

Sixteen suspects are from April 15 go to trial on terrorist cell Verviers

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Photo: EPA

On April 15, for the Brussels criminal court trial for the terror cell from Verviers, which was rolled up mid January 2015, commenced. The federal prosecutor continues sixteen people in the dossier.

It involves seven men whose identity was already known and of whom four are in custody. In addition, there are two Belgian, five French and Dutch Syriëstrijder, and a Moroccan man justified. At its meeting on April 15 will be the case only when the application will be treated initiated and the data are recorded.

Large-scale police operation

The Verviers terrorist cell was rolled up on January 15 at a major action of the federal prosecutor's office and the federal police. Who fell into a whole range of properties in Verviers, Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Brussels, Sint-Agatha-Berchem, Anderlecht and Liedekerke.

In one of the two house searches in Verviers opened two defendants, Soufiane Amghar and Khalid Ben Larbi, immediately fire on the special units of the Federal Police. The fire fight that ensued lasted several minutes and was so violent that a fire broke out in the house, so that forced the special forces were shooting at once and to use fire extinguishers. Eventually Amghar and Ben Larbi were killed. According to the federal prosecutor they were about to assassinate police officers and -commissariaten.

In the same building in Verviers was still a third man, Marouane El Bali, which was not involved in the firefight and was arrested, however. In the hours, days and weeks afterwards flew Mohamed Hamja Arshad Mamood Hajni (27), the brothers Souhaib (26) and Ishmael El Abdi (34), the Algerian Omar Damache (33), Bilel Houhoud (27) Abdelmounaïm Haddad (22) and Karim Ahalouch (29) in the cell. Houhoud, Haddad, Ismael El Abdi and Karim Ahalouch were released in the course of the investigation, subject to conditions, while the suspected mastermind behind the terror cell, Abdelhamid Abaaoud remained missing.

planned attack

At the request of the federal prosecutor, the Brussels chambers now decided that will have to stand trial sixteen defendants for their part in the offenses. Three people are accused that they were planning an attack in Belgium. It involves Souhaib El Abdi (26), Marouane El Bali (27) and Mohamed Arshad Hamja Mamood Hajni (27), all three are still in custody. Marouane El Bali, which should also stand trial for attempted murder on police officers because of his involvement in the shooting in Verviers, would have given the terrorist cell logistical support.

Mohamed Arshad Hamja Mamood Hajni would have rented the house in Verviers and would Soufiane Amghar and Khalid Ben Larbi started to pick up in France and Germany. The man first denied any involvement, but later stated that he was put under pressure by other defendants to cooperate in the terror plans. But he is also drawn into the bath by Marouane El Bali. According to the investigators of the Brussels Federal Judicial Police (FGP) El Bali would indeed have used a certain phone number that was tapped by the FPG, but according to El Bali he had borrowed the phone of Mohamed Arshad Hamja Mamood Hajni.

Souhaib El Abdi said he was involved in trafficking in false identity documents, but investigators overtook the man has traveled twice to the Turkish coastal city of Adana in the fall of 2014, once for a period of two weeks and once during a weekend. It is suspected that he has been in contact with members of IS.

terrorist group

El Abdi, el Bali and Arshad Mamood Hajni are also considered by the federal prosecutor as leaders of a terrorist group, like Omar Damache, a 33-year-old Algerian who was arrested in Greece. The man was in possession of a mobile phone handset that Abdelhamid Abaaoud from Greece would have been in contact with members of the terrorist cell in Belgium. Damache has always maintained that he never had contact with Abaaoud or others involved in the case, but research in Greece found that Abdelhamid Abaaoud some time has stayed with him. It is also in his apartment in Athens which a laptop was found which was probably used by Abaaoud.

Twelve other suspects would then have been part of the terrorist group. It involves Abdelmounaïm Haddad, Ismail El Abdi, and Karim Ahalouch (29). The latter was only placed under arrest warrant on March 30, 2015 and recently been released afterwards, but during the weeks after it came to light that he maintained solid contacts

with members of the terrorist cell. Ahalouch was released because Marouane El Bali had admitted during a confrontation that he had used Ahalouch's facebook profile. After his release, however, that Ahalouch had two Facebook profiles via the second he certainly was in contact with members of the terrorist cell.

Other members terrorist cell

Be it federal prosecutor also considered members of the terrorist cell: Nouredine Abraïmi (29) and Mohamed Darrazi (25), two Belgian Syria fighters, Mansour Niang (32), Mohammed Diallo (27), Walid Hammam (32), Karim Lakari (38) and Wissem El Mokhtari ((28), five French Syriëstrijders, the Dutch Syriëstrijder Zaid Koulliss and Moroccan Abdel Hafid Taghi (32).

Abdelhamid Abaaoud came on 18 November killed in a shootout with the French police so that for him, as for Khalid Ben Larbi and Sofiane Amghar, the criminal action is extinguished.

The federal prosecutor, the process will allow for the judicial vacation place while defending pushing for a treatment in September.
