



SYRIA CRISIS: AL-NUSRA PLEDGES ALLEGIANCE TO AL-QAEDA

April 11, 2013 BBC News reports: "The leader of the al-Nusra Front, a jihadist group fighting in Syria, has pledged allegiance to the leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani said the group's behaviour in Syria would not change as a result.

Al-Nusra claims to have carried out many suicide bombings and guerrilla attacks against state targets.

On Tuesday, al-Qaeda in Iraq announced a merger with al-Nusra, but Mr Jawlani said he had not been consulted on this. Al-Nusra has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the US.

Debates among Western leaders over whether to arm Syria's rebels have often raised the concern of weapons ending up in the hands of groups such as al-Nusra.

'The sons of al-Nusra Front pledge allegiance to Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri,' Mr Jawlani said in a recording released on Wednesday.

But Mr Jawlani said al-Nusra had not been consulted on the merger with al-Qaeda in Iraq and insisted his group would not change its stance in Syria..."



COMMANDER STRESSES IRAN'S SWIFT, CRUSHING RESPONSE TO THREATS

April 11, 2013 The Fars News Agency reported: "Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Force Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan reiterated Iran's full preparedness to confront any possible enemy threat and aggression, and said that the country's military forces will give a swift and decisive response to any enemy threat.

'No enemy can ever dare to invade the Islamic Republic of Iran,' Brigadier General Pourdastan said, addressing a ceremony here in Tehran on Thursday.

He noted that the Iranian Army can easily detect and foil all regional and transregional threats against the country.

In similar remarks earlier this year, Commander of the Iranian Army Major General Ataollah Salehi also underlined that the country's Armed Forces will give a swift and crushing response to any possible enemy threat and aggression.

In a message on the occasion of the 34th anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Salehi renewed Army's preparedness to defend the country and the Islamic Revolution.

Iran's Army will not linger a moment to preserve the integrity and honor of the precious achievements of the Islamic Revolution, the commander underlined..."

EGYPT'S CHRISTIANS LOOK AHEAD AFTER RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

April 10, 2013 VOA News reported: "The latest spasm of religious violence in Egypt is raising some concern about the fate of the approximately eight million Christians in the Islamist-led nation.

A few months ago, Cairo's Saint Mark's Cathedral was a place of joy - as Christians welcomed a new Coptic pope. Now the streets outside the main Coptic Church in Egypt are scattered with rubble, the remains of deadly fighting between those in the church and angry Muslims outside. This latest bout of religious violence has prompted some Christians to consider the relative calm of the past -- before the revolution and the rise of Islamist politicians.

A Coptic man near the cathedral grounds says this type of thing has never happened before, nor has the country ever reached this state of affairs. It will hurt not only Christians and Muslims, but the nation as a whole. 'This is wrong,' he says. 'We are one people and one country.'

Analysts say a tradition of tolerance is eroding as security diminishes, the economy tumbles and conservative strains of Islam gain strength..."

NORTH KOREA: FOREIGNERS SHOULD EVACUATE SOUTH KOREA

April 9, 2013 BBC News reported: "North Korea has warned foreigners in South Korea to take evacuation measures in case of war. This comes amid growing concern that the North may be about to launch a missile test.

Pyongyang has been making bellicose threats against South Korea, Japan and US bases in the region.

Japan has deployed defensive anti-missile batteries at three locations in Tokyo, to protect the capital's 30 million residents. US-made Patriot anti-missile systems have been deployed at the defence ministry and at two other military bases.

'The government is making utmost efforts to protect our people's lives and ensure their safety,' Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said.

'As North Korea keeps making provocative comments, Japan, co-operating with relevant countries, will do what we have to do,' he added. At the end of last week Japan sent two of its most modern warships to the Sea of Japan with orders to shoot down any missiles fired by North Korea towards the Japanese islands..."

SOUTH KOREA RAISES ALERT WITH NORTH TO 'VITAL THREAT'

April 10, 2013 BBC News reported: "South Korea has raised its alert level to 'vital threat' amid indications the North is preparing for a missile test. At least one ballistic missile with an estimated 3,000km (2,000-mile) range is fuelled and ready for launch, US and South Korean sources say.

Pyongyang has been making bellicose threats against South Korea, Japan and US bases in the region. The threats follow tough new UN sanctions imposed on North Korea last month after its third nuclear test.

Separately, an initial investigation by the South into a major cyber attack last month that affected a number of banks and broadcasters has said the North is to blame.

North Korea is believed to have completed preparations for a missile launch after it moved two Musudan missiles to its east coast, Yonhap news agency says.

In anticipation, the South Korea-US Combined Forces have raised their alert level to Watchcon 2, to increase surveillance monitoring, Yonhap quoted a senior military official as saying..."

AHMADINEJAD ORDERS AEOI TO SPEED UP NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES

April 9, 2013 The Fars News Agency reported: "Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appreciated the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI)'s experts and directors for their giant efforts and progress, and ordered them to accelerate the country's nuclear activities.



'I want you to speed up activities,' Ahmadinejad said, addressing the AEOI personnel in a ceremony held in Tehran on Tuesday to mark the 'National Day of the Nuclear Technology'.

He also blasted enemies for their attempts to prevent Iran's progress in the field of civilian nuclear technology, and said Iranians have resisted and acquired the nuclear technology, and now no one can take it away from the Iranian nation.



In April 2006, President Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had succeeded in completing the nuclear fuel production cycle at laboratory scale, which made Iran one of the world's 9 established nuclear states. Following the event, April 9 was named as the day of nuclear technology..."

IRAN: APOLOGY TO TURKEY SHOWS ISRAEL IS SOFT

April 7, 2013 Israel National News reported: "Iranian Ambassador to Turkey Alireza Bikdeli was quoted Saturday as saying that his country has learned a lesson from the Israeli apology to Turkey: 'In the past three years, Turkey, with its constant resistance, showed us we can take what we want to take from Israel,' Bikdeli told the Anadolu Agency.

The ambassador praised Turkey's role in hosting the negotiations with the P5+1 powers over Teheran's nuclear weapons program. While the latest round of talks has been taking place in Kazakhstan, the first round of talks was held in Turkey last April.

The bilateral relations between Turkey and Iran 'had a good effect on everything else,' he said. 'That is why we made sure to keep holding negotiations in Istanbul.'..."

AL-QAIDA TO SYRIAN REBELS: 'FORM ISLAMIC STATE'

April 7, 2013 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the head of al-Qaida, released an audio statement online through the organization's media branch, as-Sahab on Sunday calling for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate after the fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Such an Islamic state would encompass Arab countries, which have undergone revolutions, according to a report by the AP.

He also warned France that it was entering an unwinnable war in Mali.

'I warn France that it will meet in Mali, with God's permission, the same fate America met in Iraq and Afghanistan.'

'Let your fight be in the name of Allah and with the aim of establishing Allah's sharia [law] as the ruling system,' he said according to the Now Lebanon website. He called on the Syrian rebels to work to achieve an Islamic state, 'Do all that you can so that your holy war yields a jihadist Islamic state.'..."

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