

40 Arrested in Eurovision Terror Plot

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BAKU, Azerbaijan — Security services in Azerbaijan say they have arrested 40 suspects and seized weapons as they thwarted a series of planned terror attacks against the Eurovision Song Contest.

Targets included the song contest venue and major hotels housing foreigners, the National Security Ministry said in a statement Wednesday.

The statement said other plots included plans for an assassination attempt on President Ilham Aliyev in April, as well as attacks on religious pilgrimage sites and police stations.

Officials said 40 people have been arrested. Weapons seized included 13 assault rifles, one machine gun, 12 handguns, three rifles, 3,400 rounds of bullets, 62 hand grenades and several kilograms of explosives.

"The armed group set itself the aim of mounting terrorist attacks in several regions of Azerbaijan, creating a mood of powerlessness and lawlessness, sowing panic, ethnic and religious enmity, disrupting the public peace and damaging Azerbaijan's international image," the statement said.

The Eurovision attack would have centered on the Baku Crystal Hall, where the singing competition concluded early Sunday, officials said. Other planned targets included Marriott and Hilton hotels in the capital, Baku.

At least one suspected plotter, 37-year-old Azerbaijani citizen Vugar Padarov, and a security agent were killed during raids to shut down the terrorist group, the statement said.

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