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SURVIVAL

Global Rescue Evacuates Climbers From Violent Miner Strike In Remote Indonesia

by Tim MacWelch | November 9, 2011

Imagine the thrill of mountain climbing in the remotest parts of the world. Fun, right? Now imagine that someone in your group just received a critical injury. You manage to haul the injured man to the nearest medical care facility, only to find a full blown riot taking place there. Your fun just got replaced with a sick feeling in the pit of your stomach.

Now let's change gears a third time. Imagine the relief you would feel after a sat phone call said a chopper was on the way. Global Rescue just performed such a security evacuation for a group of climbers in the highlands of Papua, Indonesia, after the party found themselves trapped in a violent uprising.

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The group was camping at the base of Carstensz Pyramid--the tallest point in Oceania and one of the Seven Summits--when a large rock slide injured some of the group's porters, one of them critically. The nearest medical aid was at the adjacent Grasberg mine, which is located about 50 miles outside of Timika, Indonesia. The severely injured porter was treated at the mine's clinic.

The Grasberg mine sits on the largest known reserve of gold ore

in an otherwise impoverished region, and has been a political flashpoint for many years. The frequent uprisings in the region have been described by the New York Times as "a seemingly unending conflict in a part of the world famous for both its awe-some remoteness and the incredible wealth on and beneath the ground."

When the climbers arrived, the mine was in the midst of a labor strike that had escalated to a violent riot. The road from the mine to Timika was blocked by protesters and large piles of rocks. There were several reports of travelers being attacked along the road, leaving no safe overland exit for the group.

One of the climbers, who had purchased a security membership with Global Rescue, called the company's Boston Operations Center for assistance. The company's security specialists ascertained that the member was in danger and arranged a helicopter to transport him and the group to the airport in Timika, where they boarded a flight home.

Forget that stupid gym membership--I just figured out a better membership that I want for Christmas. Let us know in the comments if you have had a hairy situation where you could have used an extraction; or needed medical, security or rescue services on the ground.