New Delhi (India) - Some 798 Indian army troops died in the massive deployment to the borders with Pakistan triggered by a December 2001 attack on the Indian parliament, Defence Minister George Fernandes said Thursday.

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An estimated million troops were sent by India and Pakistan to the borders as New Delhi demanded Islamabad shut off alleged support to Islamic rebels fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, in a deployment India called Operation Parakram, or "Victory."

"During the operation, up to July 2003, a total of 798 army personnel suffered fatal casualties," Fernandes told parliament.

The minister gave no details on how the troops died. However, there have been regular reports of soldiers being killed by landmines on the border.

There are no reliable figures on the number of mines planted during the stand-off, but New York-based Human Rights Watch says India and Pakistan together conducted one of the biggest mining operations since the 1997 Ottawa mine ban treaty, which neither country has signed.

India began pulling troops away from forward positions in October 2002 after elections on the Indian side of Kashmir. During the crisis Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf promised a US envoy that Islamabad would seal off the de facto Kashmir border to rebels, according to US and Indian officials.

Fernandes said the process launched in October of "redeploying" the troops was still going on.

The parliament attack left dead 15 people including the five assailants, who New Delhi said were part of two Pakistan-based groups active in the 14-year Islamic insurgency in Kashmir.

Pakistan banned the two groups a month later and denies any link to the parliament attack.

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