

Terror Plot Emerges as Secret Service Game

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It was announced as a terror plot busted. German police had captured three young Muslim men in the small village Medebach-Oberschledor, some 450 km southwest of Berlin Sep. 4 in 2007. The police declared they had seized 730 kilograms of hydrogen peroxide, enough to make 550 kg of explosives.

The three men, and a fourth, who was captured a year later in Turkey, wanted to bomb U.S. military and other facilities in Germany, and to kill "as many U.S. soldiers as possible," one of the accused later confessed.

The four men told court their plans were in retaliation against the U.S. war on 'Islamic terrorism', especially the abuse of hundreds of Muslims detained at Guantanamo prison. German authorities and the media dubbed the four men 'the Sauerland group', in reference to the region where they were captured.

The Sauerland group were declared to be members of the Islamic Jihad Union, an alleged terrorist organisation based in Uzbekistan.

Almost two years later, the case is before the higher regional court in Duesseldorf, some 460 km southwest of Berlin, and should come to a close early 2010.

But now, the case has ceased to be "the serious terrorist threat" it was called. It is now a mysterious puzzle of secret service games, prosecutors' alarmism spread by the media, and basic failures of justice.

The supposedly dangerous group members have emerged as no more than some muddle-heads. They had no links whatsoever to international Islamic terror groups.

"No Islamic chief villain...in Pakistan or somewhere else influenced the group," says Hans Leyendecker, one of Germany's top investigative journalists. "Its members are dumb, narrow-minded young men who hate the U.S."

Moreover, the fifth member of the group, yet to be captured, has been described as a Turkish national known only as Mevlut K. He now appears as an informer of the Turkish national intelligence organisation (MIT, after its Turkish name). He was the key figure in the plot, according to confessions by other members of the Sauerland group.

"Without Mevlut, we would not have been able to go as far with the preparations as we did," Attila Selek, one of the accused, told the court. 'K' had procured 26 fuses for the bombs the group was supposed to make, Selek said. Only, the fuses were useless. German police investigations showed that all but two were too humid to work.

Fritz Gelowicz, another member of the terrorist group, said the four men were informed of K's links with the MIT. "We knew that Mevlut had links with several secret services," Gelowicz told the court. "We thought that these links were good for us."

K apparently did not hide his links to the Turkish secret service. On at least one occasion K told the group they were being monitored by the German security agencies. "Then he told me he was stealing this information from secret services," Selek told the court.

Despite warnings that the German police were constantly informed of their actions, the four men continued their preparations until they were captured.

Numerous sources have confirmed that the German foreign intelligence service Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) knew in 2004 that Mevlut K worked for the MIT. That year, the sources said, the MIT proposed to the BND that K be infiltrated into Islam movements in Germany. The BND reportedly rejected the Turkish plan.

Despite the confessions about K's involvement, German justice failed to order his capture for a long time. Mevlut K. is believed to be living in Turkey.

German authorities only issued an international warrant against Mevlut K. Aug. 13, several weeks after depositions by the other four members of the group had been widely circulated.

The Sauerland group could have been "an orchestration to make believe that a huge terrorist threat" was looming over U.S. military facilities in Germany, says Rene Hellig, leading commentator with the Neues Deutschland daily.

Former British ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray calls it a fake case orchestrated by Uzbek security services.

"I should make plain that regrettably it is a fact that there are those who commit violence, motivated by a fanatic version of their faith," Murray wrote in his personal blog. "Sadly the appalling aggression of the U.S. government and allied war policy has made such reaction much more frequent. They may or may not have been planning to commit explosions. But if they were, the question is who was really pulling their strings, and why?"

Murray says there is no evidence of the existence of Islamic Jihad Union, alleged to have been directing the Sauerland group, other than that given by Uzbek security services. "There are, for example, no communications intercepts between senior terrorists referring to themselves as the Islamic Jihad Union," he said.

Murray said the planned attacks the Uzbekistan government attributed to the group since the spring of 2004 "are in fact largely fake and almost certainly the work of the Uzbek security services, from my investigations on the spot at the time."

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