

TERRORISM

Female suicide bombers exist, too

The woman who blew herself up with an explosive vest in a suburban Paris apartment during a police operation Wednesday was far from the world's first female suicide bomber.

In the Palestinian territories, about a dozen women have carried out suicide attacks against Israelis since 2002 — including 27-year-old paramedic Wafa Idris, who blew herself up in downtown Jerusalem on Jan. 27, 2002. It was unclear if she planned to commit suicide.

Kurdish women have carried out several suicide attacks in Turkey since the 1980s, as have female members of leftist groups in their campaign against the government. The most recent attack occurred on Jan. 6, when a Turkish leftist group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at an Istanbul police station that killed an officer and wounded another.

Two female suicide bombers from Chechnya — belonging to a group known as the “black widows” in Russia — were to blame for the 2010 bombings of the Moscow metro, which killed some 40 people.

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Iranian students fill in registration forms indicating their readiness to carry out suicide attacks.

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French gendarmes enforce the **Vigipirate plan**, France's national security alert system, throughout Paris. France revealed on Nov. 19 it will spend an extra 600 million euros (\$641 million US) next year to ramp up security after the Paris attacks. President Francois Hollande announced this week that France is freezing plans to cut troop numbers through 2019. At the same time, the country will add 8,500 law enforcement jobs including 5,000 new police. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



INTELLIGENCE

Chemical weapons threaten the West

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group is aggressively pursuing development of chemical weapons, setting up a branch dedicated to research and experiments with the help of scientists from Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the region, according to Iraqi and U.S. intelligence officials.

Their quest raises an alarming scenario for the West, given the determination to strike major cities that the group showed with its bloody attack last week in Paris. U.S. intelligence officials don't believe ISIL has the capability to develop sophisticated weapons like nerve gas that are most suited for a terrorist attack on a civilian target. So far the group has used mustard gas on the battlefield in Iraq and Syria.

Still, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls on Thursday warned that Islamic extremists might at some point use chemical or biological weapons.

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Opera brings warmth to France's dark hour

Paris

Toronto-based performers set for opening of Versailles show



Marco Chown Oved IN PARIS

Barely 48 hours after the horrifying attacks in Paris, members of Toronto's Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Opera Atelier dance company faced a

very difficult choice.

Their presentation of Jean-Baptiste Lully's 17th-century opera, *Armide*, was scheduled to go forward at the Chateau de Versailles just outside Paris, but the companies weren't going to force anyone to get on the plane.

Overcoming their fears, in a show of solidarity, and as a measure of their professionalism, every single one of the 75 musicians, dancers and technicians boarded that flight.

"When we started hearing the news, it was panic in the early hours, the borders are closed and a state of emergency. Everyone was concerned," said ballet dancer Jennifer Nichols.



I think everyone, unanimously ... said we're doing this together

Ballet dancer Jennifer Nichols

"But once we heard that the company was moving forward with the tour ... we wanted to be in solidarity with the French people."

"There was a lot of trepidation," agreed Lucas Harris, who plays a type of lute called a

theorbo. "But everyone else was going and we didn't want to let them down."

Harris and his wife, Geneviève Gilardeau, who plays violin in the orchestra, went one step further than most of their colleagues: they also brought their four-year-old daughter, Daphnée.

"All the extra security makes us a little uncomfortable," said Harris. But in the week of rehearsals since their arrival, they haven't regretted the choice.

The Toronto performers are now ready for opening night Friday, a performance that's being dedicated to the victims at the Bataclan concert hall.

IN BRIEF

ISIL striving for reactions

ISIL has dramatically expanded its theatre of operations from its hub in Syria and Iraq, executing or inspiring a series of attacks across three continents that claimed more than 800 lives this year. The mayhem created by those attacks attracts the kind of attention that the extremist group thrives on. ISIL seeks to boost its credentials with acts of violence that attract recruits. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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