ISIS confirms Baghdadi death, names successor


CAIRO (Reuters) – Islamic State confirmed on Thursday that its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a weekend raid by U.S. special forces in northwestern Syria, and vowed revenge against the United States.

The raid came in response to a weekend attack by U.S.-backed forces on the city of Palmyra, upending the death of the Islamic State leader and plunging the group into a crisis of leadership.

A former senior figure in the rival Islamist group al Qaeda in Iraq, he is also known as Mohamed Said Abdelrahman al-Mawla.

Analysts have also named the Saudi Abu Abdullah al-Jizrawi and Abdullah Qaradash, an Iraqi and one of Baghdadi’s right-hand men, as potential successors along with the Tunisian Abu Othman al-Tunisi.

An Islamic State spokesperson warned the United States in the tape to “beware vengeance (against) their nation and their brethren of infidels and apostates”.

Baghdadi’s death is likely to cause Islamic State to splinter, leaving whoever emerges as its new leader with the task of pulling the group back together as a fighting force, according to analysts.

Whether the loss of its leader will itself affect the group’s capabilities is open to debate. Even if it does face difficulties in the transition, the underlying ideology and the sectarian hatred it promoted remain attractive to many, analysts say.

Spain likely to host UN climate summit

SANTIAGO/MADRID (Reuters) - Spain will likely host the United Nations’ COP25 climate change summit in Madrid, following Chile’s withdrawal as host amid raging street protests in the South American nation, a Spanish government source said.

The Spanish government said in a statement earlier on Thursday that Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was ready to do what was needed to host the summit in Madrid.

A formal decision on hosting the summit in Madrid will be taken on Monday, the source said on Thursday.

“It is nearly done, we have every chance of getting it,” the source said.

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera said Sanchez had offered to host the summit in Spain on the same days as previously scheduled, between Dec. 2 and Dec. 13.

“I hope that this generous offer from the president of Spain... represents a solution,” Pinera said. “We have shared this information with the leading authorities at the United Nations.”

The so-called Conference of the Parties is the formal meeting of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

A spokesman earlier on Thursday said the UNFCCC was waiting to receive an official letter from Spain offering to host the talks and would then organize a meeting to assess the offer.

Chile’s withdrawal is the first time that a nation has pulled out of hosting the conference with just a month to go.

Violent riots in recent days have left large parts of capital Santiago shut down, with its vital metro transport system suffering nearly $400 million in damage.