

Pakistan army completes anti-militant operation in North Wasziristan

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Islamabad: Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif announced on Monday the successful completion of operation against militants in difficult mountainous terrain of North Waziristan tribal region.

Militants who had fled major towns in the region as the result of a major offensive, were hiding in Shawal valley in the inaccessible and rugged mountains, an army spokesperson said in a statement, according to Xinhua.

Hundreds of troops, backed by fighter jets, had started the final phase of the operation earlier this year after clearing over 90 percent of North Waziristan that was once considered the stronghold of the Pakistan Taliban and their foreign allies.

The army chief visited Shawal and reviewed progress of the last phase of operation and spent whole day with troops busy in eliminating terrorists from their last bastion, close to Pakistan-Afghan border.

"Lauding the successful completion of Shawal Operation, the COAS (chief of the army staff) acknowledged exceptional achievements, courage, determination and sacrifices of troops in achieving the objectives," the spokesman said. He, however emphasised on consolidating the gains.

Talking about breaking the nexus between terrorists and their facilitators sitting outside the tribal regions, General Raheel directed to undertake large scale combing operations immediately in the aims at seeking terrorists, their sleeper cells and facilitators in areas other than tribal areas.

Field commanders briefed the army chief about operational gains so far. The commanders said that since the start of last phase in February 2016, in treacherous terrain of Shawal, more than 800 sq km of area has been secured inflicting heavy casualties on terrorists.

The army has confirmed that over 3,000 militants have been killed since the operation was launched on June 15, 2014.

All of the militants training centres in North Waziristan have been destroyed that has badly diminished their capability of carrying out organised terrorist attacks around the country.

Officials have noted a substantial decrease in terrorist activities since the launch of the North Waziristan offensive.

The security forces also have been involved in the intelligence-based operations against the facilitators of the militants in Punjab province.

- IANS