

Germany commits to ensuring security for Jews with skullcaps



People wear Jewish skullcaps, as they attend a demonstration against an anti-Semitic attack in Berlin

AP | Berlin

Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman has stressed Germany's responsibility to ensure security for all Jews wearing skullcaps anywhere in the country without having to fear an anti-Semitic attack.

Steffen Seibert's comments came after the government's anti-Semitism commissioner, Felix Klein, was quoted Saturday as saying he "cannot recommend to Jews that they wear the skullcap at all times

everywhere in Germany." That was criticized strongly by Israel's president, among others.

Seibert said Monday "it's the job of the state to ensure that anybody can move around securely with a skullcap in any place of our country."

Government statistics released earlier this month showed that the number of anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner incidents rose in Germany last year, despite an overall drop in politically motivated crimes.

IS claims responsibility for B'desh explosion

AP | Dhaka, Bangladesh

A global monitoring group said the Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for an explosion targeting a police van in Bangladesh's capital, but police said Monday they were not sure who was

behind it. Police said Sunday night's explosion in Dhaka's Malibagh area left three people injured, including a police officer. After the explosion, the van caught fire.

US-based SITE Intelligence said in a Twitter post that IS was behind the explosion.

Four suspects arrested after Lyon bomb attack



Soldiers of French anti terrorist plan "Vigipirate Mission", secure the area, near the site of a suspected bomb attack in central Lyon

AP | Paris

French police have arrested four suspects following a blast in the city of Lyon that wounded 13 people last week, authorities said yesterday.

TV footage showed a police operation underway Monday in a small town outside Lyon involving officers wearing ski masks. Police had launched a large manhunt after a device exploded Friday on a busy pedestrian street in France's third-largest city.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner announced the first arrest on Twitter, a development later confirmed by Paris prosecutors, who handle all terrorism-related cases.

The prosecutors' office later said three other suspects, including a woman, were detained and formally arrested. According to French media,

they included the mother and the brother of the main suspect.

Lyon mayor Gerard Collomb, a former interior minister, said one of the suspects is an IT student who was arrested as he stepped off a bus.

"It's a relief for all Lyon inhabitants. I believe the case has been resolved," Collomb told BFM TV. "If there was a network, it has been identified and will certainly be dismantled."

French President Emmanuel Macron has called the explosion an "attack" but no group has claimed responsibility for the explosion yet. An investigation has been opened for "attempted murder in relation with a terrorist undertaking" and "criminal terrorist association."

Last week, France's counter-terrorism prosecutor, Remy Heitz, described video surveillance that showed a suspect heading toward the center of

Lyon on a bike Friday afternoon. The man was seen arriving on foot, pushing his bike along a pedestrian-only street, then leaving a paper bag on a concrete block in the middle of the street near a bakery.

The suspect immediately returned to his bike and left the same way. One minute later, the explosion shattered the glass of a refrigerator in the bakery, Heitz said. Regional authorities said the 13 wounded suffered mostly minor injuries.

It was unclear whether the suspect first arrested Monday was the same person, although Collomb said the detained student was identified thanks to video surveillance.

Investigators at the scene have found screws, ball bearings, batteries, a triggering device that can be used remotely and plastic pieces that may come from the explosive device.

Taliban attacks kill 10 Afghan troops, 4 police



Afghan National Army members attend their graduation ceremony

AP | Kabul, Afghanistan

A roadside bombing claimed by the Taliban killed 10 Afghan soldiers in the country's west while insurgent attacks on security checkpoints in northern Afghanistan killed four policemen, local officials yesterday.

The soldiers were driving back to base after picking up their salaries in the country's western Farah province. They were travelling in a Humvee when the explosion took place on Sunday afternoon in the Bala Buluk district, said Shah Mahmud Nahimi, a provincial councilman.

"The blast was so intense that no one in the Humvee survived," he added.

Elsewhere, the Taliban targeted several checkpoints in northern Sari Pul province on Sunday night, killing four members of the security forces and wounding 22, said Zabiullah Amani, the provincial governor's spokesman.

Mexico auctions seized vehicles outside presidential mansion

AP | Mexico City

Seventeen black, bullet-proof Chevrolet Suburbans stretched in a neat, polished row outside the onetime official residence of Mexico's presidents. Nearby stood a 2007 Lamborghini Murcielago and a 2016 Ford Shelby pickup truck with a video camera embedded in the front grill and a hand-held radio next to the driver's seat.

All were put up for auction Sunday by the Institute to Return the Stolen to the People, the new name for a branch of the Finance Ministry that is in charge of selling property seized from purported drug dealers and tax cheats as well as government vehicles and other property that is no longer in use.

Holding the auction outside Los Pinos, a mansion nestled on an edge of the capital's Chapultepec Park, carried extra significance since President Andrés Manuel López Obrador turned the once heavily guarded compound into an open cultural center when he took office Dec. 1.

Ricardo Rodriguez Vargas, head of the institute, said the goal Sunday was to raise 30 million pesos (\$1.5 million) from the sale of 82 vehicles. The money is to be sent to two poor communities in the southern state of Oaxaca to improve roads, schools and other infrastructure. Those municipalities were chosen because almost all their residents live in poverty, he said.

Some of the vehicles put up for sale had been collecting dust in government warehouses for 10 years.



People look inside a 2007 Lamborghini Murcielago to be auctioned

The top seller was the cherry red Shelby pickup with a license plate from the northern state of Sinaloa, home to one of Mexico's most brutal drug cartels. The fully loaded monster truck, a virtual office on wheels with leather seats and oversized side-view mirrors, went for 1.9 million pesos (\$99,685).

It was the most heavily attended auction in the history of the Finance Ministry, Rodriguez said, with 800 people registering to bid. For every person sitting in the auction area under the shade of a white tarp there were at least another five outside ogling the vehicles, taking selfies with their favorite cars or watching the bids rise from beyond the cordoned auction pit.

Holding the auction on the grounds of the former presidential mansion was symbolic, said Ricardo Alvarado, a researcher with Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity, a watchdog group. "Using a space that's characteristic of the luxury of

past administrations is without a doubt a symbol of what this government intends to do with austerity," he said.

López Obrador has slashed government salaries, including his own, and aggressively trimmed budgets. He plans to sell the presidential jet and travels on commercial airplanes, wears a Timex watch and claims to own fewer than a dozen suits. He is also targeting corruption and theft of state-produced gasoline.

The armored Suburbans, many of which were at least a decade old, drew little interest from bidders Sunday, but the competition was fierce for three classic Volkswagen sedans —



People look at cars to be auctioned



A man poses for photos next to a Chevrolet Camaro 2010 to be auctioned at the Los Pinos Cultural Center

the original Beetles — as well as for pristine Audi and BMW hatchbacks with leather bucket seats. Muscle cars, such as an orange Corvette and canary yellow Chevrolet Camaro, also saw intense bidding.

Men in fluorescent yellow

vests floated between bidders, yelping like Mariachi crooners as offers got loftier and loftier. Red auction paddles soared in the air, encouraged by a moderator in a little black dress who seduced buyers with warnings like: "Don't let it go!"