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TNI-Polri Successfully Released Susi Air Pilot Phillip Mark Mehrstens From Captivity

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PAPUA- In a testament to the power of collaboration, Susi Air pilot Phillip Mark

Mehrtens, a New Zealand citizen, was finally successfully released by the Joint Security Forces of Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) – the Indonesian National Police (Polri) from captivity by the Free Papua Movement Organization (OPM) led by Egianus Kogoya, Saturday (21/9/2024). Since 7 February 2023, the OPM has taken hostage Pilot Phillip shortly after landing the Susi Air PC-6/PK-BVY plane in Paro District, Nduga Regency, Papua Pegunungan Province. Commanding General of Kogabwilhan III, Lieutenant General Bambang Trisnohadi, in a Press Conference at Yohanis Kapiyau Timika Air Base, Mimika Regency, Papua Tengah Province, stressed the triumphant release results from the unwavering commitment and practical cooperation among all parties and the community. His words: "Today, the Joint Security Forces TNI-Polri successfully released Susi Air Pilot Phillip Mark Mehtens from captivity by the OPM through good cooperation among all parties and the community,"

After being held hostage for one year and seven months, TNI-Polri finally managed Pilot Phillip to land safely and securely at the Yohanis Kapiyau Air Base glider Air Strip, Timika. This landing was conducted after a flight using a helicopter carrying Pilot Phillip from Yuguru Village, Mebarok District, Nduga Regency, Papua Pegunungan Province. Upon arrival at the Air Base, the Commanding General of Kogabwilhan III and TNI-Polri Officers welcomed and received Pilot Phillip. Furthermore, Doctors and Health Workers at Timika Air Base conducted thorough medical check-ups and psychological examinations to ensure Pilot Phillip's health and mental condition after being released from captivity, providing a reassuring sign of the TNI's commitment to Pilot Phillip's well-being.

Pilot Phillip's release was carried out safely and smoothly after a Soft Approach through communication and coordination of the TNI-Polri, all related Ministries/Institutions, Community Figures, Religious Figures, and all stakeholders since the captivity. The extended communication and coordination process was carried out to ensure the safety and security of Pilot Phillip without any repressive actions.

Implementing Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9 of 2020 concerning the Acceleration of Welfare Development in Papua is a priority and legal basis for carrying out the duties of the TNI in the Papua region. In the Presidential Instruction, TNI must implement three tasks: security support, supporting the Regional Government in providing essential services for the community and conducting inclusive Social Communication with all stakeholders in Papua. The successful release of Pilot Phillip on Saturday (21/9) is not just a victory in terms of security but also a powerful demonstration of the TNI's commitment to humanitarian actions carried out professionally and in collaboration with the Polri and all related stakeholders.

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