

## **2 Pakistani soldiers killed, 14 injured in suicide attack on mosque**

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**Islamabad:** Two Pakistani soldiers were killed after a small group of "suicide bombers" attacked a mosque at an Army facility in northwest Pakistan today.

According to Pakistani Army spokesman Asim Bajwa, all four "suicide bombers" were also killed in the incident.

The Army said 14 troops were also wounded in the attack on Ghalani Camp in Mohmand tribal region bordering Afghanistan. It said in a statement that security forces "valiantly averted" an attempted suicide attack and killed all four militants.

It said the attackers wanted to enter the camp and started firing after they reached the mosque, where residents and a large number of recruits gathered for an early morning prayer.

The Army said the attackers were contained in the outer courtyard of the mosque.

Two security officials also confirmed the account and said a search operation was underway to trace and arrest any accomplices of the attackers. They said the assailants entered from the backside of the camp, which is located near a farm field.

The officials said the dead and wounded were being transported to hospitals.

They spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to discuss any details about the attack.

Shortly after the attack, Jamaatul Ahrar, a breakaway faction of the Taliban, claimed responsibility.

Ahsanullah Ahsan, spokesman for the group, said that the gunbattle between attackers and troops was still ongoing Saturday morning. He said that the Ghalani Camp was notorious for torturing detained militants and that they carried out the attack to send a message to the outgoing Army chief Gen. Raheel Rashid, who is retiring next week after completing his three-year tenure.

The Mohmand tribal region is a hotbed for Islamic militants and the Pakistani Army has carried out several operations to eliminate militant hideouts. But the militants have struck back, indicating they still have the capability to launch attacks.

Sharif has said the Army will continue operations against militants until they are eliminated.

Sharif is leaving a legacy of a military chief who supported a strong, democratically elected government, personally served on the front lines and who led a military offensive that claims to have dismantled militant sanctuaries in tribal regions bordering Afghanistan.

- (With AP inputs)