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Spanish police arrest 13 over terrorism fears

updated 7:51 a.m. EDT, Wed May 20, 2009

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Spanish police arrest 12 Algerians and an Iraqi in Bilbao
- Fears money from criminal activities used to fund Islamic terrorism in Algeria
- The 12 male Algerian suspects were all born in Oran, Algeria

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MADRID, Spain (CNN) -- Spanish police arrested 12 Algerians and an Iraqi early Wednesday on suspicion of using money from common criminal activities to fund Islamic terrorism in Algeria, Spain's Interior Ministry said in a statement.

"The 13 formed a group dedicated to robbery and drug trafficking. The police are investigating if the suspects diverted funds they obtained from criminal activities to finance Islamic terrorism in Algeria," the statement said.

All 12 of the Algerian suspects are men and were born in Oran, Algeria. They range in age from 20 to 43, the statement said. The Iraqi suspect, also a male, is 36.

All 13 lived in the large Basque city of Bilbao, in northern Spain, the statement said.

The raids began there shortly after midnight and continued through early morning, CNN partner station CNN+ reported.

Police seized receipts of money transfers to Algeria, stolen passports and stolen gold and silver objects, a portable computer, 14 mobile phones, and knives, the ministry statement said.

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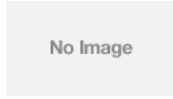
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