

ATTACK AT SAUDI-IRAQ BORDER KILLS THREE SAUDI GUARDS



Reuters reports the location of the attack as near the Suweif border station, about 40 km from Arar, Saudi Arabia and 80 km from al-Nukhayb, Iraq (marked by red pin), putting the attack roughly where the road connecting them crosses the border.

I've long followed events along the porous Pakistan-Iran border area, as there are often events taking place there that have very different descriptions on opposite sides of the border. As recently as December 28, three Iranian IRGC members were killed in the area. This is a departure from the usual pattern, where border guards instead of IRGC are the usual targets. Iran retaliated by firing mortars over the border into Pakistan, who claimed as many as 7 injuries from the attack. Iran is also reporting today that they have arrested a team of "terrorists" south of where the December event took place.

By contrast, even though it as remote as the Iran-Pakistan border, the Iraq-Saudi Arabia border is more heavily fortified and patrolled on the Saudi side. That makes today's report of three Saudi guards being killed in an attack near a border crossing with Iraq stand out:

Saudi Arabia's border with Iraq,
defended by earth barriers and fences

and monitored by camera and radar, has been attacked in the past by mortar bombs fired from a distance, but more targeted strikes are rare.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the assault, which hit a remote desert area next to Iraq's Anbar province where both the Islamic State militant group and Shi'ite Muslim militias close to Riyadh's foe Iran operate.

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Monday's attackers, described by the ministry only as "terrorist elements", shot at a border patrol near Arar and when security officers responded, one of the attackers was captured and detonated an explosives belt, the ministry statement on state media said.

One of those killed was a senior officer, ministry spokesman Major General Mansour Turki told Reuters. Local media, including al-Arabiya television, named the dead officer as General Oudah al-Belawi, the head of a border sector. A third officer was wounded, the ministry said.

The Reuters article quoted above [the quote above is from an earlier version of the article which has since been updated] relied on a single expert to blame the attack on ISIS based on the presence of a suicide bomber.

AP, on the other hand, assigned no blame, but noted (as did Reuters), that Saudi Arabia has joined the fight against ISIS in Syria.

It will be interesting to see whether any group claims responsibility for the attack and whether there are additional attacks along the Saudi-Iraq border. For now, I'd place about as much authority on the pronouncement that the presence of a suicide bomber means the attack came from

ISIS as I do on Iran's latest "documentation"
that the US is controlling ISIS operations out
of the embassy in Baghdad.