programs, had a significant influence on strengthening the economic resilience and social cohesion of the Kenyam District community, Nduga Regency. This approach did not only build emotional and spiritual closeness but also shifted the community's economic orientation from dependence on separatist networks toward positive cooperation with the state.

The 180% increase in farmer income within three months and the active community participation in religious activities with soldiers demonstrate the program's success in reducing the potential for support for OPM groups. This strategy is proven to support the population-centric counterinsurgency theory and social capital development that can break the chain of sympathy for separatist movements peacefully.

Overall, this program strengthens the assumption that military operations in the context of insurgency are not enough with only weapon-based approaches; they must also be balanced with social, economic, and cultural approaches to build state legitimacy in the eyes of the local community.

SUGGESTIONS

1. **Program Replication:** The *Borong Hasil Tani* and *Minggu Kasih* programs can be made into a national model for Task Force operations in other conflict-prone areas in Papua or other remote areas.
2. **Cross-Agency Collaboration:** The TNI can cooperate with civil agencies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and local churches to expand the program's impact sustainably.
3. **Periodic Evaluation:** Quarterly evaluation of the impact of non-kinetic programs is needed so that implementation can continue to be adjusted to evolving social dynamics and security challenges.
4. **Personnel Capacity Building:** Training in social approaches and cross-cultural communication is needed for soldiers who will be assigned to conflict areas, so they can be more adaptive to local conditions.

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