

FO CLAIMS CAPTURED IRANIAN BORDER GUARDS NOT IN PAKISTAN; IRAN THREATENS USE OF SPECIAL FORCES FOR RESCUE

Since word emerged on Sunday that Jeish Al-Adl executed one of the five Iranian border guards that had been abducted last month, there has been a very interesting series of developments between Iran and Pakistan. Iran has summoned Pakistan's ambassador to lodge a formal complaint about the death and Pakistan's apparent inability to find the terrorist group and release the hostages. Iran's Foreign Minister also sent an open letter to the UN, appealing for help in controlling "state sponsored" groups that are responsible for this and other attacks on Iran. Pakistan, meanwhile, has announced today that they don't believe the border guards are being held in Pakistan. Complicating matters even further, Iran now is claiming that it would be within their right to employ special forces in a raid on Pakistani territory to release the hostages and kill those responsible for the kidnapping.

The summoning of the ambassador seemed innocuous enough:

Iran's Foreign Ministry has summoned Pakistan's ambassador to Tehran over Iranian kidnapped guard's death and expressed strong objections to Pakistan for lack of control of its borders.

Deputy Director General of the department of West Asian countries of Iran's Foreign Ministry expressed Islamic Republic of Iran's objection on

Iranian border guards' abduction and their transfer to Pakistan emphasizing on Iran's demand for their release, health and also delivering the terrorists to Iran.

He continued "Pakistan should have proper control over its borders and prevent recurrence of such events unless two countries' good relations would be affected."

Pakistan's ambassador to Iran, Noor Mohammad Jadmani, offered condolences for one of the Iranian abducted guard's death in Pakistan and expressed regret for the terrorist incident.

"Pakistan is also worried about the growth of terrorist actions and extremism." added he and that "Pakistan will not let such incidents be repeated again and affect the two countries' relations."

Likewise, the letter to the UN starts off as normal diplomacy, but it eventually gets to some fairly broad claims about attacks on Iran:

It is extremely regrettable that all available evidence indicate that these cowardly acts of terror targeting the Islamic Republic of Iran and its citizens have been perpetrated by State-sponsored extremist groups, with similar patterns of funding, coordination, support and direction. The entire international community should be alarmed by the regional and extra-regional ramifications of sectarian tension and extremist violence, which are being systematically organized, sponsored and orchestrated in various parts of our region. In fact, learning from recent history, a sober assessment of the medium and long-term implications of this dangerous trend will show that

the very sponsors of such hatred, who for ill-conceived interests have hastily resorted to such short-sighted tactics to remedy their strategic miscalculations and failures, stand to lose the most from the sectarian and extremist violence that they are spreading.

What a strange passage. In protesting attacks against themselves, it appears that the Iranians are making a not very veiled threat to carry out their own "sectarian and extremist violence" against those they perceive to be behind the attacks.

The Express Tribune provides a bit more perspective on Iran's distrust of Saudi Arabia being behind this part of the letter:

Zarif did not name any countries but Iranian officials have pointed the finger of blame at regional rivals, particularly Saudi Arabia, for a number of attacks against Iranian diplomatic missions in Lebanon, Pakistan and Yemen.

Relationships with Riyadh have deteriorated in recent years over Tehran's controversial nuclear drive and its support for the Syrian regime, as well as Saudi support for Bahrain in face of a Shia uprising.

A diplomatic source in Tehran said the letter could pave the way for a debate within the UN as "state-sponsored terrorism" is a regional issue.

In a further bit of saber-rattling, an Iranian lawmaker warns that they may use special forces to rescue the hostages:

Pakistan's government is responsible for the lives of the five Iranian border guards abducted by the Jeish al-Adl terrorists early in February, an Iranian

lawmaker said, adding that several Iranian task force units are ready to attack the terrorist group to free the guards.

“Iran is fully prepared to stamp out the Jeish al-Adl terrorists,” Rapporteur for the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Seyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said on Wednesday.

Under international law, said Naqavi Hosseini, Iran can take measures to secure the release of the kidnapped guards in two ways.

“Iran is prepared to act independently to crush the Jeish al-Adl terrorist group should the Islamabad government be incapable of doing it,” the Iranian lawmaker said.

“The second way to free the abducted border guards is to use international bodies advocating human rights such as the United Nations,” added the senior MP.

Pakistan, meanwhile, seems to take Iran’s anger seriously and now is claiming that the border guards are not being held within Pakistan:

Foreign Office Spokesperson Tasnim Aslam during her weekly briefing in Islamabad on Thursday said our authorities have combed Pakistani territory in search of missing Iranian guards, however, there are no clues that they are on our land.

She said Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also discussed this issue by telephone. Pakistan and Iran enjoy deep-rooted multifaceted ties.

She said Iranian guards went missing at least 5 to 10 kilometers inside Sistan and Jaish-ul-Adl claimed the

responsibility. She said Pakistan will extend its all possible cooperation to Iran for the recovery of these guards.

Replying to a question, Tasnim Aslam said the dead body of killed Iranian guard was not found from Pakistani territory, which gives the hint that where other guards might be.

We now are approaching the halfway point in the ten day period that Jeish Al-Adl provided for Iran to release prisoners before the next border guard is executed and yet it doesn't appear that Iran or Pakistan is any closer to finding where they are being held.