

World

American passengers subdued gunman on Paris-bound train

POTENTIAL JIHADIST

The suspect had been flagged by the Spanish and was known to French authorities

PARIS: A heavily armed gunman opened fire on a train in northern France, injuring three people before being overpowered by two passengers from the US. The incident happened on the high-speed Thalys service near Arras, and the attacker was arrested at Arras station.

The gunman was armed with a Kalashnikov, a knife, an automatic pistol and cartridges but was overpowered by US tourists travelling on the same train. "Everything happened very fast," Anthony Sadler, a student travelling with friends Alek Skarlatos and Spencer Stone, both members of the US military. "I didn't realise what was happening until I saw a guard run past. I looked back and saw a guy enter with a Kalashnikov. My friends and I got down and then I said 'Let's get him,'" said Skarlatos, who recently returned from service in Afghanistan.

"We didn't know if the gun wasn't working or anything like that. Spencer just ran anyway and if anyone had gotten shot, it would have been Spencer and we're just very lucky that nobody got killed," he added. The suspect is thought to be a 26-year-old of Moroccan origin



French police stand guard along the platform next to a train after an armed gunman was overpowered by passengers (above); Anthony Sadler (L) and Alek Skarlatos sold their medals after a brief ceremony in the town of Arras. AFP



French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said the group showed "great bravery". "Without their cool-headed actions we could have been faced with a terrible incident," he said. US President Barack Obama praised the young men, saying "It is clear that their heroic actions may have prevented a far worse tragedy".



Alpine meadows in Montana

Most of world's glaciers may disappear in the next centuries

NEW DELHI: A recalculation of the dates at which boulders were uncovered by melting glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age has conclusively shown that the glacial retreat was due to rising levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, as opposed to other types of forces.

Carbon dioxide levels are now significantly higher than they were at that time, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and other human activities. Because of that, the study confirms predictions of glacial retreat, and that most of the world's glaciers may disappear in the next few centuries.

"This shows that at the end of the last Ice Age, it was only the increase in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that could have caused the loss of glaciers around the world at the same time," said Peter Clark, a professor at the Ohio College of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, and co-author on the study.

Glacial loss in the future will contribute to rising sea levels and, in some cases, have impacts on local water supplies. The new findings, Clark said, were based on a recalculation of the ages at which more than 1,100 glacial boulders from 19 glacial moraines around the world were exposed to the atmosphere after being buried for thousands of years under ice.

"The data now show that as soon as the greenhouse gas levels began to rise, the glaciers began to melt and retreat," he said.

India dragged into US debate on Iran

WASHINGTON: India has emerged as a silent and unwilling player in the count of supporters, and opponents, of President Barack Obama's Iran deal currently unfolding in US congress. Lawmakers want to know what India, and other major importers of Iranian crude such as South Korea and Japan, would do with money owed to Tehran in unpaid bills if the deal fell through.

India owes Iran about \$12 billion for crude purchases since 2012, which it wasn't able to pay because of US sanctions.

The nuclear deal signed by P5+1 nations with Iran in July unfreezes these assets totaling

between an estimated \$100 billion and \$150 billion the world over. "That money is held primarily in India, China, South Korea, Japan. So I'm on the phone to those countries, those embassies, those ambassadors, asking them the question, 'What will you do if the United States walks away?' Will Iran get this money anyway? Will Iran get this money anyway?" said Democratic senator Claire McCaskill in a TV interview recently.

Saying the issue was too sensitive for India to wade into, Indian diplomats refused to either confirm or deny these discussions or specify the number of such calls and requests received by the embassy.

"All I will say is that we have welcomed the deal," said an

official, reiterating the official Indian position. But media reports suggest India is preparing to start the payments. Indian buyers of Iranian crude — refineries — have typically paid 45% of the bill into an account Tehran has with UCO bank, and withheld the rest. Commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman told Lok Sabha in March that Iran had \$2.8 billion in the UCO bank account and was owed \$2.94 billion by refineries as of February end.

Critics of the deal in the US argue Iran will use this money — which they are calling a "windfall" — to expand its influence in the region by fomenting unrest, funding terrorism.

Supporters, on the other hand, say that this money will go to Iran even if the deal fails because the US cannot persuade these countries to enforce its sanctions in perpetuity. Congress has until September 18 — 60 days after being officially notified of the deal — to approve or disapprove it. A kill vote needs two-thirds support to override presidential veto.

Republicans, who control both chambers of congress, have vowed to vote against the deal, but making it incumbent upon Democrats to support it.

But some Democrats, including their next senate boss Chuck Schumer, have declared themselves against the deal, but, experts believe, their numbers are not large enough to impel the deal.

IS DEPUTY KILLED IN US AIR STRIKE, SAYS WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON: Islamic State's Number 2 man was killed in a US airstrike while traveling in a car near Mosul, Iraq earlier this week, the White House announced on Friday.

Faithil Ahmad al-Hayali, also known as Hajji Mutazz, was a self-described caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's deputy and a member of his cabinet, called the Shura Council. The White House said Hayali was moving large amounts of weapons, including rifles, vehicles and people between Iraq and Syria. His death will "adversely impact ISIL's (an acronym for Islamic State) operations given that his influence spanned ISIL's finance, media, operations and logistics," the White House added.

US has killed a number of senior operatives of Islamic State leader Mohammed Badie in air strikes, but the outfit continues to control large swathes of land in both Syria and Iraq. Hayali was instrumental to some of those offensives. As in charge Islamic State in Iraq, he was said to be instrumental in planning military operations in the last two years.

The offensive on Mosul in June 2014 was planned by him. The outfit took 30 Indians hostage there, and continues to hold them. The city, the second largest Iraq, also remains in its control. Hayali is said to have served in Saddam Hussein's military as many other Islamic State operatives. He was purged after the US-led invasion, an expert told The New York Times.

He later joined Qaeda in Iraq. He was arrested and kept at the same prison as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The expert told Times Hayali "rose through the Islamic State's ranks with Baghdadi, so the caliph has lost a capable and trusted lieutenant," if the report is correct.

The Iraqi army, which the United States spent billions of dollars to train and equip, former commander in the early days of the IS offensive. Baghdadi's forces have since retaken significant territory north of the capital from IS, but Mosul remains under jihadist control.

photo of the day



Refugees and migrants shelter from the rain as they wait in no-man's land along the Macedonian-Greek border near the town of Geoplyia on Saturday. The refugees and migrants, who have been there since August 20, spent the night sleeping on the ground despite heavy rain. AFP

short stories

12 KILLED IN KABUL CAR BOMB

KABUL: A car bomb targeting a vehicle carrying foreign citizens killed 12 people outside a hospital on a busy Kabul street on Saturday. The force of the blast destroyed several vehicles, including a school van. Paramedics carried away casualties on stretchers. Security sources said the target was a group of foreign security contractors working for DynCorp International. Health officials confirmed at least one foreigner was dead. "Twelve dead bodies and 66 wounded people were taken to several Kabul hospitals," health official Kabir Amir said, "some were in a bad condition." No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Egypt sentences Muslim Brotherhood leader to life

CAIRO: Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Badie and 16 others have been sentenced to life in prison on charges related to the killing of five people in an attack on a police station in 2013. Badie and senior Brotherhood members Mohammed el-Beltagy and Safwat Hegazy were accused of inciting other Brotherhood members to attack the police station in Port Said and kill its officers and soldiers. The court sentenced 76 others in absentia to the same punishment. Badie has already been sentenced to death and to life in prison in other trials. The case is one of a series of mass trials involving supporters of the ousted President Hosni Mubarak.

in the news

1 IENG THIRITH

The former "first lady" of Cambodia's murderous Khmer Rouge regime died Saturday without victims ever seeing her face trial on charges of genocide. She served as the regime's social affairs minister with her husband, former foreign minister King Sary. She ordered purges of suspected traitors in her ministry, who were sent to re-education camps, and was aware of the regime's killing of perceived enemies, court documents stated. She was among the suspects charged by Cambodia's war crimes court, but was freed in 2012 when the case against her was suspended due to her progressive dementia.

HTSUNDAYSPECIAL

The Indo-Canadian stand-up who skewers chauvinists for a living

ANIRU DH BHATTACHARYA

TORONTO: He may perform as Sugar Sammy but his routine skewers Indo-Canadian chauvinists. In fact, it's quite something — four-mouthed, lots of physical comedy, and with a political edge that skewers chauvinists. Sugar Sammy, a stand-up comedy star in Canada, is quite the oddity: an Indian origin comedian, born on a leap day, doing plenty of shows in English in the Francophone Canadian province of Quebec. But for the 38-year-old Montreal-born Samir Khullar, that's routine.

"There still is a big English population here in Montreal and we have English comedy clubs here as well. I started in English because I learnt comedy in English. When I was watching stand-up, I would watch it in English. It was very natural for me. Then I started travelling the rest of Canada, the US, the UK, Australia, South Africa, my career took off in English," he said in an interview, in between a hectic schedule.

But gradually, he went bilingual. "Eventually, I tried it in French and it worked." Actually, at times when he does shows for Indian-origin crowds, he also mixes in Punjabi, the language of his parents, and Hindi. As he said, "Punjabi is my mother tongue, that's what we speak at home. I learnt Hindi from watching the movies because my parents used to sit down and make-me-watch-all the Amitabh Bachchan movies. It was a good way of learning."

Today, he is a brand representative for Apple in Quebec, and, according to Billboard magazine, had the top-selling Canadian tour for a stand-up for the year ending April 2014. Sammy, who studied at Montreal's McGill University,

may speak, or joke, in tongues but he keeps his tongue-lashing for French-language chauvinists of Quebec. The two sets of shows he has done concurrently are the bilingual You're Gonna Rize and En Français SVP (In French Please) in 2013 and 2014. He captured the Olivier award for Comedian of the Year in Quebec, unusual for a comic who works in what he describes as "Franglais", a French-English mix much like Hinglish.

Sammy often quips about Indian stereotypes. Some are pretty personal, like when he jokes his parents think he's actually a doctor and that he's on his rounds when he's out performing. In reality, his parents are his biggest boosters. His father, originally from Hoshiarpur, and his mother, from Una in Himachal Pradesh, are now retired after years of running convenience stores. As Sammy's words point out, any visitor to their house, even if he's come to fix the

pipes, can't leave without having watched a Sugar Sammy video. But he's cagey about revealing too much about his family or his personal life, including his partner, a fellow comedian (fellow actor), his brother, who recently acquired a real estate license, or his sister, who is studying to be a pastry chef. His relationship status is totally off limits for public consumption. As he explained, "I like to keep that private just because I got enough death threats. I just want to keep them out of it. It's a part of the game. I got one serious one last year in Sherbrooke and it was pretty scary and the police handled it over there. Someone called the fucking office, tonight we're going to get the federalist clown." (A federalist in Quebec is a person who supports being part of the Canadian federation.) That underscores how serious the language divide is in Quebec, though Sammy makes it into a laughing matter.

Sammy has toured India twice: the last time in 2013 for Comedy Central India, and he wants to return. That may have to wait, though, since he's not only a stand-up success in Quebec, but also a huge success in Montreal but come from completely different backgrounds on a homestead from a small town near Victoriaville and the other one is born here, of Indian descent, multicultural background. He's from a family where Simon, the other guy is Francophone, unilingual. "Those thonging to Sammy's sold-out shows or viewing his TV turn obviously don't think of his views as an imposition. Bill Clinton was from a small town near Victoriaville and he can improve upon."

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Malala passes UK exam with top grades



Malala, the youngest-ever Nobel laureate, has achieved top grades in the GCSE exam. GETTY IMAGES

LONDON: Malala Yousafzai, who won the Nobel prize last year for her campaign for girl education, has achieved top grades in the GCSE exam — equivalent to India's 10th standard exams — with best results in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. A student of Edgemoor High School in Birmingham, Malala won A* grades in GCSE and IGCSE Maths. Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, took to Twitter to celebrate: "My wife Tori Pekai

and I are proud of Malala getting 6A's and 4As, medication for every child."

Malala, who was shot by the Taliban in Pakistan, was the youngest person ever to win the Nobel peace prize last year. On the day it was announced, she was informed by her teacher during Chemistry class, but carried on as usual, attending remaining classes during the day. Besides A* grades in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Religious Studies, she also secured A* grades in History, Geography, English Language and English Literature.