

Al Qaida claims Danish embassy blast

Contributed by Egypt News
Thursday, 05 June 2008

Denmark shared with Pakistani investigators video footage of the suicide car bombing against its embassy Thursday, while an Internet posting purportedly by al-Qaida claimed responsibility and threatened more attacks

The statement, signed by an al-Qaida commander in Afghanistan, said Monday's attack in Islamabad was carried out to fulfill the promise of Osama bin Laden to exact revenge over the reprinting in Danish papers of a cartoon of Islam's Prophet Muhammad wearing a bomb-shaped turban.

The attack killed six people, including a Danish citizen. It caused widespread destruction and demonstrated the vulnerability of the Pakistani capital to attack by Islamic extremists.

The authenticity of the statement, which was posted on a Web site frequently used by Islamic militants, could not be independently verified. It was signed by al-Qaida commander Mustafa Abu al-Yazeed and dated Tuesday.

Al-Yazeed warned that if Denmark fails to apologize for the cartoons more attacks will follow and Monday's blast will "only be the first drop of rain."

The attack is but a "warning to this infidel nation and whoever follows its example." Denmark "published the insulting drawings" and later "refused to apologize for publishing them, instead they repeated their act," the posting said.

It said the bombing was carried out by an al-Qaida martyr whose last will and testament will soon be made public, and thanked Pakistani jihadists for helping prepare and execute the plot.

Denmark officials have already said they suspect al-Qaida was behind the attack. Pakistani officials were not immediately available to comment on the purported al-Qaida claim of responsibility.

Ben Venzke of IntelCenter, a U.S. group which monitors al-Qaida messages, said al-Qaida could target embassies and diplomatic personnel, possibly in Pakistan, from other countries where the cartoons also were published.

Venzke said Norway, the U.S. and all European Union member countries, including Denmark, were most at risk.

In early 2006, a dozen Muhammad cartoons, originally published in a Danish newspaper, triggered fiery protests in Muslim countries when they were reprinted by a range of Western media, mostly in Europe. The drawing showing Muhammad in a bomb-shaped turban appeared again in Danish newspapers Feb. 13, after Danish police said they foiled an alleged plot to murder the cartoonist who drew it.

That has sparked more, mostly peaceful, protests by Muslims. Islamic law generally opposes any depiction of the prophet, even favorable, for fear it could lead to idolatry.

Monday's attack was the deadliest strike against Denmark since the publication of the cartoons. A 10-member Danish crisis management team is now in Pakistan to help probe the bombing and assess security for the Danish diplomatic mission in the leafy capital.

Spokeswoman Louise Brincker said the Danes have shared footage from a close circuit camera with Pakistani investigators, which shows the car used in the bombing arriving outside the embassy and exploding.

She said it is not possible to see the registration plates of the vehicle from the footage because of the camera angle.

Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller said Wednesday that the video also doesn't show who was inside the car.

Pakistani investigators have said the car was stolen and equipped with fake diplomatic plates to help gain access to the street, which is not barred to the general public but had high security.

Denmark's Intelligence and Security Service said Wednesday that preliminary information about the car indicated "major and long-term planning."

Al-Qaida are believed to have regrouped inside Pakistan's lawless border regions since the U.S.-led invasion that ousted their Taliban hosts in Afghanistan in 2001.

Pakistan's newly elected government is negotiating peace deals with militants along the Afghan border in an attempt to curb Islamic extremist violence inside Pakistan, but U.S. officials in particular are worried this will give militants greater freedom to attack Afghanistan and the West.

Also on Thursday, Pakistani police raided a suspected militant hideout in the northwestern city of Nowshera, triggering a shootout that wounded one police driver and one militant.

Local police chief Akhtar Ali Shah said an unspecified number of militants later managed to flee when police halted fire to avoid civilian casualties.

EGYPT NEWS