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Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council

NEWSLETTER



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Open Source News reporting Summary: This collection of open source information is offered for informational purposes only. It is not, and should not be, construed as official evaluated intelligence.

Chechen separatists allegedly to observe February ceasefire

According to the Kavkaz Center Web site (<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/>), Chechen separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov has called for a ceasefire in war-torn Chechnya during the month of February. The statement, originally signed on Jan. 14, 2005, calls for a cessation of all offensive operations in Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia as a sign of good will. The Web site also claims that Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev, whose group Riyadus Salikhin Martyrs' Brigade has claimed responsibility for several major terrorist attacks in Russia, intends to follow Maskhadov's ceasefire order, but has told his units to stop all offensive activities until only Feb. 22. There was no explanation for his choosing that date.



COMMENT:

The authenticity of these statements could not be confirmed, but the Kavkaz Center Web site has previously been seen as a mouthpiece for the Chechen separatist movement. One possible explanation for Maskhadov's alleged call for a ceasefire is that pro-Moscow security forces in Chechnya may be holding up to eight of Maskhadov's relatives hostage, including a sister and two brothers. Perhaps Maskhadov believes this sign of good will could lead to their release. The International Federation for Human Rights and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights published an open letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin in January, calling for Maskhadov's relatives to be released. Chechen security forces allegedly abducted them in December. Maskhadov, who was once the president of Chechnya during its de facto independence following the 1994-96 war, is high on Moscow's most-wanted list, along with Basayev, for links to various terrorist attacks. The most recent attack tied to Basayev and Maskhadov was the September hostage taking of an elementary school in Beslan, North Ossetia, which left 330 hostages dead, many of them children. Chechen rebels have carried out various attacks since 1999, when Russia resumed the war in Chechnya in response to a rebel incursion into neighboring Dagestan. In the past two years, Putin has attempted to establish a pro-Moscow government in Chechnya, including Chechnya's Deputy Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov. Kadyrov leads the Chechen security forces, which have been described as a band of thugs, responsible for kidnappings, killings and other crimes. It is possible that Russian officials are supporting the security forces' tactic of abducting terrorists' relatives as a means to put pressure on the rebels and prevent future attacks. Feeling the pressure, Maskhadov could be reacting with the ceasefire. But it remains

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to be seen whether it will take hold and have the desired effect on Moscow.

Related for reference

A face of future battle: Chechen fighter Shamil Basayev

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1207097/posts>

Beslan leader 'planning repeat'

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4234565.stm>

Also see: **The Chechen conflict** sidebar at the above URL

Update



Chechen Warlord promises more attacks

Just a day after Chechen media sources reported a one-month ceasefire announcement by rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov, a British television network broadcast an interview with another rebel leader, Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev. In the interview, which was filmed about three weeks ago, Basayev promises to launch more terrorist attacks in Russia like the September hostage siege at a school in Beslan, North Ossetia that left more than 300 people dead. Basayev said he is planning the attacks in order to show "the true face of the Russian regime," and to further his cause of driving Russian forces out of Chechnya. Authorities have linked Basayev to the Beslan siege and several other terrorist attacks, including many in the North Caucasus and Moscow.

COMMENT:

Basayev (pictured on the right) allegedly agreed to honor the February ceasefire called by Maskhadov, but only until Feb. 22. A report by the *BBC* pointed out that Feb. 23 is the anniversary of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's mass deportation of Chechens to Central Asia in 1944. Therefore, it is possible Basayev is planning an attack on that date, especially if Russia ignores the ceasefire call. The Russian government has reportedly dismissed Maskhadov's ceasefire declaration as a bluff.



Two provincial German towns emerging as unlikely center of Islamic extremism

The towering Ulm cathedral brought pilgrims for centuries to this town on the Bavarian border, but today security officials say a nondescript mosque in an old factory is the new magnet, drawing Islamic extremists around the country. Intelligence services have been watching the Multicultural House and those associated with it for years, saying they have had contacts with top terror suspects in Germany, including a former top lieutenant of Osama bin Laden. In the Jan. 12 raids, 700 police officers searched 60 mosques, homes and shops across Germany. Suspects included nationals of Germany, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Bulgaria; police said their activities included raising money, producing fake passports, and recruiting people for jihad, or holy war. The Ulm area operation focused on the mosque and an Islamic Information Center. The raids were part of a general crackdown on Islamic extremism in Germany that included the apprehension of three Ansar el Islam suspects alleged to have plotted to assassinate Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi when he visited Berlin in December, and the arrest of two others at the end of January on suspicion they belong to al-Qaida.

Full story: <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/news/archive/2005/02/01/international0342EST0436.DTL&type=golf>

U.S. warns of European terrorist attacks

A top anti-terrorism official at the U.S. State Department on Thursday warned Europeans to expect more

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attacks such as last year's train bombings in Madrid, saying dispersed and well-disguised terrorist networks are operating in Western countries. ``Unfortunately reality is that al-Qaida has proven itself resilient, despite our best efforts. It remains an active and dangerous opponent," Pope said. ``While less effective as an organization, al-Qaida seems to be becoming more powerful as an idea and inspiration." Western countries ``now face a future in which young persons, familiar with the West and raised in a tolerant and open society, may deliberately chose to brutally murder hundreds of their fellow citizens in furtherance of what they see as their duty toward a worldwide jihad," or holy war.

Full story: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,1280,-4777344,00.html>

Alert over Islamic terrorists who tried to kill bin Laden

An Islamic terrorist organisation considered more extreme than Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda has taken root in Britain because of lax asylum procedures, security experts claim today. The movement, Al-Takfir wa al-Hijra (excommunication and exile), has gradually built its presence in Europe in recent years through loose networks of imams and supporters, according to Jane's Intelligence Review. It is so extreme that it once tried to assassinate bin Laden and its members are thought to have aided last year's Madrid train atrocity. According to Jane's, western security agencies now respond more actively to the threat posed by Takfiri adherents, fearing that what has long been a support base for activities in other parts of the world may become an active terror group in Europe itself.

Full story:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/02/01/ntakf01.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/02/01/ixhome.html>

Related reporting

Al Takfir Wal Hijra

<http://www.rotten.com/library/history/terrorist-organizations/al-takfir-wal-hijra/>

Al-Qaeda's secret plan for Africa: Terrorize, Divide, Seize

The world has heard the sound of the African oil boom. So has al-Qaeda. The continent has more than 75.4 billion barrels of proven reserves, edging toward 10 percent of the world's total. Five large producers - Nigeria, Libya, Algeria, Egypt and Angola -top the list of African oil exporting countries. Lesser producers, such as Chad, are also in the mix. Sub-Sahara Africa supplies as much oil to the United States as Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda sees Africa as a prize well worth going after. It is a graveyard of failed states, of corrupt governments whose power seldom goes much beyond capital city shantytowns and of areas of Muslim radicalism. The problems of the region are opportunities for Al-Qaeda.

Full story: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200501311197.html>

Also see: *Relevant Links* sidebar at the above URL

Algeria crushes militant bomb-making unit

Algerian security forces have dismantled a bomb-making unit of the al Qaeda-aligned Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and killed four of its members. Security forces attacked late on Friday the GSPC's Al Tafjeer brigade, known for its bomb-making expertise and suspected of being behind numerous deadly attacks against authorities in northern Algeria.

Full story: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L06694487.htm>

Cutting funds key to cutting terror

The international community must step up the financial war on terrorism and choke off funding for

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extremist groups, U.S. Treasury Undersecretary John Taylor has told a gathering of finance ministers in London. "By breaking the financial backbone of terrorist groups and insurgents, we can encumber and thwart their short-term ambitions while rupturing and dismantling their long-term agendas," Taylor said in a dinner address Friday evening. "Choking off funds that aid terrorist efforts can lead to the ultimate ruin of terrorist organizations."

Full story:

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/apeurope_story.asp?category=1103&slug=Britain%20G%207%20Terrorism

U.S. tracks vulnerable to sabotage

In the first moments after a commuter train plowed into a sport utility vehicle parked on the tracks, some feared it was a terrorist act. The truth -- that the deadly wreck was caused by one man bent on suicide -- was at once reassuring and chilling. Chilling, because the disaster illustrated just how vulnerable the nation's passenger trains are. Security and railroad experts worry that the nation's 140,000 miles of track are extremely susceptible to sabotage, and say there is not much that can reasonably be done to protect the rails because the network is so vast and because submerging or enclosing track would be staggeringly expensive. Track security is "basically superficial," said David Heyman, director of the homeland security program at Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington. "Anyone who's determined can get to the tracks." New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Miami and other major U.S. cities have commuter railroads that accounted for 405 million passenger trips in 2003, according to the American Public Transportation Association. Amtrak accounted for an additional 24.6 million.

Full story: <http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/10767069.htm>

Related reporting

Suspects sought in railroad sabotage

<http://www.kstp.com/article/stories/S5980.html?cat=64>

States to focus on fusing threat information

As terrorist threats become more decentralized, state and local governments are switching their focus from external threats from organizations, such as Al Qaeda, to internal threats from individuals residing in the United States who might launch an attack because they are sympathetic to international terrorist ideology

Full story: http://www.washingtontechnology.com/news/1_1/daily_news/25470-1.html

Lone wolves

Who are we referring to when we talk about a lone wolf domestic terrorist? Someone like Tim McVeigh, who carried out the Oklahoma City bombing. U.S. authorities claim Rudolph was a lone wolf -- a domestic terrorist who largely worked independently. "It's not only Osama bin Laden out there, it is not only people with turbans who are capable of blowing you and your family up. It's Americans, people who are your neighbors, capable of doing things like this." Examples.....

Full story: <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/US/02/01/schuster.column/>

Snipers target border agents

Snipers working as "lookouts" for drug traffickers and illegal-alien smugglers are targeting U.S. Border

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Patrol agents from vantage points across the U.S.-Mexico border. Within the past week, agents assigned to the Douglas station in Arizona's southeastern corner -- one of the nation's busiest illegal-entry points -- have been fired at on at least six occasions, according to federal authorities, and although none of the officers was injured, several reported near-misses. Since Oct. 1, agents assigned to the Tucson sector, which includes the border stations at Douglas, Naco and Nogales in the highest alien- and drug-trafficking corridor in the country, have been assaulted 80 times, nine involving shootings. Responsible for a 260-mile section of the Arizona-Mexico border, the Tucson agents are being assaulted at a rate of two every three days in that period, more than doubling last year's total.

Full story: http://www.wpherald.com/North_America/storyview.php?StoryID=20050203-022704-5330r

Non-Mexican illegal aliens a U.S. security headache

Tens of thousands of people from countries other than Mexico illegally crossed the Mexican border into the United States last year, creating a growing security headache for U.S. authorities. Mexicans caught by U.S. border patrols trying to enter the country illegally are usually immediately returned to their native land. But Mexico accepts only Mexicans, so any non-Mexicans are checked against government watch lists as a potential security or criminal threat. If their names do not appear, many are released on their own recognizance and told to appear at a deportation hearing often months in the future. The majority fail to show up for the hearing and are never seen again.

Full story: <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/mexico/tijuana/20050204-0912-security-border.html>

Terrorist hoax exposes little-known Chinese smuggling route

That quiet life was jolted last month when a phony tipster in Mexicali said he smuggled Chinese nationals across the border who were preparing a terrorist attack in Boston. The FBI declared a false alarm, but the episode led the Department of Homeland Security to begin an investigation of networks that sneak Chinese immigrants into the United States. Mexicali is part of an elaborate smuggling route that starts in China and ends in U.S. coastal cities, where Chinese find work at restaurants, garment shops and other places where they blend in easily, U.S. law enforcement officials say. Calexico is one of the largest points of entry for Chinese immigrant smugglers, along with Los Angeles, New York and Seattle.

Full story:

<http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050205/APN/502050804&cachetime=3&template=dateline>

Cleric, wife face additional charges

Federal prosecutors filed additional criminal charges yesterday against Imam Shamsud-din Ali and his wife, Faridah, who go on trial this spring in a City Hall corruption case. Originally filed in September, the racketeering indictment against the politically prominent Muslim cleric was expanded to include a mortgage-fraud charge against Ali's wife. It said Faridah Ali used false pay stubs and W-2 forms to obtain a \$200,000 home-equity line of credit in 2001. The indictment alleges that Ali and his wife headed a racketeering enterprise that operated out of their West Philadelphia mosque and that engaged in extortion and corruption with help from city officials in some cases. A deputy mayor and a top aide to a city councilwoman - both of whom have since resigned - also are named in the indictment.

Full story: <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/10803377.htm?1c>

Note:

The latest superseding indictment, along with wiretap transcripts and other filings, are available at:

http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/special_packages/fbiprobe/

Identity theft focus of National Consumer Protection Week 2005

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The Federal Trade Commission has launched the seventh annual National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), February 6-12, 2005, in cooperation with federal, state and local agencies, and national advocacy organizations committed to consumer protection and education. This year's theme, "Identity Theft: When Fact Becomes Fiction," focuses on minimizing the risk of identity theft and taking fast action if an identity thief strikes. The NCPW Web site, <http://www.consumer.gov/ncpw/>, contains helpful information for consumers and businesses on a variety of topics, including "phishing" scams, telecommunications fraud, Internet fraud, and the theft of printed documents with personal information, as well as protecting employees from identity theft in the workplace. The site also contains valuable consumer information on the steps to take if you become a victim.

Full story: <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2005/02/ncpw05.htm>

Identity thieves can lurk at Wi-Fi spots

Coffee shop Web surfers beware: An *evil twin* may be lurking near your favorite wireless hotspot. Thieves are using wireless devices to impersonate legitimate Internet access points to steal credit card numbers and other personal information, security experts warn.

Full story: http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2005-02-06-evil-twin-usat_x.htm

Also see 'Wireless Center' sidebar at the above URL

Related for reference

What Is Wi-Fi

<http://www.darwinmag.com/learn/curve/column.html?ArticleID=673>

Will Wi-Fi Revolutionize the Phone?

<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/fastforward/0,15704,465157,00.html>

Wi-Fi for Dummies

<http://slate.msn.com/id/2084046/>

Hold the Phone, VOIP Isn't Safe

<http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,66512,00.html>

Featured Internet Site

The logo for MEMRI (The Middle East Media Research Institute) features the acronym "MEMRI" in a large, white, serif font, set against a dark red rectangular background.

The Middle East Media Research Institute

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) explores the Middle East through the region's media. MEMRI bridges the language gap which exists between the West and the Middle East, providing timely translations of Arabic, Farsi, and Hebrew media, as well as original analysis of political, ideological, intellectual, social, cultural, and religious trends in the Middle East.

<http://www.memri.org/index.html>

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