

## Militants free Pakistani soldiers

*by UPI*

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- More than 200 Pakistani troops held captive since August by pro-Taliban militants in the tribal areas, have been freed, the Xinhua news agency reported. There were 211 soldiers released through the efforts of a tribal council of elders in South Waziristan, Pakistan military spokesman, Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad was quoted as saying. The soldiers, sent to contain growing militant violence in the region near the border with Afghanistan, were captured Aug. 30 by pro-Taliban militants, much to the embarrassment of the Pakistani military. It wasn't clear how many militant prisoners were freed by Pakistani authorities in exchange. But the BBC reported one of the negotiators said authorities had agreed to release nearly 30 militants, some of them suspected suicide bombers. In September, the militants killed three of the captive soldiers as a warning to the government.

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