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Italy

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Arrests in Venice after police intercept talk of bombing Rialto bridge

Three Kosovan men and a child detained by Italian police after allegedly discussing potential bombing and support for Isis

Angela Giuffrida in Rome

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Italian police have arrested four people in Venice after one of them was overheard in an intercepted phone conversation talking about the possibility of placing a bomb under city’s Rialto bridge.

“With all the non-believers there are in Venice, if you put a bomb under the Rialto bridge you’ll immediately earn a place in heaven,” one of the suspects said. It wasn’t clear if the reference

was bluster or indicated an imminent threat.

The suspects – three men from Kosovo and an unidentified minor – were also reportedly overheard praising the terrorist attack in London last week and discussing a desire to join jihadis in [Syria](#).

The group had been under surveillance for more than a year. A police statement said they were detained in an overnight sweep after it was established that they had undergone “religious radicalisation”.

The [Rialto](#) is the oldest of four bridges that span Venice’s Grand Canal, first built at the end of the 12th century.

The current bridge, an arched stone construction that dates from the late 16th century, is one of Venice’s best-known landmarks. The Venice prosecutor Adelchi d’Ippolito told reporters that the comment about blowing it up “was one the most worrying and alarming remarks we heard” on the intercept.

D’Ippolito said the suspects appeared to have been studying how to make explosives, but did not have the necessary components for constructing a bomb.

“There was [also] a lot of talk about unconditional support [for] [Isis](#). It wasn’t just theory and dogma,” D’Ippolito added, referring to the intercepted conversations.

Twelve raids were carried out overnight in the city’s historic centre, and one each in the nearby town of Mestre and the Veneto city of Treviso.

The interior minister, Marco Minniti, praised Italy’s anti-terror squad, Digos, for “its important achievement in the prevention of terror”.

Italy has deported 21 terror suspects since the beginning of this year, and 153 since January 2015, when the country ramped up security after the [Charlie Hebdo attack](#) in Paris. Security was tightened again after the [attack](#) in London on 22 March.

Earlier this month, authorities deported a Tunisian man allegedly linked to Anis Amri, who [killed 12 people after driving a truck into a crowd](#) at a Christmas market in Berlin in December. [Amri was shot dead by Italian police](#) during a routine check in Milan days after.

Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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