

Iraq arrests network suspected in embassy bombing

Military operations spokesman Major General Qasim Al Mousawi said police on April 14 arrested members of the network based on evidence given by a failed bomber caught on the day of the attacks against German, Iranian and Egyptian embassies.

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Baghdad: A top Iraqi security official said Tuesday that authorities have dismantled the militant network allegedly behind suicide car bombings in April against three embassies in Baghdad, which killed 46 people.

Military operations spokesman Major General Qasim Al Mousawi said police on April 14 arrested members of the network based on evidence given by a failed bomber caught on the day of the attacks against German, Iranian and Egyptian embassies.

In the course of his news conference, Al Mousawi showed videotaped confessions of a man he identified as the failed suicide bomber, Haitham Ahmad Khalaf, and the network's alleged ringleader, Mubarak Mohammad Abbas.

Since last August, there have been a series of devastating suicide car bomb attacks against foreign and government targets in Baghdad, claiming hundreds of lives. In the past months, however, security has announced a series of high-profile arrests of top Al Qaida operatives allegedly behind the attacks.

On March 11, police said they arrested the leading Al Qaida member in Baghdad, Munaf Abdul Rahim Al Rawi, who gave security the information they needed to kill the terrorist organisations leaders in Iraq, Abu Omar Al Baghdad, and Abu Ayoub Al Masri.

Al Mousawi did not specify how many people were arrested in the raid to disrupt the alleged bombing network, which he said was linked to Al Rawi.

In the April 4 attacks, police said Khalaf attempted to detonate his car in front of his target twice, but failed. When he tried to escape, Al Mousawi said he was shot and wounded by security forces, who then detained him.

"For intelligence reasons, we then announced his death on Iraqiya TV so that we could proceed with investigations on the terrorist network," Al Mousawi said.

Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki's has based his reputation on restoring security to Iraq after years of war and instability and his popularity was shaken by the string of bombings.

The violence also came as the country's political factions are squabbling over the results of a close fought election on March 7 which left no clear winner.

A recount began on Monday of ballots in Baghdad after Al Maliki, whose coalition came in second, alleged there had been fraud in Baghdad.

Election officials said that the first day of counting went smoothly with 622 ballot boxes out of around 11,000 counted so far.

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