



International Investigation Underway in Swedish Bomb Attack

After two bombs were detonated in downtown Stockholm over the weekend, killing the man suspected of the attack and injuring two others, investigators from several countries are trying to determine whether the suspect had accomplices in Sweden or abroad. So far, experts are divided on the question.



Suspect Taymour Abdel Wahab, a 29-year-old Iraqi-born male who reportedly moved to Sweden at the age of 11, is believed to have sent a file offering some clues. Parts of the audio message, which was sent to a Swedish media outlet and authorities just prior to the blasts, have been released. And the statements make frequent reference to “we” and an “Islamic state,” leading some experts to conclude that the suspect did not act alone.

“Now the Islamic state has been created,” the voice explained. “We now exist here in Europe and in Sweden. We are a reality. I don’t want to say more about this. Our actions will speak for themselves.”

While it has not been officially confirmed that the suspected bomber was the source of the message, most analysts are assuming that to be the case. Among the motivations for the attack listed in the audio file were the presence of Swedish troops in Afghanistan and a Swedish cartoonist who depicted the Islamic Prophet Mohammed as a dog.

“Now your children, daughters and sisters will die like our brothers and sisters and children are dying,” the voice said, alternating between Swedish and Arabic. “As long as you don’t end your war against Islam and the humiliation against the Prophet and with your stupid support to [Swedish cartoonist] Lars Vilks the pig.”

Other comments from the message also regularly use the plural. But experts have offered varying opinions on whether the bomber was working alone or had outside help.

According to one of Sweden’s top scholars on Islam, who reviewed the audio message, the attack was clearly the work of a loner as opposed to a conspiracy. “His call to Muslims in Sweden to join the struggle shows his isolation,” [wrote](#) Jan Hjarpe, a former Lund University professor of Islamic Studies, in a piece for one of Sweden’s biggest newspapers. He called the failed attack the product of a “a personal tragedy,” saying that the vast majority of Muslims do not support the violent extremism and are much more often the victims of attacks.

But not everyone agreed. “This was not something where he just woke up and thought that he would blow himself up,” terrorism expert and military Professor Magnus Ranstorp [told](#) CNN.



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Swedish authorities, by contrast, acknowledged a degree of uncertainty. “This is a very serious incident, which is being investigated as an act of terrorism,” said Security Police boss Anders Thornberg. He [told](#) Reuters that, “as far as we know, it looks like he was working for himself, but we have to be really sure so we are investigating whether there could be more perpetrators.”

The official investigation now includes a team of U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation experts who will be [working](#) on the case. Authorities in the U.K. have already [jumped](#) on it as well, since the suspect is believed to have studied just north of London for several years. His wife and two children also reportedly live in Britain. According to media reports, he was shunned from a local mosque there because of his extremist views.

But as the investigation develops, reports are surfacing in the [Swedish media](#) that the military may have had advanced knowledge of the attack. Most of the speculation arose from a message sent by an armed-services employee who warned an acquaintance to avoid the specific street several hours before the blasts: “If you can, avoid Drottninggatan today. A lot can happen there ... just so you know,” the message was quoted as saying by the Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (TT) news agency.

The military responded in a statement by denying any prior knowledge. “The Swedish Armed Forces did not know ahead of time about the plans or the circumstances surrounding the events which have taken place,” a spokesman said in a statement after being confronted with the allegations. “If that had been the case, Säpo [the Swedish security service], which is the responsible agency in these types of cases, would have been informed immediately.” The Swedish Prime Minister has so far refused to comment.

An intelligence expert [cited](#) by TT said that, even if there were indications of a possible attack, it did not mean specific prior knowledge. “A warning is a slippery term and nothing concrete,” intelligence analyst Professor Wilhelm Agrell told the TT news agency. “Warnings can consist of very precise information that can be acted on, but it’s common that warnings are more diffuse and can’t be acted on.”

And while suspicions of a broader plot involving others in Sweden and Britain persist, Muslims in Sweden were quick to distance themselves from the bomber, even hosting a demonstration the day after the attack. “We felt a responsibility to sharply condemn the attack, but it would be naïve to think that yesterday’s events aren’t going to have a negative effect on the perception of Muslims in Sweden,” [said](#) Samaa Sarsour of the group Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice, which organized the rally.

Sweden has not seen terror attacks in decades, though communist groups have orchestrated violence in the past. But it is the first suspected suicide bombing in the history of the sparsely inhabited northern nation which traditionally has avoided entanglements in foreign wars. There are currently about 500 Swedish soldiers serving in Afghanistan, and no plans have been announced to withdraw any time soon.

Sweden prides itself on being “open” and “tolerant,” so of course, politicians have been [working](#) overtime urging Swedes not to come to conclusions or blame the Muslim religion. The anti-immigration Sweden Democrats party, which finally [rose to national power](#) with 20 seats in Parliament during the most recent election, has been vocally advocating a halt to immigration and the eventual repatriation of refugees currently in the country. And while large swaths of Swedes consider the party “racist” and “extremist,” there are simmering tensions among some in Swedish society hiding just below the surface.

What the long-term effect of this attack might be remains unclear at this point. But as new developments happen and the investigations proceed, more information will likely come to light in the



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not-too-distant future.

Photo of Stockholm bombing: AP Images



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