

International

Paris knife rampage probe handed to French anti-terrorist prosecutor

Stabbing spree sent shock waves through an embattled police force

PARIS: French detectives on Friday referred the investigation into a knife rampage by a staffer at Paris police headquarters that left four colleagues dead to anti-terrorist prosecutors, sources said. Three police officers and an administrative worker — three men and a woman — died in the frenzied 30-minute attack on Thursday at the police headquarters, a stone's throw from the Notre-Dame cathedral in the historic heart of Paris.

The assailant, a 45-year-old computer expert, was eventually shot dead by police. Two other people were injured in the Thursday lunchtime stabbing spree that sent shock waves through an embattled French police force already complaining of low morale. Sources at the Paris prosecutor's office, which had been handling the inquiry, said on Friday that the case had been passed to the anti-terrorist prosecutor's office (PNAT).

The attacker, named as Mickael H, was born on the French overseas territory of Martinique in the Caribbean. He was partially deaf. Preliminary enquiries suggest that the attacker, a convert to Islam, could have become radicalized, said sources, who added that he had worked in a section of the police service dedicated to collecting information on jihadist radicalization.

He had worked for the police since 2003 without ever arousing suspicion. But his wife, who is being questioned by police, claimed he had behaved in an "unusual and

agitated" manner the night before the attack, sources said. Investigators were examining text messages between him and his wife, whose detention was extended on Friday.

A 'quiet person'

A search of the couple's house in a low-income Paris suburb near Charles de Gaulle airport yielded no evidence that the man, who became a Muslim about 18 months ago, had been motivated by radical religious ideology, one source added. Computer equipment seized in the search was still being examined. AFP correspondents saw investigators — faces concealed by balaclavas — lead out from the house late Thursday a man and a woman who hid behind hoods.

One motive investigative sources mooted was a personal conflict at work. "He complained to me that his career had not evolved, due to his handicap," said Abdelaziz, the deputy head of a local Muslim organisation who attended the Gonesse mosque with the attacker. Locals said the man had two children aged three and nine. "He was a very quiet person. I used to see him going to the mosque but he practiced (his religion) in a normal way," a neighbor, who asked not to be named, told AFP.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said Thursday the assailant had "never shown any behavioral prob-

lems" and never aroused the "slightest reason for alarm". The man used a kitchen knife to stab two policemen and a male administrative colleague in two offices on the first floor of the building before attacking two women on the staircase on his way to the courtyard outside. One was a police officer who died at the scene. The other, an administrative worker, was seriously injured. The assailant wounded another policeman in the courtyard before he was shot in the head by a colleague, sources told AFP.

'One of us'

Tension has been growing in police ranks, stretched to the limit after months of weekly "yellow vest" anti-government demonstrations and years of high alert following a string of terror attacks in France. Hundreds of police and headquarters staff observed a minute of silence in the courtyard of the building Friday in memory of their fallen comrades.

"This tragedy is all the more awful as it took place inside the police headquarters and it came from one of us," Paris's top policeman Didier Lallemand said. The killings came a day after thousands of police officers marched in Paris for better working conditions, a rare protest against the backdrop of a spike in police suicides — 52 so far this year.



PARIS: People leave Paris' prefecture de police (police headquarters) on October 3, 2019 after four officers were killed in a knife attack. —AFP

The police have also been a recurring target of jihadist groups, such as Islamic State, behind a wave of attacks since 2015 — from large synchronized assaults to isolated knife and gun attacks. In June, a parliamentary report on radicalization within the public services spoke of 30 suspected cases out of the 150,000 police officers and 130,000 gendarmes in France. —AFP

'Tinder K' support for Argentina's Kirchner

BUENOS AIRES: They say opposites attract but it doesn't seem so for many Argentine members of Tinder K, a closed Facebook dating group drawn together by a shared vision of the perfect romantic partner: single, Peronist and Kirchnerist. The K stands for Cristina Kirchner, the two-term former president who despite facing a slew of corruption trials, remains arguably the country's most popular politician as crisis-wracked Argentina heads into October 27 polls.

The feisty 66-year-old leftist is seen by many as a standard-bearer for Peronism, the political philosophy of former military leader Juan Peron, credited with upending Argentina's class structure and championing the downtrodden during three presidential terms that ended in the mid-1970s. "I couldn't have a partner who didn't share my political conviction," said Estefania, a 35-year-old who met her politically compatible partner on Tinder K.

She readily concedes that in Argentina, politics rule people's personal lives. "We are ravaged by politics!" True to form in Argentina's politically polarized society, the mostly left-leaning Tinder K group is united by their trenchant opposition to center-right President Mauricio Macri, whose election victory in 2015 put an end to 12 years of Peronist populism under both Kirchner and her husband, Nestor Kirchner.

Politically oriented dating sites and apps began in the United States with the likes of DonaldDaters and TrumpSingles, or for Democratic Party supporters, Liberal Hearts. Slowly the idea is taking hold elsewhere in South America. In Brazil, the Workers' Party is starting its own dating site for supporters of its jailed leader, ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Political niches

But experts are warning of the dangers of such "political niches" on social networks. "The exchange of ideas is essential for a democracy, but dating applications with an ideological bias limit the probability of meeting a partner who does not validate your ideas," said Chelsea Reynolds from California State University, Fullerton.

"Two decades ago you could fall in love with someone at university even though your political ideas were not the same, today that would be practically impossible," she said. According to experts, social networks' tendency to group like-minded people has contributed to the phenomenon. "All the technology is aimed at creating niches with common denominators in ideological terms," said Argentine political consultant Carlos Fara. "These niches encourage the most extreme positions," Fara said.

'Political partners'

"You don't choose your family, but a partner has to think the same politically," said Estefania, a shop assistant who lost her job a month ago to become one of the country's growing number of unemployed. A member of Campora, a Kirchnerist youth movement, she met her partner, who lives in Buenos Aires, on Tinder K, which boasts a total membership of 12,000 people.

Group membership is restricted to singles. Get-togethers include parties to raise money for charity, outings and debates on social issues. That's how "several couples" came to be. "Last year one of them got married," she said. The three affiliated Tinder K groups online were set up "to push back against the four years we've had of Macrismo," she said.

Barring a shock, Argentina will revert to Peronism in the October polls with Alberto Fernandez the likely winner, with Kirchner as his vice-president. Macri has stuttered through the final year of his presidency and is given little chance of re-election after suffering a drubbing in August primaries. Soaring inflation and rising poverty have stirred outrage at his government's belt-tightening policies.

Many Tinder K members are inspired by the model of Nestor and Cristina Kirchner who were married for 35 years until his death in 2010. "The love they had for each other is a reference point. I see the photos and video of how they looked at each other, how he admired her," said Estefania. But being a Kirchnerite is no guarantee of finding love within the group, says Omar San who created the oldest of the three groups, claiming 6,000 members. "We can find you a K partner, but afterwards we can't guarantee that it'll work out." —AFP

Press Release



HUAWEI



Huawei advances AI and gears up for 5G expansion at GITEX Technology Week 2019 in Dubai

Dubai, UAE – October 6, 2019: At this year's GITEX Technology Week, Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT), will focus on end-to-end solutions and global

case studies revolving in particular around 5G and Artificial Intelligence (AI), under the theme 'Building a Fully Connected, Intelligent World'.

Visitors can find Huawei at Stand Z2-A10 in Za'abeel Hall 2, where the company will be launching first-of-its-kind products and solutions, announcing strategic partnerships, and working with clients from around the region to develop custom approaches to their ICT needs.

In parallel to the main GITEX exhibition, Huawei will host its **Huawei Middle East Innovation Day 2019** on October 7th. The event will include three sessions: a 5G Ecosystem Conference under the title "5G, Gear Up"; an AI Conference under the theme "Advance Intelligence", and a "Huawei Developer Day Dubai 2019" session which is focused on building a better ecosystem.

Charles Yang, President of Huawei Middle East, said: "We are building a fully connected, intelligent world. When many people think of Huawei, they think connections. It's true we have been investing in connectivity for the past 30 years, but our work doesn't stop there. Both connections and computing are key – they're inseparable. Today this combination is delivering more advanced intelligence across every touchpoint of the digital economy, and is being accelerated with the launch of 5G networks. As leaders in both AI and 5G technologies, GITEX visitors will be able to see how Huawei is working to bring digital to every person, home and organization."



Huawei's participation at GITEX 2019 is supported by some of its key partners including GAPP and Redington as Diamond sponsors; Enterprise Systems and Octalpa as Gold sponsors.

For more information, please visit Huawei's GITEX 2019 microsite at <https://e.huawei.com/topic/gitex2019/ae/index.html>

