

## Pakistani forces battling Taliban in north

*by UPI*

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- It could take another week for Pakistani government forces to push back Taliban insurgents in the country's northwest, a military spokesman says.

Major Gen. Athar Abbas says government forces secured mountain passes to the west and south of the Buner district Thursday while helicopter gunships hit Taliban positions to the north, The New York Times reports.

Abbas said it would take another week to clear Buner since government forces have to proceed slowly to defuse booby traps and avoid civilian casualties.

Militants continued their attacks Thursday, hitting a checkpoint belonging to government paramilitary forces in northern Buner. They seized several police stations including two in the upper reaches of their stronghold in the Swat Valley.

Some 50 members of the police and paramilitary forces are still being held hostage by the Taliban in Buner.

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