

German police warn of possible attack at Cologne Cathedral

From [DW](#) , [Reuters](#) and [The Independent](#)

German authorities said that have received an alert that a group may have been planning an attack on the Cologne Cathedral, the DPA news agency reported Saturday.

Authorities have not elaborated on the alert they received, saying police in the German city will take all special protective measures. Sniffer dogs were brought in to search the premises after the evening mass service and visitors will be screened before entering the church, Michael Esser, the chief of police, said in a statement.

Neither police agency specified the threat, but the German news agency dpa said authorities were responding to signs of a possible attack by Islamic extremists, without citing a specific source.

Michael Esser, head of the criminal investigation department of the Cologne police, said in a news release that the threat indications pointed to New Year's Eve rather than Christmas, but added that "we are putting everything possible in motion for the security of cathedral visitors on Christmas Eve."

Esser said that even if the alert were for New Year's Eve, authorities would "take everything into account this evening to ensure the safety of cathedral visitors on Christmas Eve."

Police and cathedral officials urged those attending Mass on Sunday evening to arrive early and not bring bags or purses.

Austrian police said in a statement they were increasing security on churches and Christmas markets given a heightened

state of alert. "Given that terrorist actors throughout Europe are calling for attacks on Christian events, especially around Dec. 24, the security authorities have taken the corresponding protection measures in public spaces," the police said.