



Written by on October 27, 2008

Syria Protests Reported U.S. Raid

Sana, Syria's official news agency, reported that "four American helicopters violated Syrian airspace around 1645 (4:45 pm) local time on Sunday."

"This is an outrageous raid which is against international law. It is a terrible crime. I don't know the political meaning of it. We are expecting clarifications from the Americans," Syria's ambassador to England, Sami al-Khiyami told Reuters news service in London.

There has been no official comment from either the U.S. military or the White House and a U.S. military spokeswoman in Baghdad told BBC News that the military was "in the process of investigating" the incident.

Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said his government was "in contact with the American side about reports regarding the attack along the frontier with Syria," explaining that the attacked area "is a theater of insurgent activities against Iraq using Syria as a launch pad."

Syria's press attaché in London, Jihad Makdissi, told the BBC the incident was "an outrageous crime and an act of aggression," and stated: "If [the United States has] any proof of any insurgency, instead of applying the law of the jungle and penetrating, unprovoked, a sovereign country, they should come to the Syrians first and share this information."

An unnamed U.S. military official told the Associated Press that special forces had targeted al-Qaeda linked militants moving across the border, and stated, bluntly: "We are taking matters into our own hands."

Marine Major General John Kelly, whose area of responsibility includes western Iraq, said last week that U.S. and Iraqi security measures had reduced the flow of militant attackers coming across the border from Syria. He told reporters: "The Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi intelligence forces feel that al Qaeda operatives and others operate, live pretty openly on the Syrian side, and periodically we know that they try to come across." The general cited a May 2 raid that killed 11 Iraqi army recruits.

Syrian Interior Minister Bassam Abdel Majeed said that Syria "refuses to be a launching pad for threats against Iraq." Khiyami told Reuters that Syrian authorities were still awaiting word on the raid from the Americans before deciding how to respond and whether to complain to the UN Security Council. He stated: "We are expecting clarifications. Depending what they give as reasons we will see what to do next.... They killed civilians. They have to admit their mistake and they have to compensate (the people) for it."

The *New York Times* reported on October 27 that Iran had joined Syria in condemning what they described as "an attack by four United States helicopters on the Syrian side of the border with Iraq on





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Sunday that they said killed eight people." The *Times* quoted Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi, who told reporters: "Iran condemns in strongest terms any form of aggression or violation of the states' territorial integrity which leads to the death of innocent civilians."

The *Times* added that the United States had confirmed that a special operations mission took place in the area, but that a senior military official gave no further details.



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