

The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

## **Guantanamo tip tied to arrests of 22 in Germany**

Charlie Savage  
Boston Globe  
January 24, 2005

WASHINGTON -- Information obtained through the interrogation of a Guantanamo Bay detainee led to a spectacular series of counterterrorism raids in Germany this month, in which more than 700 police swept through mosques, homes, and businesses in six cities and arrested 22 suspected militant extremists, according to a senior Defense Department official.

The role of the Guantanamo interrogations in triggering the raids had not been previously reported. In Europe, the interrogations have been widely denounced as flagrant violations of international law, and many leaders have expressed concern over alleged abuses.

The United States is holding 558 detainees at Guantanamo, and some have been imprisoned for as long as three years. Officials say that only a quarter of the detainees still regularly meet with interrogators, but they maintain that that core group still provides valuable intelligence.

The German raids of Jan. 12 are the most extensive intelligence coup attributed to the operation. The sweep was the largest counterterrorism operation in recent months in Europe.

In the series of raids, German police seized computers, cellphones, large sums of money, counterfeit identity documents, and literature espousing jihad, or holy war.

German police and prosecutors also told reporters that portions of the suspected Al Qaeda-related network had been under surveillance by Bavarian authorities. They did not say how the alleged cell first came to their attention.

Army Brigadier General Jay Hood, who has commanded the Guantanamo operation for 10 months, confirmed last week there had been a previously unknown terrorist cell in another country recently uncovered by information obtained at the base. He provided no further details.

"We have [obtained information] in the last 90 days which has been of significant value to us and has been relayed as appropriate to allies who might also have an interest, and I'll leave it at that," Hood said.

A senior Defense Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that the intelligence breakthrough led to the arrests in Germany. The raids have been considered particularly significant because the terrorists involved in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States had roots in Al Qaeda cells in Germany.

Hood said the US military has been interested in demonstrating the value of the interrogations at Guantanamo -- interrogations that he said have been undermined by adverse court rulings and the release of memos by FBI agents describing alleged abuses.

"I have provided through the chain of command specific examples where information gathered here has been of value to us and our allies in the global war on terror," Hood said.

He also said the operation has had many intelligence successes, including intelligence provided to US military forces operating in parts of Afghanistan, as well as information that contributed to a broader understanding of how Al Qaeda interacts with other terrorist networks around the world.

The most dangerous terror suspects are in a new wing of the prison, called Camp Five, where they are housed in cells next to high-tech interrogation rooms. About 50 detainees are living there. When interrogators question the detainees, an analyst observes the encounter via a closed-circuit camera, and then feeds information into a computer database and compares it to intelligence gleaned from other sources.

The civilian in charge of interrogations, Steve Rodriguez, said he would seek permission from his Defense Department superiors to use aggressive, stress-inducing, interrogation techniques only if he believed a detainee has information that could save lives that are in imminent danger. He said he has not encountered such a situation in his year and a half at the prison. After years of questioning certain detainees, the sessions continue to yield useful information about local terrain and leaders in areas of Afghanistan or Pakistan where the US military is still conducting operations, Rodriguez said.

The operation in Germany spanned six cities -- including Berlin, Frankfurt, and Bonn -- but most of the arrests came from the southern city of Ulm. German police told local reporters that the arrests included people from Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Palestine, Morocco, Bulgaria, and Germany.

A statement issued by German police and prosecutors said the suspects "worked collaboratively, highly professionally, and conspiratorially, misusing mosques and other Islamic establishments as cover" for their interest in promoting "political violence." They accused the suspects of money laundering and falsifying identity documents to help spread "their beliefs in a manner that incites racial hatred and of recruiting people for jihad."

According to press accounts from Germany, the chief state prosecutor said that several of those arrested were linked to the militant extremist groups Ansar al-Islam and El Tauhid, and one had been trained at an Al Qaeda camp in Pakistan. He said police had found no evidence that the group was planning an imminent terrorist attack. Instead, the objective of the raids was to destroy their logistical base.

The Al Qaeda cell that carried out the Sept. 11 attacks had been based in Hamburg, where they lived undetected by German authorities. Germany has intensified its efforts to crack down on Islamic extremists since then. Earlier this month, according to press accounts, the interior minister of Bavaria, Guenther Beckstein, delivered a speech warning that there were some 500 Islamic extremists in Germany who "must be considered extremely dangerous."