

8 tribal elders killed in Pakistan

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- Pakistan's efforts at a truce with pro-Taliban militants in tribal areas were thwarted Monday with the killings of eight tribal elders. The elders, who were seeking to broker a truce with the help of a local tribe, were gunned down in two separate incidents in Wana and in the nearby town of Shkai, the Press Trust of India reported quoting a Pakistani military news release. The shootings occurred hours before a jirga or tribal council was to be convened in Tank City. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attacks. The area is known as a stronghold of pro-Taliban and al-Qaida forces and has been the scene of major operations by the Pakistani armed forces in recent months. The area is the stronghold of Baitullah Mehsud, who now leads a coalition of Pakistani Taliban groups. The Pakistan government of President Pervez Musharraf suspects Mehsud for masterminding the Dec. 27 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

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