

Thursday, 22 October 2009

## Pakistan denies hosting Iranian rebel group chief Iran cracks down on Jundallah inside Pakistan



Jundallah claimed responsibility for the attack on the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (File)

Tehran (Agencies)

Iranian Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar will visit Pakistan on Friday to discuss ways of cracking down on a Sunni rebel group behind a deadly attack on the elite Revolutionary Guards.

State television reported late on Thursday that Najjar will head a large security delegation to Islamabad for talks with his Pakistani counterpart and other top officials on means of fighting Jundallah.

"Mostafa Mohammad Najjar will meet Pakistani officials, namely the interior minister, about the recent terrorist attack and ways of fighting against the terrorist group," an interior ministry spokesman, Mehdi Azar Makan, said.

Iran on Tuesday turned up the heat on Pakistan saying that Jundallah (Soldiers of God) which claimed responsibility for the Oct. 18 suicide bombing, is based on its territory. Islamabad denied the allegations.

Top commanders of the Revolutionary Guards were among 42 people killed in the attack -- the deadliest assault in recent years on Iran's prestigious military force which was set up after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Tehran says that Jundallah chief Abdolmalek Rigi is based in Pakistan and has asked Islamabad to hand him over.

However, Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Basit has denied that Rigi is in the country and said the attack was aimed at undermining ties between Islamabad and Tehran.

"We don't know the whereabouts of Rigi," Basit said. "As Interior Minister Rehman Malik said, Rigi is not in Pakistan."

A Jundallah statement on the Internet said the aim of Sunday's operation was to avenge "the wounds of the Baluch people which have been bleeding for years without end."

Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province, which shares a border with both Iran and Afghanistan, is also rife with Islamist militancy, Sunni-Shiite sectarian violence and a regional Baluch insurgency.