Beat: Miscellaneous

Australian PM Abbott warns of increased `terror chatter`

-, 23.12.2014, 13:02 Time

USPA News - Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott said Tuesday that there has been "a heightened level of terrorist chatter" since last week`s hostage crisis at a Sydney cafe, warning that there are people with the intent and the capability to carry out further attacks. Abbott, speaking after a meeting of the Cabinet`s National Security Committee, said that law enforcement agencies would continue to work around the clock to keep Australians safe over the holiday season.

He said he convened Tuesday`s NSC meeting to fully brief the new defense, immigration and border security ministers on the domestic and international security situation. "As we prepare to join family and friends to celebrate Christmas, we do need to be conscious of the fact that the terror threat remains high. There are people who would do us harm and who can do us harm," the prime minister said. "Our police forces and our security and intelligence organizations are doing everything they possibly can to monitor and disrupt all the threats to our security." Asked whether anything new had prompted the NSC meeting, Abbott explained that a briefing from the security agencies had indicated a "heightened level of terrorist chatter" in the wake of last week`s hostage crisis in Sydney. "I just want to assure people that, now and always while the terror threat is heightened, that our police and security agencies will be very active and very visible," he said. The prime minister did not provide specific details on the terror chatter. "I`m alerting people to the fact that the terror threat remains high and as you`ll all understand, at this level an attack is likely. We don`t know when and how an attack may come, but we do know that there are people with the intent and the capability to carry out further attacks," he said. Abbott added: "I`m just going to tell you what the police and the security agencies are telling us and that is that in the wake of the Martin Place brush with terrorism, there has been a heightened level of chatter amongst people who we would normally think of as terrorist sympathizers. And that`s why it`s important that I keep the public as informed as I can." The prime minister, however, said Australian citizens should go on with their lives as normal despite the increased terror threat. "Australians should go about their lives as normal because what terrorists are trying to do is to scare us out of being ourselves," he said. The warning comes about a week after Australia was shaken by a 16-hour-long hostage crisis at a chocolate cafe in Sydney, resulting in the deaths of two hostages and the hostage-taker. Memorial services took place on Tuesday for both victims, Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-3141/australian-pm-abbott-warns-of-increased-terror-chatter.html

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619