

ISIS 'highly likely' to attack the London Underground

Claims chemical weapons expert

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ISIS militants returning to the UK could launch a chlorine gas attack on trains, the London Underground or at a football match, according to a chemical weapons expert.

Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, a former commanding officer at the Joint Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Regiment, said the last two weeks in Syria and Iraq have seen the "most concentrated and deadly use of chemical weapons" since the 1980s Iran-Iraq war.

"It is very evident that ISIS are putting much time and effort into training its jihadis in the use of chlorine as a terror weapon and in particular in IEDs (improvised explosive devices)," he wrote on 2Paragraphs.

"Virtually every foreign jihadi who returns to the US or UK will have been exposed to training of this sort and will have a reasonable idea on how to use chlorine and other toxic chemicals as a terror weapon.

"In the UK at least, up to 90 tonnes of chlorine can be purchased without any licences required."

After returning from advising security forces in Baghdad last week, he told the Daily Mirror he feared a chlorine gas attack was "highly likely", adding: "This could happen on a train or tube or even at a big football match."

De Bretton-Gordon examined the

likelihood of such an atrocity on the 20-year anniversary of the Tokyo subway sarin attack, which killed 12 people and injured more than 1,000 more, causing chaos in the Japanese capital. Japan's emergency services treat commuters after the gas attack which saw the army decon-

punctured with umbrella tips on the Tokyo subway during morning rush hour. But de Bretton-Gordon said less complicated methods would be needed for a deadly chlorine attack.

The expert, who has recently worked with UK-based charity Syria



PHOTO: BBC

ISIS has been using chlorine IEDs against Iraqi and Kurdish soldiers and overran Saddam Hussein's primary chemical weapons factory last year.

taminate Tokyo's subway cars Japan's emergency services treat commuters after the gas attack which saw the army decontaminate Tokyo's subway cars

The Aum Shinrikyo movement used packets of the nerve agent, which they

Relief advising civilians on what to do in a chlorine gas attack, founded chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence firm SecureBio and is a director at gas mask manufacturers Avon Protection.



Ted Cruz confirms US presidency bid

AP, Lynchburg

US Senator Ted Cruz opened the first major campaign of the 2016 presidential season yesterday with a kickoff speech courting cultural conservatives and declaring that he will devote himself to "reigniting the promise of America."

One of several Republican hopefuls to rise from the tea party movement, Cruz spoke at Liberty University, the college founded by the late Rev Jerry Falwell, hours after a wee-hours tweet announcing his White House bid. The choice of the college founded by the late Rev Jerry Falwell was meant as marker against potential rivals who are also counting on Christian conservatives to fuel their candidacies.

Cruz addressed his religious faith, his father's Cuban roots and his unquestioned conservative credentials, saying "for so many Americans the promise of America seems more and more distant."

And he asked the enthusiastic crowd to "imagine a president that finally, finally, finally secures the borders."

"Imagine a simple flat tax," he said. "Imagine abolishing the IRS."

Lanka President heads to China

Seeks to smoothen relations; wants stronger ties with India

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's new president heads to Beijing this week for talks with China's leadership, seeking to smooth ruffled feathers after scuttling Chinese-funded projects and seeking stronger ties with regional rival India.

Maithripala Sirisena has moved to wind back Beijing's influence, which became the strategically located island's biggest foreign financier and enjoyed significant political and even military influence under Rajapakse.

Sirisena has unnerved China by suspending a \$1.4 billion "port city" project in Colombo that India considered a security risk, and ordering a review of other Beijing-financed projects and loans amid allegations of corruption.

Experts say the president will be seeking a divorce of sorts from China during the three-day state visit starting tomorrow, while trying

not to upset the economic giant.

Sirisena will hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping along with other members of the leadership, Colombo said.

"The former government allowed China a free run in Sri Lanka," Sri Lankan political commentator Victor Ivan told AFP. "President Sirisena wants to maintain a normal relationship that will not irritate India."

The visit is about "bringing balance in Sri Lanka's engagement with two Asian rivals", P Sahadevan, professor of South Asian studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, told AFP.

Sirisena made India -- rather than China -- his first foreign trip after winning the January elections, seeking to rebuild ties with Delhi damaged by tensions over Beijing's influence on the island.

Delhi was reportedly furious after Chinese submarines were allowed to dock at Colombo port last year when Rajapakse was still in power.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani folk artists perform during the Pakistan Day military parade in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistan held its first national day military parade after seven years showing the country has the upper hand in the fight against the Taliban.

Abe, Widodo to tighten defense ties

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday to forge tighter economic and defence ties, as Tokyo works to court friends in the face of a rising China.

The two nations agreed to tighter cooperation on coastal security, regular talks between their respective defence and foreign ministers, and greater Japanese investment in Indonesia.

"We wish to contribute to the peace and prosperity of this region and the international community by strengthening our strategic partnership with Indonesia, which, like Japan, is a maritime nation and democracy," Abe told Widodo as they began their talks.

Widodo's visit to Tokyo is a part of his week-long tour of Japan and China, aimed at attracting investment and forging closer political ties.

The visit came as Abe actively courts Southeast Asian nations to join Japan to create a counterweight to China, which is

locked in territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea and with Vietnam and the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Widodo has previously told Japanese media that China's claim to virtually all of the South China Sea has no legal foundation.

Indonesia "is ready to play a role of mediator" between Tokyo and Beijing, Widodo told NHK before his trip.

Roughly 1,500 Japanese firms are operating in Indonesia, and Tokyo is Jakarta's top aid donor.

Indonesia, by contrast, counts Japan as the number one destination for its exports, particularly its energy sales.

During his stay, Widodo, who took office in October, will also meet with Japanese business leaders, including executives from Toyota, the world's biggest automaker that has major operations in Indonesia.

Ahead of his visit, the Indonesian leader told Japanese media that he was interested in Japan's assistance to build key infrastructure, such as power plants, highways, and railways.



Putin to be 'immortalised'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A bronze bust of Russian president Vladimir Putin -- in the style of a Roman emperor -- will be unveiled next month to honour his supposed ability "to bring order and end wars".

The idea to celebrate Putin's alleged achievements was sparked by the anniversary of Russia's allied victory over the Nazis and it now being one year since it seized the Crimean peninsula from the Ukraine after a 97 per cent 'yes' result in a referendum.

Andrey Polyakov, the leader of the St Petersburg Cossack group Irbis, said that the sculpture will be installed near Parnas station in north St Petersburg.

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