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## Pakistani Taliban execute captured policemen

**At least 21 men who belonged to a paramilitary force shot dead in Peshawar by their captors, say government officials.**

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An injured policeman in hospital after surviving an attack by Taliban fighters outside the city of Peshawar

Government officials say 21 out of 23 tribal policemen believed to have been kidnapped by the Taliban have been executed by their captors in northwest Pakistan.

Naveed Akbar Khan, a local government official, told the AFP news agency on Sunday: "We found 21 bullet riddled bodies of security personnel a short while ago in an uninhabited area."

"One was found alive but wounded and admitted to hospital while another managed to escape unhurt," he added.

Khan said officials found the bodies shortly after midnight on Sunday after being notified by one policeman who had escaped.

The victims were from a paramilitary force recruited from members of ethnic Pashtun tribes in northwestern Pakistan, reported the Reuters news agency. The militias support the government in its efforts against fighters battling the state, it added.

Al Jazeera's Kamal Hyder, reporting from the capital, Islamabad, said the policemen were captured after 400 Taliban fighters reportedly attacked their posts.

"After the levies [local name for police] discovered that this was some sort of a surprise attack, there was resistance. Two of the levies forces were killed [and] 23 were taken away," he said.

"After that the tribal jirga tried to negotiate with the Taliban but those talks failed, after which the levies were taken to the cricket ground and they were shot."

### **Bodies in wilderness**

The slain policemen were found in the Jabai area of Frontier Region Peshawar, part of Pakistan's troubled tribal region.

The 23 policemen went missing before dawn on Thursday when fighters armed with rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons attacked two posts. Two policemen were also killed in the attacks.

Gul Shehzad, another government official, said authorities received information just before midnight that some bodies were lying in the wilderness, within about four kilometres of the camps.

"The hands of soldiers were tied with rope before they were shot," Shehzad told AFP.

He said Taliban fighters had accepted the responsibility for the kidnappings.

The camps are outside Peshawar, the main city in northwest Pakistan, close to the restive tribal areas that border Afghanistan, and are regarded as havens for Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked fighters.

In August, the Pakistani Taliban released a video showing what appeared to be the severed heads of a dozen soldiers, after the military said 15 troops had gone missing following fighting with gunmen in the Bajaur tribal district.

There has been a surge in attacks in northwest Pakistan in the past two weeks, including a suicide bombing on a political meeting in Peshawar on Saturday that killed Bashir Bilour, the second top politician in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for that attack, saying Bilour, an outspoken critic of the fighters, was assassinated in revenge for the death of one of the movement's "elders".

Pakistan has lost more than 3,000 soldiers in the fight against homegrown rebels but has resisted US pressure to do more to eliminate havens used by those fighting the Americans in Afghanistan.