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ITALIAN POLICE IN VENICE ARREST THREE JIHADISTS

March 30, 2017 BBC News reported: "Three adults and a girl have been detained in the centre of Venice as suspects in an alleged jihadist cell. Police had been monitoring the group from Kosovo for months amid concerns they were planning to join Islamist militants in Syria, reports said.

But police moved in at dawn on Thursday amid fears of a potential attack in the wake of the last week's murder of four people in London, reports said. Twelve addresses were raided including 10 in the city's historic centre. One of the raids took place close to the famed La Fenice opera house at around 04:00 (02:00 GMT), Italian media said.

Police said all four of those held had Italian residence permits. They said Italy's specialist Digos crime squad had been investigating the three adults on suspicion of radicalisation.

Two of the three had been working as waiters, one report said. Italian police apparently tapped communications referring to the 22 March attack at Westminster, when Khalid Masood drove a car into pedestrians and stabbed a police officer outside parliament..."

PHILIPPINES AND CHINA TO HOLD DIRECT TALKS ON SEA ROW

March 29, 2017 spacedaily.com reported: "China and the Philippines will hold direct talks on their maritime dispute in May, Filipino officials said Wednesday, as President Rodrigo Duterte seeks stronger economic ties with Beijing.



Last year a United Nations-backed international tribunal rejected Beijing's claims to most of the South China Sea, including disputed areas close to the coasts of its neighbours.



Duterte, elected last year, has played down that ruling and pushed for rapprochement with China as he seeks billions of dollars in trade and investment from it.

China this week offered to host a meeting in May of a "bilateral consultation mechanism" to tackle issues related to the sea row, the Philippine foreign department said.

"This is a new proposal, a bilateral consultation mechanism specifically on the South China Sea," spokesman Charles Jose told reporters.

China rejects the tribunal's ruling and asserts sovereignty over almost all of the South China Sea, despite partial counter-claims from Brunei, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. It has extensively reclaimed reefs and installed military and other facilities including airstrips on some outcrops.

China has always favoured bilateral talks with each rival claimant instead of negotiations involving all six, as was previously favoured by the Philippines.

Analysts say direct talks with smaller neighbours would allow China to exert its massive economic and political leverage in a region dependent on Chinese trade. Jose said the Chinese invitation for the May bilateral talks set no preconditions.

"What is important is we have a peaceful means (to resolve the dispute)," he added.

Duterte, 72, has repeatedly said he does not want to go to war with Beijing over the sea row. After his election he pivoted his nation's foreign policy away from traditional ally the United States towards China.

Jose said the direct talks would be the "platform" where the Philippines could raise issues like China's construction of artificial islands. Both nations were still finalising the agenda, dates and level of representation, he added. Duterte's spokesman hailed the proposed meeting."..."

EU VOWS UNITY AS BRITAIN BRACES FOR BREXIT

March 29, 2017 AFP reported: With the clock ticking on Britain's EU membership, the bloc's leadership vowed unity while in London the government was set to begin the arduous task of disentangling itself from Brussels.

"This is a moment to unite," European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker said on Wednesday, hours after Britain formally started procedures to end its 44-year membership of the EU. With just two years foreseen for negotiations, Juncker said the rights of EU citizens will be top of the agenda.

Settling Britain's exit bill -- estimated by the Commission to be 60 billion euros (\$64 billion, £52 billion) -- will also be a priority when talks get underway, expected mid- to late-May. But even before the negotiations start, Britain on Thursday will begin the monumental task of incorporating EU legislation for when the divorce is finalised.

Speaking in parliament on Wednesday, Prime Minister Theresa May said that was important "so that on the day we leave everybody knows those rules still apply and everybody knows where they stand".

The government will publish a "white paper" policy document on Thursday outlining its plans for the legal overhaul, which for better or worse will give MPs the opportunity to amend the laws as they are brought under the national system.

Meanwhile Juncker will meet in Malta with EU President Donald Tusk, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. Tusk bid farewell to Britain on Wednesday, after receiving the British government's divorce letter triggering Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty -- the exit clause.

"We already miss you," he said."..."

FEARS OF ISLAMIC STATE'S LONG GAME PERSIST AS CALIPHATE CRUMBLES

March 29, 2017 voanews.com reported: "Across much of Iraq and parts of Syria, the Islamic State terror group is in retreat. Yet, Iraqi and U.S. officials tell VOA they have a creeping fear that the larger war is still very much undecided.

To be clear, few worry IS will again be able to make the kind of sudden, massive land grab it did in 2013 and 2014 when, bolstered by tens of thousands of foreign fighters, it captured one Iraqi city after another.

Rather, they fear something more subtle: that the resilient terror group has played the long game well enough that even as its self-declared caliphate teeters on the verge of collapse, it will be a force to reckon with for some time to come.

'They have sleeper cells. They have networks,' Najmaldin Karim, the governor of Iraq's Kirkuk province, said during a recent visit to Washington. 'They exist everywhere.'..."

PM SIGNS ARTICLE 50 LETTER WITH CALL TO 'COME TOGETHER'

March 28, 2017 news.sky.com reported: "Nine months after the divisive Brexit referendum last June, the Prime Minister (Theresa May) will officially trigger Article 50 in a letter that will be hand delivered in Brussels. At the same time, in a statement to MPs in the Commons, she will pledge to get the right deal for everyone in the UK, including EU nationals living in this country.

"We are one great union of people and nations with a proud history and a bright future," she will say. While the Prime Minister's approach on the historic day of the triggering of Article 50 will be typically business-like, many Brexit-supporting Conservative MPs are in a mood to celebrate.

Although Tory MPs have been discouraged from holding Article 50 parties, many are preparing to defy the plea and begin celebrating immediately after the PM has finished answering questions on her statement. There is also a mood of anticipation and excitement in Whitehall. One senior government source, describing the mood ahead of triggering Article 50, said: "It's like Christmas Eve"

"And, now that the decision has been made to leave the EU, it is time to come together."..."

ISRAELIS WARNED OF INCREASED ISIS THREAT ABROAD AHEAD OF PASSOVER HOLIDAY

March 27, 2017 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Leading into the Passover and summer travel seasons, Israel has raised travel warnings to the highest level, cautioning Israelis against traveling to Egypt's Sinai region, Prime Minister's Office Counter-Terrorism Bureau Chief Eitan Ben David said at a special media briefing on Monday. Ben David said that 'the threat has grown, including to Israelis in the coming period and is the gravest level of threat.'

'Attacks on the Egyptian military, on Coptic Christians... ISIS rockets fired at Eilat and videos from ISIS against Israelis show the high motivation and power of terror groups there [to attack Israelis],' said Ben David. 'We don't expect them [ISIS] to respect red-lines.'

While Sinai has the highest level of warning at level one of four, other countries also have high warning levels – with Turkey at level two (without special heightened warning for merely stopping over in Turkey's airport) and Jordan along with Egypt at level three. Level one signals 'a very high concrete threat' with advice to avoid any travel to a destination and leave immediately. Level two means 'a high concrete threat' with advice to avoid travel to a destination and leave as early as possible. Level three means 'a basic-level concrete threat' with advice to avoid travel to a destination and level four is 'a continuing potential threat' with advice to delay travel which is not essential.

Ben David said that most of the increased threat was presented by ISIS-affiliated groups, including, 'that ISIS is losing ground in Iraq and Syria which is causing many runaways to places where it is easier to act.'..."

IMAM CALLING FOR JEWS TO BE KILLED IN SERMON AT MONTREAL MOSQUE DRAWS POLICE COMPLAINT

March 26, 2016 CBC News reported: "A Montreal mosque is facing a police complaint and rebukes from the larger Muslim community after a video of an imam delivering a sermon in which he asks for Jews to be killed surfaced online. The sermon took place at the Dar Al-Arqam Mosque in the city's Saint-Michel neighbourhood on Dec. 23, 2016.

The video was posted to the mosque's YouTube channel three days later. The imam in the video is Jordanian cleric Sheikh Muhammad bin Musa Al Nasr — he was reportedly an invited guest of the mosque. In the video, the imam recites in Arabic the verse: 'O Muslim, O servant of Allah, O Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'

CBC independently verified the speech and its translation..."

SWEDISH POLICE STATION SO DANGEROUS OFFICERS CAN'T COMMUTE IN ALONE

March 24, 2017 Breitbart.com reports: "The danger posed to police in the notorious Swedish No-Go Zone of Rinkeby will likely mean they will not be allowed to use public transportation to get to work and may have to be driven to the station daily for their personal safety.

The heavily migrant-populated Stockholm suburb of Rinkeby in Sweden is often cited as a textbook example of a No-Go Zone where police are constantly under threat of attack from residents. To deal with the danger, the police have planned a new fortified police station. But police are at such risk it may not be safe for them to take public transport to work, Mitti.se reports.

The new station in Rinkeby will cost 380 million Swedish Krona (£35 million) to build. It will look like and be designed as a fortress with bullet proof windows, steel reinforced walls, and surrounded by security fence. Security is the police's main concern in the area following attacks against them by residents while out on patrol. Police in Rinkeby rarely venture on foot into the area without backup..."

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