

WHO IS BEHIND LATEST IRAN-PAKISTAN BORDER INCIDENT? WHO BENEFITS?

Before diving into Friday night's border incident where fourteen Iranian border guards were killed and Iran retaliated the next morning by hanging sixteen prisoners already in detention, we need to look back at the important events surrounding other such outbreaks of violence at the Iran-Pakistan border.

On January 1 of 2012, Pakistan detained three Iranian border guards whom they claimed had crossed into Pakistan. Details of the event were sketchy, but Iran claimed the guards were chasing drug smugglers and most of the stories on the event brought up the likely involvement of the group known as Jundallah. Less than two weeks later, a prominent Iranian nuclear scientist was assassinated on January 11. Only two days after that event, the famous "false flag" article by Mark Perry appeared in Foreign Policy, making the remarkable claim that Mossad agents were posing as CIA agents while recruiting members of Jundallah for operations including assassinations. Marcy had a series of three posts (one, two, three) delving into the many implications surrounding the false flag accusation. Another border incident then happened in late January, where six "Pakistanis" were killed by Iranian border agents, but there was a lot of confusion over just who the victims were, including their nationality.

Here is how Reuters first broke the news Saturday on this latest incident:

Fourteen Iranian border guards were killed and three others captured by "bandits" on the southeastern frontier with Pakistan overnight, Iranian media reported on Saturday.

In response, the Iranian judiciary executed 16 people it said were elements of “terrorist” groups, according to the ISNA news agency. There were no further details of who they were or whether or when they had been tried.

A follow-up story by Dawn from Sunday has more details, with the identity of the attackers unknown (but Jundallah is still mentioned prominently in the article):

It was still unclear whether the attackers were drug smugglers or armed opposition groups.

However, Iran’s Deputy Interior Minister Ali Abdollahi called on the Pakistani government to “take measures to control the border more seriously.”

Pakistan’s charge d’affaires was received at the Iranian foreign ministry to receive an official demand that Islamabad “act firmly with officials and members of terrorist groups who have fled to Pakistani territory,” IRNA reported.

The Dawn article also notes a second, separate border incident on Sunday in which one Pakistani was killed and four others were wounded.

Responsibility for the attack has now been claimed by a group known as Jeish Al-Adl:

A little-known Iranian Sunni group says it carried out the killing of 14 border guards on Friday night.

Jaish al-Adl said the attack was in retaliation for an alleged Iranian “massacre” in Syria and the “cruel treatment” of Sunnis in Iran.

Iran is now saying that they are a subgroup within Jundallah:

14 Iranian border guards were killed and 6 more were injured during the terrorist attack in Saravan border region in Southeastern Iran in the early hours of Saturday morning. The terrorists who have reportedly been members of the outlawed Jeish Al-Adl radical Sunni Wahhabi movement affiliated to the terrorist Jundollah group fled into Pakistan after the operation in Iran's Southeastern Sistan and Balouchestan province.

It seems quite interesting to me that Iran would point out the "radical Sunni Wahhabi" connection of the group they are blaming. Of course, the primary sponsor of "radical Sunni Wahhabi" teachings is Saudi Arabia through their madrassas. But Iran seems to be dancing around an outright referral to Saudi involvement in this attack, even though it would make sense since we know that Bandar is now very upset both with the US "failure" to launch a strike on the Assad regime in Syria and the US diplomatic push toward Iran. This same Fars News article doesn't name names, but refers to "two countries" providing financial support and "three countries" providing intelligence and equipment to them:

Commander of Iran's Border Guard Force General Hossein Zolfaqari accused certain regional and trans-regional states of providing financial and intelligence backup for the militant groups carrying out terrorist operations against the Iranian people.

"Based on the authentic intelligence that we have, terrorist grouplets are supported financially by two countries in the region and outside the region," Zolfaqari told reporters explaining Tehran's intelligence on the financial resources of the terrorists who killed the 14 Iranian border guards in the Southeastern Sistan and Balouchestan

province on early Saturday morning.

"Also, three countries in and outside the region are providing intelligence and technical equipment to the terrorist grouplets," he added.

Based on the usual accusations from Iran, the "two countries" reference would be the US and Israel and the third one joining them for "three countries" would be the UK.

One last tidbit should be considered here. Back in December of 2012, Fars News noted (the link is to a reposting of the article, but it looks like authentic Fars wording, note how the recitation of Jundallah terrorist strikes lines up with the Fars article cited today) that the UK had facilitated a meeting between top representatives of Jundallah and the MEK in London. The article also notes as an aside that a Jundallah figure had been given refuge in Saudi Arabia. This would suggest to me that Iran considers Saudi Arabia to be a backer of Jundallah and that they continue to monitor MEK despite the US taking them off the official list of terrorist organizations a few months before this article came out.

At any rate, an armed group capable of killing fourteen Iranian border agents, especially when Iran doesn't seem to be claiming that their agents were able to kill any of the attackers, sounds like a serious escalation of the firepower involved in these skirmishes on the Iran-Pakistan border. Especially given the assassination on January 11, 2012 following a smaller, but otherwise similar skirmish on January 1, we are left to wonder how many operatives may have gone into Iran while this battle took place and who their targets will be.

The timing of this attack also stands out as quite significant. On the very same weekend that Iran was seen to be removing posters with anti-American slogans in Tehran, this border skirmish forced Iran to re-run its usual descriptions of

the CIA training and funding Jundallah terrorists. Both the Israelis, who are upset over apparent diplomatic progress on US-Iranian nuclear negotiations, and the Saudis, who are upset over that and the lack of an attack on Syria, would seem to benefit from such an irritation of old wounds.

Today's New York Times also points out that two members of the Rigi family, which is prominent within Jundallah, were killed earlier this month in Iran, so that is another likely contributor to the timing of this attack.