

## **Belgium: Man arrested for trying to drive high speed car into crowd in Antwerp**

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**Brussels:** Belgian police today arrested a man after he tried to drive at high speed through a busy shopping street in the port city of Antwerp, forcing pedestrians to jump out of the way.

### **REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE**

The suspect was of north African origin and used a car with French registration plates, Antwerp police chief Serge Muyters said.

Belgian authorities have raised the security in the city following the incident.

"A vehicle with French plates has tried to drive at high speed into the Meir (shopping street). A man in camouflage was taken away," Muyters said.

"The pedestrians had to jump aside," he said.

Meir, a mostly pedestrianised street in Antwerp's historic centre, is one of the most important shopping areas in the country.

The federal prosecutor's office said the car was intercepted late Thursday morning at the port docks and a Frenchman living in France was arrested. Authorities then raised security in the center of town, in places where people normally gather.

In the car, authorities said they found knives, a shotgun and a gas can with an unknown liquid.

The office said "because of these elements, and the events in London yesterday, the case is being taken on by the federal prosecutor's office," which usually deals with extremist attacks.

Prime Minister Charles Michel said authorities were "closely monitoring" developments in Antwerp.

"I also wish to inform parliament that we are currently closely monitoring the situation in Antwerp, in the dock area, where an individual displaying suspect behaviour and with suspect material, was arrested and stopped," Michel said.

"we remain vigilant. Our security services have done excellent work," he said.

The incident came a day after the terrorist attack in London where a knife-wielding attacker had first plowed an SUV into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, killing two and injuring over 30 before he fatally stabbed a police officer on Parliament grounds.

Wednesday was also the anniversary of the attack on Brussels airport and subway, which killed 32 people on March 22, 2016.

Belgium has been on high alert since the attack.

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