



REBELS ATTACK CHRISTIAN VILLAGE IN SYRIA

September 5, 2013 The Fars News Agency reported: "Syria rebels from the al-Qaeda-linked faction al-Nusra Front attacked the Christian village of Maaloula in the Western part of the crisis-hit country, seizing control of a mountain-top hotel and using it to launch mortars against the surrounding area, forcing the locals to hide in a convent.

Al-Qaeda has accused Syria's Christian minority of being 'pro-Assad,' though as a practical matter they are simply averse to the rebels that are constantly attacking them.

Overall casualties from the attack are not yet clear, Antiwar.com reported.

Syria's rebels also attacked Mushirfeh, a town in Homs Province, killing nine people there. The identities of the victims were unclear, but much of the recent fighting in Homs has involved attacks on members of the nation's minorities..."

SYRIA'S JIHADIST OPPOSITION GROUPS A DILEMMA FOR US

September 5, 2013 Voice of America News reported: "The Obama administration is planning to step up its efforts to improve the fighting abilities of Syrian rebels trying to oust President Bashar al-Assad, according to Pentagon officials.

The officials say they are considering deploying special-forces teams drawn from the U.S. military to help train Free Syrian Army (FSA) brigades considered to be ideologically moderate.

The Pentagon officials, who spoke on background, say the U.S. military has pushed for a greater role in training and arming rebels, a task so far handled by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Military officials say the intelligence agency has been over cautious following President Obama's undertaking in June to provide weapons to rebel forces. Obama made that undertaking in response to the battlefield successes of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia militia that supports Assad..."

RUSSIA'S PRESIDENT PUTIN WARNS US OVER SYRIA ACTION

September 4, 2013 BBC News reported: "Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned the US and its allies against taking one-sided action in Syria.



He said any military strikes without UN approval would be 'an aggression'.

US President Barack Obama has called for punitive action in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack.

Mr. Putin said Russia did not rule out supporting a UN Security Council resolution authorising force, if it was proved 'beyond doubt' that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons.



On Tuesday evening, members of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations agreed on a draft resolution backing the use of military force. The measure, to be voted on next week, sets a time limit of 60 days on any operation.

According to the draft resolution, the operation would be restricted to a 'limited and tailored use of the United States Armed Forces against Syria', and prohibit the use of any ground forces.

The US has put the death toll from the alleged chemical attack on the outskirts of Damascus on 21 August at 1,429, though other countries and organisations have given lower figures..."

IRAN MOUNTS ADVANCED WEAPONS, RADARS ON NEW OVERHAULED WARSHIP

September 3, 2013 Fars News Agency reported: "A senior Iranian commander announced on Tuesday that the country's Navy has equipped its newly-overhauled warship, Lavan, with advanced weapons and radar systems to improve its performance and fire power.

'Some repairs and changes have been made to the body as well as the sailing, sonar and radar systems, weapons and information-gathering sensors of the warship,' Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari told reporters on the sidelines of a forum in the Northern city of Noshahr today.

'The warship needed an overhaul and equipment with the state of the art and novel technologies and therefore the warship's weapons have been modernized,' he added.

Sayyari said that the overhauled warship may be unveiled in the Sacred Defense Week (late September), commemorating Iranians' sacrifices during the 8 years of the Iraqi imposed war on Iran in 1980s.

Iran in June launched its overhauled and modernized destroyer named Bayandor in the Southern waters of the country in the presence of

Army Commander Major General Ataollah Salehi and Rear Admiral Sayyari..."

NETANYAHU: WE HAVE AN IRON DOME – AND AN IRON WILL

September 3, 2013 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu had a message for Israel's enemies on Tuesday as he dedicated a new national cyber center and high-tech park in the southern city of Be'er Sheva.

'We need to see to [our] security. This is our first obligation, as well as mine as Prime Minister, and this is a challenge for us because the reality around is challenging,' Netanyahu began.

'In the end, our lives depend on an iron wall. We are building an iron wall, an Iron Dome, and we have an iron will,' he declared.

'These are the things that give us the strength to defend ourselves and also to tell those who would attack us: it is not worth your while. These are the fundamentals that protect the State of Israel. Everything else is happening here now.'..."

RUSSIA SENDS SPY SHIP AS US PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE SYRIA STRIKE

September 2, 2013 The Guardian.co.uk reported: "Russia is sending a reconnaissance ship to the eastern Mediterranean as the US prepares for a possible military strike in Syria, it was reported on Monday.

The Priazovye left Russia's naval base in the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Sevastopol late on Sunday on a mission 'to gather current information in the area of the escalating conflict', said an unidentified military source quoted by the Interfax news agency. The defence ministry declined to comment.

Barack Obama said on Saturday he would seek congressional authorisation for punitive military action against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad after what the US says was a sarin gas attack that killed more than 1,400 people.

Russia says the US has not proved its case and that it believes the attack was staged by rebels to provoke intervention in the civil war.

Russia is one of Assad's biggest arms suppliers and has a naval maintenance facility in the Syrian port of Tartous. Moscow opposes any military intervention in Syria and has shielded Damascus from pressure at the UN Security Council..."

USS NIMITZ CARRIER GROUP REROUTED FOR POSSIBLE HELP WITH SYRIA



September 2, 2013 Reuters reported: "The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and other ships in its strike group are heading west toward the Red Sea to help support a limited U.S. strike on Syria, if needed, defense officials said on Sunday.

The Nimitz carrier strike group, which includes four destroyers and a cruiser, has no specific orders to move to the eastern Mediterranean at this point, but is moving west in the Arabian Sea so it can do so if asked. It was not immediately clear when the ships would enter the Red Sea, but they had not arrived by Sunday evening, said one official.

'It's about leveraging the assets to have them in place should the capabilities of the carrier strike group and the presence be needed,' said the official..."

ISRAEL DEPLOYS IRON DOME DEFENCE SYSTEM: NETANYAHU

August 29, 2013 SpaceDaily.com reported: "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said Israel deployed its Iron Dome missile defence system to bolster its security as the West weighed military strikes on neighbouring Syria.

But he echoed President Shimon Peres in insisting that Israel is not involved in Syria's civil war but will respond with all its might if attacked.

"We have decided to deploy Iron Dome and other interceptors," Netanyahu said, in a statement released by his office, ahead of holding security talks at the defence ministry.

"We are not involved in the war in Syria. But I repeat: if anyone tries to harm Israeli citizens, Tsahal (the Israeli army) will respond with force," Netanyahu said in other remarks broadcast by Israeli television.

His comments come as Britain and the United States laid out their case for punitive strikes on Syria over an alleged chemical attack last week that rights groups say killed hundreds. Earlier Peres said Israel will hit back if its security is at stake.

"Israel was not, and is not, involved in the Syrian fighting but if anyone tries to harm us we will respond with all our might," Peres was quoted as saying in a statement from his office.

"Israel has a strong army, modern and powerful, and a more advanced defence system than ever before," he added.

Army chief of staff Lieutenant General Benny Gantz said his forces were "ready for all scenarios," but added: "I hope we will not have to send them into action."

Peres said the situation in Syria, where a civil war that erupted in March 2011 has killed more than 100,000 people, "is not a local incident but a crime against humanity."..."

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