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Reuters

## Hundreds of Afghan-based militants launch raid into Pakistan

By Mian Saeed-ur-Rehman

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At least 300 militants crossed into Pakistan from Afghanistan and attacked a Pakistani checkpoint, government and intelligence officials said on Monday, the sixth cross-border attack in a month that has raised tensions between the neighbors.

One Pakistani soldier was killed and another wounded in the late Sunday attack in the Pakistani tribal region of Bajaur, intelligence officials said. At least four militants were also killed in the fighting, they said.

Pakistan says 56 members of the security forces have been killed and 81 wounded in a series of militant attacks from Afghanistan over the past month.

Villagers from Kitkot, where the attack took place, told Reuters that militants used rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades and AK-47 assault rifles.

"Heavy firing was going on, and it lasted for several hours," tribal elder Juma Gul said.

One government official said the militants were driven back into Afghanistan by Pakistani security forces. There were no civilian casualties, he added.

A military spokesman in Rawalpindi, however, said no militants have crossed the border, but instead fired rockets into Pakistan, killing one Pakistani soldier.

It is difficult to independently verify what is happening in the remote mountain region that divides Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Sunday's raid follows allegations by the Afghan Foreign Ministry that a number of rockets fired from Pakistan into the Afghan province of Kunar had killed and injured Afghan civilians in recent months.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said that Pakistan had fired 470 rockets over the border in June. Pakistan has denied the allegations.

Pakistan says militants, including Pakistani Taliban commanders, have taken refuge in Afghanistan following military operations to drive them out of its Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

It was angered by a U.S. decision to thin out its troops in eastern Afghanistan, including the Korengal valley in Kunar province, when Washington decided to concentrate on population centers in southern Afghanistan, the Taliban heartland.

"For quite some time we have been highlighting that there are safe havens across the border," Pakistan army spokesman Major-General Athar Abbas said. "Something should be done about these."