

Zardari vows strong retaliation against intruders

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RAWALPINDI:

President Asif Ali Zardari said the people of Pakistan and its armed forces were united and would face terrorism in unison and expressed the resolve to make the terrorists accountable for the blood of each martyred Jawan, the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a statement on Sunday. Late on Saturday, the president attended the funeral prayers of Shaheed Lt-Col Syed Kashif Ali and Capt Muhammad Ahmed Bader, who were martyred in Mir Ali in North Waziristan district in a terrorist attack earlier in the day. The president paid tributes to the martyrs and reiterated the resolve to respond to terrorist activities with full force. The nation's brave brothers, sons and friends had been protecting the borders, Zardari said. He promised that the blood of the sons of the soil would not go in vain," the statement added. The two brave officers were among the seven

martyred in a terrorist attack in North Waziristan's Mir Ali area. The funeral prayers were offered at the Chaklala Garrison in Rawalpindi, according to the military's media wing. The funeral was also attended by Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of Army the Staff Gen Syed Asim Munir, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar as well as Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, senior serving military and civil officers, relatives of the Shuhada and locals of the area. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the troops foiled an initial attempt of intrusion into an army installation in the wee hours of the day. However, a group of six terrorists rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into it. The six terrorists were also killed in the subsequent clearance operation. According to the ISPR, the media wing of the military, President Zardari said: "Pakistan has decided that whoever will enter our borders, homes or country and commit terror, we will respond to them strongly, regardless of who it is or from which country."

"This noble sacrifice stands as another glorious testament to the unflinching resolve of our gallant sons, who have never hesitated to offer the ultimate sacrifice for the defense of our Motherland. The whole nation stands in solidarity with our armed forces," he added. Zardari praised the Pakistan Army, saying that it had "consistently upheld the ideals of Faith, Unity, and Discipline and always endeavoured to set higher benchmarks of professionalism and loyalty in its unrelenting fight against terrorism". The bodies of the martyrs were later taken to their respective

hometowns, where they will be laid to rest with full military honours, the ISPR stated. The five other martyred soldiers were Havildar Sabir, resident of district Khyber; Naik Khurshid, resident of district Lakki Marwat; Sepoy Nasir, resident of Peshawar; Sepoy Raja, resident of Kohat; and Sepoy Sajjad, resident of Abbottabad. A group affiliated with Pakistani Taliban leader Hafiz Gul Bahadur claimed responsibility for the attack. Bahadur's outfit is the strongest militant group in North Waziristan. He fled to Afghanistan following Operation Zarb-e-Azb in 2014.