

Judul : E-ID graft witness dies in US
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E-ID graft witness dies in US

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An Indonesian businessman believed to hold key evidence exposing the alleged involvement of politicians in the multi-million dollar e-ID graft case has been found dead in the United States.

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) confirmed on Friday the death of Johannes Marliem, a key witness in the Rp 5.9 trillion (US\$441.6 million) graft case that implicates powerful politicians in the country, including House of Representatives Speaker Setya Novanto.

"We have received information that Johannes has died," KPK spokesman Febri Diansyah told reporters. He added that the anti-graft body had yet to receive information detailing the circumstances surrounding his death. Some media outlets, however, have linked his death to a recent hostage and suicide incident in the Beverly Grove neighborhood in Los Angeles, California.

US media reported on an overnight standoff between an armed man and police at a house in the neighborhood.

The man, believed to be Marliem, was found dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound after the standoff, according to *Wired* magazine.

A woman and child believed to be his wife and daughter exited the building a few hours after the standoff started, according to local authorities.

The standoff began on Wednesday afternoon, local time, and ended early Thursday morning. The police placed the neighborhood on lockdown immediately after they arrived at the crime scene. Several neighbors said they heard several gunshots and small explosions during the standoff.

Although several Indonesian media outlets claim the standoff is linked to Johannes' death, *The Jakarta Post* has yet been able to independently verify this.

Marliem, an Indonesian green card holder, moved to the US before the investigation into the e-ID graft scandal began.

He was the president director of PT Biomorf Lone LLC, the provider of automated fingerprint identification system products under the brand name of L-1. These products were to be used in the e-ID cards. The company was a member of the consortium that won the tender for the project.

The businessman was seen as a key witness in the case following his interview with *Koran Tempo* in which he claimed to have recordings of conversations he had with a number of politicians alleged to have orchestrated the e-ID graft case, including Setya, who has been charged for his alleged role in the case.

Marliem told the newspaper that he kept 500 gigabit recordings of negotiations regarding the project which he allegedly showed to KPK investigators during a questioning session in the

States. He claimed that two top KPK officials were present during the questioning.

The questioning, according to the interview, was the second session after one held in Singapore last February.

Marliem's name has also been mentioned several times in the trial for defendants Irman and Sugiharto, both former Home Ministry senior officials.

In their sentencing demand for Irman and Sugiharto, KPK prosecutors mentioned Johannes at least 25 times.

Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) analyst Aradilla Caesar said Johannes' death would hamper the KPK's investigation into the case, given his status as a key witness.

"For sure, this is a big test for the KPK. The KPK must find another way of solving the case by looking into other witnesses who could provide other pieces of evidence," Aradilla said.

The activist said the KPK should work with local police in the US to uncover the reasons behind Marliem's death.

Marliem was the CEO and founder of the Marliem Market Group, which helps US companies sell products and services in Indonesia. The man, however, has a notorious public record.

US media outlet *Start Tribune* in 2014 reported that he donated \$225,000 to former US president Barack Obama's second inauguration. Later, Democratic National Committee officials expressed regret at having received the money from Marliem after it found that the businessman had pleaded guilty to "theft by swindle" charges.