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The "mixture of Germans and Arabs" killed in a CIA drone strike in northwest Paki...

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'Mixture of Germans and Arabs' killed by CIA drone strike in rugged border area

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NBC News and news services
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ISLAMABAD — The "mixture of Germans and Arabs" killed in a CIA drone strike in northwest Pakistan provides further evidence that jihadists with European passports are training for plots against the West, a senior western counterterrorism official told NBC News on Tuesday.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said that western officials still have no hard evidence to back up Pakistani claims that the militants killed in the missile attack were part of one of the suspected plots that led to last weekend's State Department terror alert.

But the official said that the presence of German nationals in the region bolstered concerns that al-Qaida and its affiliates were seeking to use European passport holders to mount attacks.

Pakistani officials have variously claimed that five to eight Germans were killed in Monday's strike at a rented home in Mir Ali in North Waziristan. The area is a stronghold of the Haqqani network, a militant group aligned with al-Qaida that has been a major target of the CIA's escalating campaign.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a security official told NBC News that several German nationals, who were associated with militants, had been living in the house.

"Five of them were confirmed to be German nationals, having lived there for some time," the official said on Monday.

However, the official did not provide further information about identity of the German nationals.

 **Video: Drone strike kills German militants in Pakistan** (on this page)

He said local tribesman Sher Maula Khan owned the house and had rented it to the Germans.

NBC News reported that Khan was caught by Pakistani security agencies in July this year along with his younger daughter for allegedly helping German national Rami Mackenzie, 27, cross into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province from North Waziristan.

He remains in the custody of the security agencies.

One Pakistani official told NBC on Tuesday that the Germans killed were among a group that traveled from Hamburg with Ahmed Sidiqi, a German of Pakistani origin who was captured by the U.S. over the summer.

Sidiqi has since provided information about a planned attack in Europe involving multiple public targets along the lines of the Mumbai attack in November 2008.

A U.S. official declined comment on the matter.

'Concrete evidence'

The German nationals were in the rugged Pakistan border area where a cell of Germans and Britons [at the heart of the U.S. terror alert for Europe](#) — a plot U.S. officials link to al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden — were believed to be hiding, the Associated Press reported.

The attack, part of a recent spike in American drone strikes on Pakistan, came as Germany said it has "concrete evidence" that at least 70 Germans have undergone paramilitary training in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and about a third have returned to Germany.

However, tribespeople and political officials in North Waziristan denied that German nationals has been killed in the missile strikes.

A local political official, who requested anonymity, told NBC News that all the eight men killed were local tribal militants who were having their dinner at the time of the attack.

Authorities across Europe have heightened security at airports and other travel hubs as well as at main tourist attractions following the U.S. warning of an al-Qaida-linked terror plot targeting London, Paris, Berlin and other European capitals.

The terror cell said to be behind the Europe plot — eight Germans and a Briton — were believed to have been in hiding in the region, the Associated Press reported. A second Briton was killed in a U.S. strike last month.

Germany's ARD public television cited unnamed sources Tuesday as saying that four of the Germans killed in the missile attack were of Turkish descent.

The country's Foreign Ministry said late Monday it was investigating the reports, but did not return calls seeking comment Tuesday on the militants' identities.

However, the German police agency responsible for terrorism investigations, the Federal Criminal Police Office, said as many as 220 people have traveled from Germany to Pakistan and Afghanistan for paramilitary training, and at least 70 have received it. A Pakistani intelligence official last week said there are believed to be around 60 Germans in North Waziristan now.

Despite the growing evidence of a terror plot, France, Britain and Germany — the nations believed to be the targets of the scheme — have not changed their terror threat levels. On Monday, the German government played down the fears by declaring there is "no reason to be alarmist."

 **Video: Taking terror alert in stride, travelers commit to tours** (on this page)

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The threat is being viewed differently by Washington and European capitals, and some analysts said it was a matter of approach. Such differences have played out repeatedly in the years since the 9/11 attacks on the United States, they said.

British intelligence prefers to keep targets under surveillance as they plan attacks, often waiting until the final stages to intervene — hoping to gather evidence and to gain information about contacts in Britain and overseas.

"That cuts significantly too close to the bone for the United States. They are not happy to let plots run for too long," said Tobias Feakin, director of national security and resilience at London's Royal United Services Institute, a military think tank.

In Germany, the homeland security spokesman for the main opposition Social Democratic party said there is a different security culture in Europe and the United States.

"After 9/11 there were almost daily warnings of new threats in the U.S. which — thank God! — never became a reality" in Germany, Dieter Wiefelspuetz said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said Monday that the travel advisory was issued because of extensive evidence of a plot.

"We felt, having tracked intelligence over a lengthy period of time, it was appropriate to issue this alert at this moment," he said. | Most popular

"We specifically have said continue with your travel plans, but just be cautious because we are aware of active plots against the United States, American citizens and other allies around the world."

 [Video: Security expert: Publicity can disrupt terror plot](#) (on this page)

German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere insisted his nation had no concrete evidence of an imminent attack. "There is no reason to be alarmist at this time," de Maiziere said.

He said he had spoken with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano about the travel advisory and that it is not "in keeping with our assessment of the situation."

In a rare public speech last month, MI5 director general Jonathan Evans warned that the risk of attacks can never be completely eradicated.

"We appear increasingly to have imported from the American media the assumption that terrorism is 100 percent preventable and any incident that is not prevented is seen as a culpable government failure. This is a nonsensical way to consider terrorist risk," Evans said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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