

Fight Against Militants in Pakistan Leads to Advanced Treatments for Wounded



Amputees at Rawalpindi's Armed Forces Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine (AFIRM)

From VOA Learning English, this is the Health Report.

More than five thousand members of the Pakistani security forces have been killed in the fight against terrorists and militants since 2001. Some 10,000 regular and paramilitary troops have been wounded. The high number of deaths and injuries has resulted in improved care at the army's top rehabilitation center in Rawalpindi. Doctors at the rehabilitation center help troops regain physical and mental skills damaged in war.

Aman Ullah lost both of his legs more than a year ago while serving in the Khyber tribal area on the border with Afghanistan.

The 23-year-old is one of the thousands of Pakistani soldiers dealing with wounds from Pakistan's ongoing fight against militant groups. Most soldiers are wounded by improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

“I was part of FC, you know, the Frontier Corps [paramilitary force] convoy when a roadside IED planted in a vehicle exploded. I lost both my legs and received multiple injuries all around my body.”

Arif Hussain is another patient recovering from injuries.

“We were engaged in an operation against extremists in the Mohmand agency when one of their bullets hit me in the leg and I lost it.”

The soldier is recovering from major medical operations at Rawalpindi’s Armed Forces Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine, or AFIRM. Aman Ullah and several other soldiers are now hoping to compete in the next Paralympic Games. This international competition is for athletes with disabilities.

Their inspiration is South African Oscar Pistorius. He became the first double amputee Olympian in London last year -- long before he faced charges of murder.

“When I saw the boy [Oscar Pistorius] from South Africa on television racing with a horse and competing in the games, I decided that, Inshallah [God willing], next year I will also do that and compete with that young man.”

Major-General Akhtar Waheed is the chief of the army-operated rehabilitation center. He is proud of the progress made in treating patients who have suffered the loss of arms or legs.

“I had a few patients with three amputations and one patient with four limb amputations. So I think you have seen them in today’s event and they are not less than any normal person.”

The experience of treating thousands of patients over the years has led to improved medical practices. These improvements include more useful artificial limbs. These replacement arms and legs are needed after severe wounds lead to amputations. Medical workers have also developed better practices for helping wounded soldiers again stand on their feet.

With military efforts continuing in Pakistan’s tribal areas, there are plans to further expand the Rawalpindi rehabilitation center.