

Suicide bombers strike Syrian capital as war enters 7th year

By ALBERT AJI and ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Suicide bombers hit the main judicial building and a restaurant in Damascus Wednesday, killing at least 30 people and spreading fear across Syria's capital as the country's civil war entered its seventh year with no end in sight.

The attacks reflect a renewed effort by militants to use insurgent tactics against President Bashar Assad's forces in a bid to recover lost momentum.

The first attacker, reportedly dressed in a military uniform, struck inside the Justice Palace, located near the famous and crowded Hamidiyeh market. The explosion left bodies lying amid pools of blood and shattered glass in the building's main hall, where a picture of President Bashar Assad hung on one of the walls.

The official news agency, SANA, said another suicide explosion about an hour later struck a restaurant in the Rabweh district of Damascus, an area known for its restaurants and cafes, leading to multiple casualties, mostly women and children. Syrian TV showed overturned plastic chairs and tables at the restaurant with bloodstains on the floor.

The Ikhbariyeh TV channel said the attacker was being chased by security agents when he ran into a restaurant and detonated his explosives' vest there.

The bombings were the latest in a spate of deadly explosions and suicide attacks targeting government-controlled areas in Syria and its capital. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for either attack, but



In this photo released by the Syrian official news agency SANA, journalists gather next of blood inside the main judicial building which attacked by a suicide bomber, in Damascus, Syria, Wednesday.

other, similar attacks in recent weeks were claimed by al-Qaida's affiliate in Syria, which has come under pressure lately amid infighting with other insurgent factions in Syria and airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition.

The al-Qaida branch in Syria, The Levant Liberation Committee, denied responsibility for the attacks late Wednesday. In a statement released on its Telegram channel, it said that its targets are restricted to security and military installations.

The attacks came as Syrians mark the sixth anniversary of the country's civil war, which has killed more than 400,000 people and displaced millions of others. The conflict began in March 2011 as a popular uprising against Assad's rule but quickly descended into a full-blown civil war that has left large parts of the country

in ruins. The chaos allowed al-Qaida and later the Islamic State group to gain a foothold in the war-torn nation.

Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, told The Associated Press Wednesday following a three-day trip to Syria that what he has seen is "unprecedented," even in comparison to conflict zones like Yemen, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

"I have never seen a level of destruction so big as I have been seeing over the last few days," he said.

Russia and Turkey, who back opposing sides of the conflict, have been working together to launch a political track focused initially on a cease-fire in Syria, and the U.N.'s Syria envoy held another round of peace talks in Geneva recently, but the talks

have gone nowhere. Militant groups such as the Islamic State group and the Nusra Front, now known as the Levant Liberation Committee, are not part of those talks.

The recent attacks have struck at highly symbolic targets, and may mark the start of a new insurgency campaign by insurgents to try and counter recent military advances by Assad's forces, backed by Russia and Iran.

"Deploying sleepers as suicide bombers deep behind enemy lines is (al-Qaida's) way of telling Syrians that it remains an invaluable component of the revolutionary struggle against the Assad regime and that the armed struggle is far from over, despite losses in Aleppo and elsewhere," said Charles Lister, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute.

Russian agents, hackers charged in Yahoo breach

By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two Russian intelligence agents and a pair of hired hackers have been charged in a devastating criminal breach at Yahoo that affected at least a half billion user accounts, the Justice Department said Wednesday in bringing the first case of its kind against current Russian government officials.

In a scheme that prosecutors say blended intelligence gathering with old-fashioned financial greed, the four men targeted the email accounts of Russian and U.S. government officials, Russian journalists and employees of financial services and other private businesses, U.S. officials said.

Using in some cases a technique known as "spear-phishing" to dupe Yahoo users into thinking they were receiving legitimate emails, the hackers broke into at least 500 million accounts in search of personal information and financial data such as gift card and credit card numbers, prosecutors said.

"We will not allow individuals, groups, nation states or a combination of them to compromise the privacy of our citizens, the economic interests of our companies or the security of our country," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary McCord, the head of the Justice Department's national security division.

The case, announced amid continued U.S. intelligence agency skepticism of their Russian counterparts, comes as U.S. authorities investigate Russian interference through hacking in the 2016 presidential election. Officials said those investigations are separate.

One of the Yahoo-related defendants, a Canadian and Kazakh national named Karim Baratov, has been taken into custody in Canada. Another, Alexsey Belan, is on the list of the FBI's most wanted cyber criminals and has been indicted multiple times in the U.S. It's not clear whether he or the other two defendants, Dmitry Dokuchaev and Igor Sushchin, will ever step foot in an American courtroom since there's no extradition treaty with Russia.

"I hope they will respect our criminal justice system," McCord said.

The indictment identifies Dokuchaev and Sushchin as officers of the Russian Federal Security Service, or FSB. Belan and Baratov were paid hackers directed by the FSB to break into the accounts, prosecutors said.

Dokuchaev has been in custody in Russia since his arrest on treason charges in December, along with his superior and several others. Russian media have reported that Dokuchaev and his superior were accused of passing sensitive information to the CIA. The media reports also have contended that Dokuchaev was arrested by the FSB several years ago and offered a choice: serve a long prison sentence on hacking charges or sign a contract to work for the agency.

The FSB hasn't commented, and the Justice Department did not confirm that.

Yahoo didn't disclose the breach until last September when it began notifying hundreds of millions of users that their email addresses, birth dates, answers to security questions and other personal information may have been stolen.

Dutch PM Rutte claims victory over 'wrong kind of populism'

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Wednesday claimed a dominating parliamentary election victory over anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders, who failed the year's first litmus test for populism in Europe.



Rutte

Provisional results with over half the votes counted suggested Rutte's party won 32 seats in the 150-member legislature, 13 more than Wilders' party, which took only third place with 19 seats. The surging CDA Christian Democrats claimed 20.

Following Britain's vote to leave the European Union and Donald Trump's election as U.S. president, "the Netherlands said, 'Whoa!' to the wrong kind of populism," said Rutte, who is now poised for a third term as prime minister.

"We want to stick to the course we have — safe and stable and prosperous," Rutte added.

Wilders, who campaigned on radical pledges to close borders to migrants from Muslim nations, close mosques, ban the Quran and take the Netherlands out of the EU, had insisted that whatever the result of the election, the kind of populist politics he and others in Europe represent aren't going away.

"Rutte has not seen the back of me," Wilders said after the results had sunk in.

His Party for Freedom clinched 24 seats in 2010 before sinking to 15 in 2012, and Wednesday's total left him with about 12 percent of the electorate, far less than populists in Britain and the United States have scored.

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Craig Coleman grew up in a farming family. He has farmed for over 30 years in the Willamette Valley, and then later in Eastern Oregon (Hermiston) where he currently lives. A serial entrepreneur, Coleman enjoys starting new projects and watching them take flight into successful ventures. His latest, Ordinance Brewing which he manages, recently has grown from a small scale brewery, to one that has a 50 bbl. brewing system. Ordinance's beer can be found in Oregon and Washington and soon will be found in Montana, Alaska, Idaho and surrounding states. So what is next? Well, Ordinance Distilling and Ordinance Cider of course! When not on the farm, or at the brewery, Coleman can be found checking up on Neighbor Dudes, an affiliated taproom in Hermiston or going to sporting events with his family.



Jean-Luke Alexander has been the Head Brewer at Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub in Pendleton Oregon since 2015. Jean-Luke graduated from Oregon State University in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Food Science/ Fermentation Science, and he also holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration/Marketing. Before coming to Prodigal Son, Jean-Luke was a brewer at Bridgeport Brewing Company in Portland Oregon, a malt house operator at Great Western Malting in Vancouver Washington, and had early experience as a brewery intern at Bridgeport Brewing, Deschutes Brewery in Bend Oregon, and McMenamins in Corvallis Oregon.



Jean-Luke and his wife Alyssa moved to Pendleton in 2015, and they attempt to keep up with their two boys, Murray and Keaton.

Rodney Bullington is a native of the Pacific Northwest and grew up in agricultural towns in Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington. Over the past 21 years of his professional career Rodney has provided project management and leadership for ESPN.com, Walt Disney Internet Group, Microsoft Xbox Games Studios, and Pop Cap games. Rodney moved back home to Pendleton Oregon with his wife Kelli and son Truman. Rodney started his career with Pendleton Grain Growers, Inc. in 2012 where he was responsible for PGG's IT, Safety, and Facilities (Infrastructure) teams and for the past two years McKennon Seed Plant. In 2015 Rodney and his wife Kelli purchased the Comrie's Cadillac and Oldsmobile dealership building on the eastside of Pendleton with a vision for Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery and on November 19, 2016 that vision became a reality when it opened its doors. With a focus on agriculture and Eastern Oregon growers and produce they have partnered with Cliff and Judy Bracher to bring Pendleton and the surrounding areas quality craft distilled spirits.

For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District; the East Oregonian; American Association of University Women; and Harriet Isom; a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.bluecc.edu.