Shin Bet uncovers Hamas terror plot in the West Bank

Hamas cells in the West Bank were receiving their instructions directly from the military wing of the terror group in the Gaza strip and were told to procure weapons, train for attacks and kidnappings and recruit more operatives

Yoav Zitun|Published: 08.06.19, 16:55

An explosive device prepared for use was found by the Shin Bet, IDF and police forces in Hebron inside a makeshift lab where it was made.

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According to an official announcement Tuesday the device was to be detonated in Jerusalem.

Explosive device uncovered by Shin Bet (Photo: Shin Bet) Explosive device uncovered by Shin Bet

According to the Shin Bet, a number of Hamas terror cells were uncovered in the West Bank all receiving instruction from Hamas in Gaza.

The cells had planned terror attacks against Israeli as well as Palestinian Authority targets.

The operatives in the West Bank were instructed to purchase lethal weapons, train for attacks including kidnapping, stabbing and shooting and recruit fighters for future operations.

Shin Bet foils terror plot Shin Bet foils terror plot

The explosive device uncovered, was made by a cell receiving direct orders from the military wing of Hamas in Gaza

According to the Shin Bet, on June 29, 2019, security forces arrested 22-year old student who was recruited to build explosive devices for use by Hamas operatives. He enlisted the help of other students who were tasked with procurement of the needed ingredients to make bombs.

The explosive devices were hidden inside homes in the Hebron area placing the families in those homes at great risk.

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Suspected members of Hamas terro cells in West Bank Suspected members of Hamas terro cells in West Bank

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacting to the news released the following statement: "I commend the ISA, IDF and Israel Police forces for the operational-intelligence effort that led to the thwarting of a terrorist attack that Hamas planned to carry out on our territory".

Suspected white supremacist kills at least 20 at Texas shopping center Dozens more were left wounded when a 21-year-old man armed with a rifle opened fire outside the Walmart in the largely Latino city of El Paso; police say the suspect left a manifesto rallying against 'Hispanic invasion' of Texas Reuters|Published: 08.04.19, 08:40

A young gunman opened fire in an El Paso, Texas, shopping area packed with as many as 3,000 people during the busy back-to-school season Saturday, leaving 20 dead and more

than two dozen injured. The suspect is believed to have posted an anti-immigrant manifesto shortly before the massacre.

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Gov. Greg Abbott called the incident in the Texas border city "one of the most deadly days in the history of Texas." Police said authorities were investigating if it was a hate crime.

Police outside the shopping center (Photo: EPA) Police outside the shopping center (Photo: EPA)

The suspect was arrested without incident outside the Walmart near the Cielo Vista Mall, said El Paso Police Chief Greg Allen. Two law enforcement officials who spoke on condition of anonymity identified the suspect as 21-year-old Patrick Crusius. El Paso police didn't release his name at a news conference but confirmed the gunman is from Allen, near Dallas.

Many of the victims were shot at the Walmart, police said.

The suspect, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius The suspect, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius

"The scene was a horrific one," said Allen, adding that many of the 26 people who were hurt had life-threatening injuries.

The chief said police found a post online possibly written by the suspect. "Right now we have a manifesto from this individual that indicates, to some degree, it has a nexus to potential hate crime," Allen said.

In the four-page document the suspect apparently bemoans the "Hispanic invasion of Texas" and expresses his support of the New Zealand shooter who killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch.

The shooting came less than a week after a gunman opened fire on a California food festival. Santino William Legan, 19, killed three people and injured 13 others last Sunday at the popular Gilroy Garlic Festival, and died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

El Paso, which has about 680,000 residents, is in West Texas and sits across the border from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Residents quickly volunteered to give blood to the injured after the shooting, and police and military members were helping people look for missing loved ones.

(Photo: EPA) (Photo: EPA)

"It's chaos right now," said Austin Johnson, an Army medic at nearby Fort Bliss, who volunteered to help at the shopping center and later at a school serving as a reunification center.

Adriana Quezada, 39, said she was in the women's clothing section of Walmart with her two children when she heard gunfire.

"But I thought they were hits, like roof construction," she said of the shots.

Her 19-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son threw themselves to the ground, then ran out of the store through an emergency exit. They were not hurt, Quezada said.

She said she saw four men, dressed in black, moving together firing guns indiscriminately. Police later said they believed the suspect, who was armed with a rifle, was the only shooter.

Ryan Mielke, a spokesman for University Medical Center of El Paso, said 13 of the injured were brought to the hospital with injuries, including one who died. Two of the injured were children who were being transferred to El Paso Children's Hospital, he said. He wouldn't provide additional details on the victims.

Eleven other victims were being treated at Del Sol Medical Center, hospital spokesman Victor Guerrero said. Those victims' ages ranged from 35 to 82, he said.

Police rushing toward the scene of the attack (Photo: AFP) Police rushing toward the scene of the attack (Photo: AFP)

President Donald Trump tweeted: "God be with you all!"

At a candidate forum Saturday in Las Vegas, presidential candidate and former Texas congressman Beto O'Rourke, who is from El Paso, appeared a bit shaken after news of the shooting in his hometown was reported. The Democrat said the shooting shatters "any illusion that we have that progress is inevitable" on tackling gun violence.

He said he heard early reports that the shooter might have had a military-style weapon, saying we need to "keep that (expletive) on the battlefield. Do not bring it into our communities."

El Paso Mayor Dee Margo said he knew the shooter was not from his town.

"It's not what we're about," he said at the news conference with the governor and police chief. El Paso is nearly a 10-hour drive from Allen.

In the hours after the shooting, authorities blocked streets near a home in Allen that is associated with the suspect. Officers appeared to speak briefly with a woman who answered the door of the gray stone house and later entered the residence.

El Paso County is more than 80% Latino, according to the latest census data, and the city, where the mayor said tens of thousands of Mexicans legally cross the border each day to work and shop, has become a focal point of the immigration debate. Trump visited in February to argue that walling off the southern border would make the U.S. safer, while city residents and O'Rourke led thousands on a protest march past the barrier of barbed wire-topped fencing and towering metal slats.

Police officer outside the Walmart (Photo: EPA) Police officer outside the Walmart (Photo: EPA) O'Rourke stressed that border walls haven't made his hometown safer. The city's murder rate was less than half the national average in 2005, the year before the start of its border fence. Before the wall project started, El Paso had been rated one of the three safest major U.S. cities going back to 1997.

Heidi Beirich, director of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project, also said the El Paso shooting suspect wasn't on her group's radar screen prior to the shooting.

"We had nothing in our files on him," Beirich wrote in an email.

The shooting is the 21st mass killing in the United States in 2019, and the fifth public mass shooting. Before Saturday, 96 people had died in mass killings in 2019 - 26 of them in public mass shootings.

The AP/USATODAY/Northeastern University mass murder database tracks all U.S. homicides since 2006 involving four or more people killed, not including the offender, over a short period of time regardless of weapon, location, victim-offender relationship or motive. The database shows that the median age of a public mass shooter is 28, significantly lower than the median age of a person who commits a mass shooting of their family.

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Since 2006, 11 mass shootings - not including Saturday's - have been committed by men who are 21 or younger.

Dutch parliament approves limited ban on burqa, niqab Limited ban on 'face-covering clothing' in public places kicks off in Netherlands, pushed for by far-right politician Geert Wilders for over a decade Associated Press|Published: 08.01.19, 20:37 The Netherlands has approved a limited ban on "face-covering clothing" in public places, including Islamic veils and robes such as the burqa and niqab but not the hijab, which covers only the hair. Firebrand far-right politician Geert Wilders had pushed for the ban for over a decade.

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Parliament's upper chamber made the final approval in a vote Tuesday.

Woman wearing a burqa in Rotterdam (Photo: AP) Woman wearing a burqa in Rotterdam (Photo: AP)

Wilders' Freedom Party claimed the development as a major victory, while Senator Marjolein Faber-Van de Klashorst called it "a historical day because this is the first step to de-Islamize the Netherlands."

"This is the first step and the next step is to close all the mosques in the Netherlands," she said, building on Wilders' anti-Islam rhetoric.

Women protesting the burqa ban in Denmark (Photo: Reuters) Women protesting the burqa ban in Denmark (Photo: Reuters)

The Dutch law is described by the government as "religion-neutral," and does not go as far as more extensive bans in neighboring countries like France and Belgium. It applies on public transport and in education institutions, health institutions such as hospitals, and government buildings.

Successive Dutch governments have sought to ban niqabs, which cover most of the face but still shows the eyes, and burqas, which cover the face and body — even though studies suggest that only a few hundred women in the Netherlands wear the garments. The ban also covers ski masks and full-face helmets.

A woman wearing a burqa in Belgium (Photo: AP) A woman wearing a burqa in Belgium (Photo: AP) The government said people still have full freedom on how to dress, except when it is necessary to have full facial contact — for instance in education and health-related situations.

The ban does not apply to public streets, although police can ask an individual to remove face-covering clothing for identification.

Protests against a ban on burqas in Denmark (Photo: AFP) Protests against a ban on burqas in Denmark (Photo: AFP)

"This is actually virtually a complete ban because the only spaces that are still available for women (who wear face-covering clothing) are the street and the private sector," said Annelies Moors, professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. "And, of course, the private sector can also have their house rules, they could also possibly legislate against their presence. So this leaves women very little space."

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"It is completely disproportionate and the only effect will be that many of these women will stay at home even more," said Green Party senator Ruard Ganzevoort. "They will not have an opportunity to go to school. They will not have an opportunity to go to learn to swim, and all those things."