



By: TA | AP Brief

Regional powers are urging Pakistan and Afghanistan to refrain from escalation



Afghanistan said Sunday it killed 58 Pakistani soldiers in overnight border operations, in response to what it called repeated violations of its territory and airspace.

Earlier in the week, Afghan authorities accused Pakistan of **bombing** the capital, Kabul, and a market in the country's east. Pakistan did not claim responsibility for the assault.

The Taliban government's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said Afghan forces have captured 25 Pakistani army posts, 58 soldiers have been killed, and 30 others wounded.

"The situation on all official borders and de facto lines of Afghanistan is under complete control, and illegal activities have been largely prevented," Mujahid told a press conference in Kabul. There was no immediate confirmation from Pakistan about casualties.

The Taliban government's Defense Ministry said early Sunday morning its forces had conducted "retaliatory and successful operations" along the border.

"If the opposing side again violates Afghanistan's territorial integrity, our armed forces are fully prepared to defend the nation's borders and will deliver a strong response," the ministry added.

The Torkham border **crossing**, one of two main trade routes between the two countries, did not open on Sunday at its usual time of 8 am.

Pakistan accuses Afghan authorities of harboring members of the banned **group** Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan. Islamabad says the group carries out deadly attacks inside Pakistan, but Kabul denies the charge, saying it does not allow its territory to be used against other countries.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the Saturday night assault and said the country's army "not only gave a befitting reply to Afghanistan's provocations but also destroyed several of their posts, forcing them to retreat."

Dialogue and wisdom

Qatar's Foreign Ministry expressed concern over the escalations and the potential repercussions for the security and stability of the region. It urged both sides to prioritize "dialogue, diplomacy and restraint."

The Saudi Foreign Ministry issued a statement late Saturday, calling for "restraint, avoidance of escalation and the adoption of dialogue and wisdom to help de-escalate tensions and maintain the security and stability of the region."

Saudi Arabia just reached a mutual defense pact with Pakistan, which apparently put the kingdom under Islamabad's nuclear umbrella following Israel's attack on Qatar.

The two countries share a 2,611-kilometer (1,622-mile) border

A senior Pakistani security official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media, said Afghan forces opened fire in several northwestern border areas in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the districts of Chitral, Bajaur, Mohmand, Angoor Adda and Kurram.

The official also said troops responded with heavy weaponry near Tirah in Khyber district and across the frontier in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province.

The two countries share a 2,611-kilometer (1,622-mile) **border** known as the Durand Line, but Afghanistan has never recognized it.