

Friday Times

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ONTARIO: Police stand watch outside of a house in Strathroy on Wednesday. — AP

CANADA POLICE THWART POTENTIAL ATTACK, SUSPECT 'SHOT DEAD'

LONE WOLF ATTACKS

OTTAWA: Canadian police shot dead an alleged Islamic State sympathizer armed with an explosive device on Wednesday, media reports said, as police confirmed they thwarted a "potential terror threat".

There was no immediate confirmation from Canadian police that anyone had been shot, with a statement saying only that a suspect had been identified and that they had taken "action" after receiving information about a potential attack.

"Earlier today, the RCMP received credible information of a potential terrorist threat. A suspect was identified and the proper course of action has been taken to ensure that there is no danger to the public's safety," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said in a statement.

They did not say where the incident took place. Media reports said the suspect was a 24-year-old man who had been arrested in 2015 for expressing support for the Islamic State group in postings on social media. He had been released in February but

was being monitored. Canadian broadcaster CBC identified him as Aaron Driver, saying he was shot dead during a police raid in Strathroy, a residential area in southern Ontario about 220 kilometers (140 miles) southwest of Toronto. According to a relative who spoke to CBC, police informed the family that he was shot dead after detonating an explosive device, injuring himself and one other person, whose condition was unclear.

They told the family they had to shoot him because he had a second device which he was planning to detonate, CBC said. Broadcaster CTV, citing internal government documents, also said the suspect was allegedly linked to IS and had been planning to set off an explosive device in a packed public space in a major city.

Suspect on the radar

CBC said the suspect had first come to the attention of anti-terror officials in October 2014 after he

tweeted support for IS. According to The Canadian Press news agency, Driver had been under a court order not to associate with any terrorist organization, including IS. According to the order, a peace bond which was signed in February, there were "reasonable grounds to fear that he may participate, contribute directly or indirectly in the activity of a terrorist group," the agency said.

The RCMP said an investigation was under way as the matter "continues to unfold," and no other details from officials were immediately available.

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said he had discussed the incident with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and that the security forces had acted effectively. "Canadians can be confident that whenever credible information is obtained about a potential terrorist threat, the RCMP, CSIS (security intelligence service) and other police and security agencies take the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of this country and its citizens," Goodale said

in a statement. "These agencies conducted themselves effectively in the circumstances that developed today."

Lone wolf attacks

Goodale said Canada's terrorism threat level remains at "medium", a ranking which it has maintained since October 2014 when two soldiers were killed in separate lone wolf attacks by suspected jihadists in in Quebec and Ottawa.

On October 20, a 25-year-old Muslim convert ran down two soldiers in a parking lot in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) southeast of Montreal, before being shot dead by police. One of the soldiers later died. Two days later, another Muslim convert, aged 32, killed a ceremonial guard then tried to storm Canada's parliament before being shot dead by security guards only meters (yards) from a room where the prime minister and his caucus were meeting. — AFP