

*JPNN/Sajjad Hussain/ Islamabad /Mar 21, 2015/At least 80 militants and seven soldiers were killed today in clashes between security forces and terrorists in Pakistan's volatile northwest tribal region, where the country's military*

*has launched a major campaign. Military spokesman Maj Gen Asim Bajwa said Pakistani forces have inflicted heavy casualties on militants as the army follows up its series of aerial strikes to clear the region. He said 80 militants were killed and about 100 injured in the aerial and ground operations in Khyber district, near the Afgan border. Seven soldiers were also killed. The militants were fleeing towards Afghan border as their bases were destroyed in the mountainous region, Bajwa said. "Operations will continue with full force till total terrorist elimination from these areas," he said. Khyber is one of Pakistan's seven semi-autonomous regions governed by tribal laws and lies near the Afghan border. The ongoing Khyber-1 operation launched by the military in Khyber tribal region are part of its stepped-up efforts following the massacre of 150 people, mostly students, by Taliban gunmen at an army-run school in Pashawar in December. Militants are believed to have fled to various tribal regions that borders Afghanistan, where they operate on both sides of the border. Pakistani troops have been engaged in a full-scale offensive against Taliban and other militants in North Waziristan tribal region named 'Operation Zarb-i-Azb', ad also in Khyber, following a Taliban-claimed attack on Karachi International Airport in June last year. The Taliban and its allies have been waging an insurgency for more than a decade in Pakistan, seeking to install their own brand of fundamentalist Islamic rule. Agency*