

# **Dutch 'terror cell plotting major suicide attack had 220lbs of fertiliser for car bomb', prosecutors says after it was revealed ringleader was released early from prison for trying to join extremists in Syria**

[arrest of seven terror suspects.](#)

The suspects briefly appeared for the first time in the Rotterdam District court on Friday on terror-related charges, where their case was remanded until next week.

The men, who range from 21 to 34 years, were not named and will remain under maximum security conditions – which means they are only allowed to talk to their lawyers. The ringleader, named as Hardi N, was released early from prison after trying to join ISIS in Syria, it emerged today.

During Thursday's search 'police confiscated a substantial amount of raw materials to make bombs at the suspects' homes,' the Dutch public prosecution service said

Officers had previously placed a group of people under surveillance, including a 34-year-old Dutch man of Iraqi origin who was convicted in 2017 of attempting to reach territory controlled by the jihadist Islamic State group. . . Two others in the group also had convictions related to attempts to travel to Iraq or Syria. The men are suspected of

wanting to attack civilians at a major event in the Netherlands, the Dutch secret service (AIVD) said, but a possible target was not named.

Hardi N, 34, who was born in Iraq but lived in Arnhem, was initially jailed for 16 months in 2016 for trying to join Al Qaeda in Syria, but was released after less than a year after claiming to have renounced his extremist views. As part of his probation, he agreed to seek religious counselling once a week. In February 2016 he was sentenced to 16 months in jail with eight on probation. Despite the sentence being below the legal minimum, he decided to appeal. The appeal was heard at The Hague in October 2017 when judges increased his sentence to 24 months, but agreed he could serve 21 months on probation.

Two other terror suspects also had previous convictions, including 21-year-old Waïl el-A. who had also attempted to travel to Syria, Dutch media reported.

Far-Right politician Geert Wilders, who has previously denounced the treatment of Hardi N as too soft, attacked the Dutch government for its soft-touch approach following his arrest.

ncluded in the arrest was Waïl el-A who was previously sentenced to two years in jail for attempting to travel to Syria . . . El-A is linked to N through a jihadi rapper known as Marouane B. All three lived in the town of Arnhem before B traveled to Syria to fight. In a letter sent to De Telegraaf last year, B threatened that either he or his friends would carry out a terrorist atrocity in the Netherlands after the government supported US attacks in Syria.

Officials said that the investigation sped up this month because of the suspects' 'advanced preparations'.

It is not yet known exactly what event they were planning to target. However, the Netherlands will host a number of high

profile marathons including the Pinjnenburg BosMarathon in Soest on October 7, the Eindhoven Marathon on October 14 and the TCS Amsterdam Marathon on October 21.

The suspects are to be brought before an investigating judge on Friday at a behind-closed-doors hearing.