

Austria carries out raids against 72 alleged Islamic extremists ahead of 9/11 anniversary

[VIENNA \(AP\)](#) – Austrian security forces carried out raids against 72 alleged Islamic extremists this week ahead of the 23th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, citing the potential for copycat violence on the date of the plane hijackings that killed nearly 3,000 people.



The raids occurred across the European country on Tuesday, before

Wednesday's anniversary, because the 2001 tragedy remains symbolic for extremists and has inspired copycat attempts, the Directorate of State Security and Intelligence said Thursday in a statement.

Authorities thwarted an attempted attack last year on

anniversary at the Vienna central station, and the risk remains high on the date around the world, it said.

Tuesday's raids came a month after authorities foiled a plot to attack planned Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna which were then canceled. Austrian officials said the main suspect, a 19-year-old Austrian man, was inspired by the Islamic State group and [sought to kill tens of thousands of fans](#).

The actions on Tuesday included raids on several prisons in Austria, as well as interrogations of suspects and seizures of digital devices such as cellphones to look for evidence of radical Islamic propaganda.

["Measures have been taken against 72 people](#). A total of four house searches were carried out, 39 detention room searches, five interviews with suspects, where there was a concrete suspicion, so that the suspects were also interviewed. And 20 so-called threat interviews were also carried out," explained Interior Minister, Gerhard Karner.

Karner also said that 52 of the 72 people targeted in the raids are already in prison. "These are also important consistent measures because we simply see, both the judiciary and our investigating authorities, that we know and see again and again that some people ultimately become radicalized in prison,"

He... also called for stronger powers for investigators to be able to root out such plots. Currently, Austrian officials often rely on other countries – such as for the Swift concerts, where the CIA discovered the information – because unlike some foreign intelligence services, Austria can't legally monitor text messages.