

Militancy/Terrorism



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Europe Alert (UPDATE): Hamas plot aimed to target Israeli Embassy in Stockholm, per January 13 reports; to elevate concerns over mass-casualty attacks

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Current Situation

- On January 13, Israel's Prime Minister's Office (PMO) released new details regarding the Hamas terrorist plot targeting Jewish institutions in Europe, thwarted on December 14, 2023. The ongoing investigation, which involves the Mossad, Shin Bet, and international law enforcement agencies, confirmed that at least one target involved the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden. The Swedish Foreign Ministry has yet to comment.
- Moreover, Israel's PMO said the investigation uncovered details on "theaters of operation" as well as those involved in carrying out attacks - from Hamas commanders in Lebanon to the actual attackers. Details also revealed that the network planned to buy unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and utilize criminal organizations in Europe to support the attacks.
- On January 12, Danish police said that the seven individuals arrested in December suspected of involvement in the terrorist plot had links to Hamas - including one suspect originally from Malmö, Sweden. At least one suspect was also arrested in the Netherlands and three others in Germany on December 14, with German officials immediately confirming the involvement of Hamas operatives.

- Danish Justice Minister Peter Hummelgaard said that the connections to Hamas “confirm that the threat against Denmark is serious.” Danish authorities also confirmed suspected links to the gang “Loyal to Familia” (LTF) previously in December.

Assessments & Forecast

1. While Denmark did not initially link the plot to Hamas, the recent statement adds credibility to Israel’s PMO’s claims. That said, considering that at the time of the arrests, Danish Prime Minister Mette Fredriksen confirmed the plot concerned the Israel-Hamas conflict, coupled with German authorities confirming Hamas’ involvement, this was not unexpected. However, while Denmark initially claimed the arrests on Danish soil were separate from those in Germany, these developments support claims that Hamas has extensive infrastructure within Europe – including financing, weapons stocks, and recruitment.
2. Moreover, while the targeting of the Israeli Embassy is in line with recent attack plots, given the elevated threat posed to Israeli and Jewish entities – especially amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict – the fact that the embassy in Stockholm was targeted reflects Sweden’s status as a priority target for Islamist attacks. This is also evidenced by the October 16 Islamist shooting attack in Brussels, Belgium, in which two Swedish nationals were targeted and killed in response to the Quran burnings in 2023.
3. Moreover, while the attack plot likely involved additional targets, the target in Sweden is indicative of the continued presence of Hamas members and sympathizers in the country. This is especially true for Malmo, where authorities have previously voiced concerns over Hamas-linked individuals – in addition to at least one confirmed Malmo resident involved in the plot.
4. While Danish authorities confirmed links to LTF, the plot likely also involved organized criminal networks in Sweden. Indeed, organized crime in Sweden has resulted in an influx of weapons trafficked primarily from Eastern Europe, including hand grenades and assault rifles. Further, many gangs predominantly recruit from immigrant communities, which also face high levels of Islamist radicalization, increasing the potential for Islamists to gain access to weapons.
5. **FORECAST:** These factors will exacerbate already elevated concerns over a multi-pronged Islamist terrorist attack manifesting in Europe, as it points to existing capabilities of organized terrorist networks in the region. This is especially relevant to security measures at large-scale events, including the World Economic Forum in Davos scheduled for January 15-19, and the Summer Paris Olympics.
6. **FORECAST:** That said, based on precedent, lone actors continue to pose the greatest threat, given that such plots are less likely to be detected by authorities – even with bolstered transnational counter-terrorism operations. While previous attacks have been carried out using rudimentary tactics, especially bladed weapons, the organized crime-terror nexus increases the likelihood of actors gaining access to firearms. Should a shooting attack take place, this would increase the number of casualties.
7. **FORECAST:** While Sweden is expected to feature heavily in attack plots, as well as successful attacks, going forward, the threat posed to Israeli and Jewish entities regionwide is especially high. While the potential for a successful attack on Israeli diplomatic missions is low, given extensive security measures, synagogues, Jewish community centers and schools, and other entities associated with Israel are at higher risk.

Recommendations

1. Those operating or residing in Europe on January 15 and in the coming weeks are advised to maintain heightened vigilance of the increased threat of potential attacks by extremists regionwide, especially during the holiday period.
2. Maintain heightened vigilance for potential attacks near Israeli embassies, synagogues, Jewish establishments, festive events, transportation hubs, religious sites, and public places with large

crowds due to the potential for attacks.

3. Alert authorities immediately upon witnessing suspicious items or behavior.
4. If a potential stabbing, shooting, explosion, or similar incident manifests, leave the area immediately if possible, or take shelter at a secure location.
5. Jewish and Israeli individuals and organizations are advised to be conscious of their surroundings and activity around any residences, places of work, or community centers. Consider keeping a low profile and limiting the wearing or presenting of overt signs or symbols associated with Judaism or Israel. Those that wear the traditional head covering (kippah), are advised to consider wearing an additional head covering, such as a baseball cap.
6. Public, private, and third-sector organizations are advised to increase awareness of threats on social media using threat monitoring services. Increased awareness of an organization's political footprint and perceptions from online fringe groups can help uncover potential violent actors and plots before they occur.
7. For further questions and risk assessments, please contact intel@max-security.com.