

3 Iraqi refugees arrested in Germany over attack plot

Wed, 2019-01-30 21:35

BERLIN: German authorities arrested three Iraqi refugees on Wednesday on allegations they were planning an extremist bombing attack, and searched properties in three states in connection with their investigation.

Federal prosecutors said Shahin F. and Hersh F., both 23, and Rauf S., 36, were taken into custody in an early morning raid by a police SWAT team in the area of Dithmarschen, near the border with Denmark.

The suspects, who had refugee status in Germany, had been under surveillance for some time by a task force of around 200 investigators, said Holger Muench, the head of Germany's federal police.

The case shows that the threat of radical terrorism is still present, Muench told reporters.

It was not immediately clear when the suspects came to Germany.

More than 1 million asylum-seekers entered Germany in 2015-16, most from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The involvement of several asylum-seekers in extremist attacks or plots has helped boost support for the anti-migrant Alternative for Germany party.

Searches were carried out at other residences in northern and southwestern Germany of people linked to the three main suspects but not currently to the bomb plot.

The two younger men are suspected of preparing a bomb attack and violating weapons laws, and the older one is alleged to have aided them. Their last names were not given in line with German privacy laws.

The men appear to have been in the early stages of planning, said Frauke Koehler, a spokeswoman for the Federal Prosecutors Office.

"We believe that Shahin F. and Hersh F. were firmly committed to carrying out an attack," she told reporters. "But ... according to our information the concrete target and timing of the attack weren't determined yet."

Prosecutors allege the two men decided in late 2018 to carry out an attack motivated by extremism in Germany. There are indications that they sympathized with Daesh, but Koehler said there was no evidence so far the men were members of, or directed by, the group.

In December, Shahin F. downloaded "various instructions" on how to build a bomb, and ordered a detonator from a contact person in Britain, prosecutors said. Its delivery, however, was stopped by British law enforcement agencies.

At the same time, the two carried out tests using around 250 grams of gunpowder extracted from New Year's fireworks, and asked Rauf S. to procure a firearm, prosecutors said.

He is alleged to have contacted Walid Khaled Y.Y., also an Iraqi, who offered them a Russian semi-automatic Makarov 9mm pistol, prosecutors said. But the seller wanted at least €1,200 (\$1,370) for the weapon, which was considered too expensive so it was not purchased.

Y.Y.'s home in the Schwerin area was searched as part of Wednesday's operation, and he is being investigated for alleged weapons and drug violations, prosecutors in the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania told The Associated Press.

In preparation for the possibility of using a vehicle in the attack, Shahin F. started taking driving lessons, federal prosecutors said. All three appear before federal judges late on Wednesday to decide whether they should be kept in custody while the investigation continues.

Koehler said authorities received a tip about the alleged plot in late 2018 from Germany's domestic intelligence service, but did not say how the agency started tracking the suspects.

In the only mass casualty extremist attack in Germany, Tunisian asylum-seeker Anis Amri hijacked a truck in 2016 and drove it into a crowded Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and wounding dozens. Daesh later claimed responsibility.

Since that attack, Muench said police had foiled seven planned attacks.



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Iraqi charged with rape, murder in Germany's 'Susanna case' Four dead in terrorist attacks on Iraqi police convoys

[Ethiopian Israelis rally in Tel Aviv against police violence](#)

Author:

AP

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Thu, 2019-01-31 (All day)

JERUSALEM: Thousands of Ethiopian-Israelis are protesting in Tel Aviv against alleged police brutality after an officer killed an Ethiopian man two weeks ago.

Demonstrators blocked a major highway in Tel Aviv on Wednesday and paraded through major avenues of the city protesting what they consider to be systemic police mistreatment of the minority group. They carried signs saying "police are killing Beita Yisrael," a Hebrew term for the Ethiopian Jewish community.

Earlier this month, a policeman shot dead 24-year-old Yehuda Biadga, a mentally distressed man wielding a knife, in the Tel Aviv suburb of Bat Yam. Israel's Justice Ministry is investigating the incident.

Biadga's family accused police of excessive force, and protest organizers called the incident "the straw that broke the camel's back" after years of perceived discrimination by Israeli authorities.

Israel's Ethiopian community now numbers around 140,000 people, including more than 50,000 born in the Jewish state.

Most of them are descendants of communities cut off from the Jewish world for centuries, and were belatedly recognized as Jews by Israeli religious authorities.

The community has consistently alleged institutionalized racism in recent years.



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Ethiopian-Israelis decry family separation as discriminatory
Palestinians say Israel removing witnesses by ejecting Hebron monitors

[Iranian-made Houthi drone intercepted over Saudi Arabia](#)

Wed, 2019-01-30 19:17

RIYADH: Arab coalition forces on Wednesday intercepted and destroyed an Iranian-made drone used by Houthis over Abha in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Royal Air Force's defense system caught the drone, which was heading for the southern city, spokesman Col. Turki Al-Maliki said Wednesday.

After specialists examined the debris of the device, it was found to be a Houthi drone built using Iranian specifications.

Al-Maliki warned the Iranian-backed Houthi militia “in the strongest terms” against targeting civilians and civilian targets. He added that the coalition would take any measures in accordance with international humanitarian law to deter their threat.

This latest interception comes after a drone attack earlier this month on a military parade at Al-Anad air base in Yemen’s government-held Lahij province killed at least seven people. The dead included high-ranking Yemeni intelligence official Brig. Gen. Saleh Tamah.

In December, the coalition destroyed a drone and its launch pad at Sanaa International Airport. The coalition said the drone was in the preparation stage for its launch before it was destroyed.

The drone interception came on the same day that the Arab coalition freed and returned seven Houthi prisoners back to Yemen.



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Arab coalition targets Yemen’s Houthi drone capabilities in Sanaa
Houthi militants involved in Al-Anad drone attack captured: Yemen Ministry of

Militant group admits attack on Iranian police station

Author:

Tue, 2019-01-29 23:19

TEHRAN: A double-bombing lightly wounded three police in the southeastern city of Zahedan on Tuesday.

Gen. Mohammad Ghanbari, the provincial police chief, told the official IRNA news agency that the second bomb went off as police raced to the scene of the first explosion. He says the bombs were handmade and that police are investigating.

Jaish Al-Adl, a militant group, claimed responsibility for the explosions. The group said it had targeted a police station with “two strong bombs”, damaging a police car and a police motorcycle.

Iranian officials said the explosions were caused by percussion grenades, and left three police officers with minor injuries.

Zahedan is the capital of Sistan-Baluchistan province, which has seen past attacks by Baluch separatists and drug traffickers.

Last month a suicide car bomber struck a police headquarters in the port city of Chabahar, also in Sistan -Baluchistan, killing at least two police and wounding 42 other people.

*With AP and Reuters



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Iran holds infantry drill involving 12,000 troops
US sanctions Iranian militias for turning refugees into 'cannon fodder'

[Daesh fighters pinned in tiny Syria enclave with families](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-01-29 22:00

QAMISHLI, SYRIA: Daesh fighters in eastern Syria are pinned down in a final tiny pocket with their wives and children, forcing a US-backed militia to slow its advance to protect civilians, the militia said on Tuesday.

An aid agency said separately that 10,000 civilians had fled the enclave since last week and were arriving hungry and desperate at a camp.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which have been backed by 2,000 US troops and air support, are preparing for a final showdown with Daesh in

eastern Syria after helping to drive the fighters from the towns and cities that once formed the group's self-proclaimed caliphate.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali said Daesh fighters were now confined to a pocket of just 5-6 square km (around 2 square miles) by the Euphrates River. The presence of their wives and children meant the US-backed militia could not launch an all-out storm of it, and was using slower, more precise tactics instead.

"There are thousands of Daesh families there. They are civilians at the end of the day," Bali told Reuters. "We cannot storm the area or put any child's life in danger."

The SDF had refused an offer from the militants via mediators to surrender the territory in return for safe passage out, Bali said.

Clashes had slowed because of the presence of the civilians, and "precise operations" were taking more time. "Calm prevails on the frontlines but there is a state of caution and waiting."

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) charity said it was helping tend to a sudden influx of more than 10,000 people, almost all women, children and elderly, who had arrived at a camp in northeast Syria since last week.

Most were exhausted, extremely hungry, and thirsty as they fled Daesh territory, the global aid agency said. Many arrived barefoot. The UN confirmed that 12 young children had died after reaching the Al-Hol camp or on the dangerous journey there, the IRC added on Tuesday.

The SDF, spearheaded by the Kurdish YPG militia, has seized much of north and east Syria with US help. It has been battling Daesh remnants near the Iraqi border for months.

Last month, US President Donald Trump declared that Daesh had been defeated and announced the abrupt withdrawal of the US troops, over objections of top advisers including Defense Secretary Jim Mattis who quit in protest.

The SDF vowed to escalate its operations against Daesh this month after a bomb attack killed several people including two US soldiers in northern Syria. SDF officials have warned of a Daesh revival if Washington withdraws.

Kurdish leaders also fear a US pullout would give Turkey, which sees the YPG as a threat on its border, the chance to mount a new assault. Washington has since said it will make sure its allies are protected when it leaves.



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Scores of civilians, fighters depart Daesh stronghold in SyriaDaesh in Syria boxed in to shrinking pocket