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## Dynamite Found At Store In Paris

Unknown Group Tips Off Police

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PARIS, Dec. 16 -- Police found five sticks of dynamite in a landmark Paris department store Tuesday after an unknown group warned that bombs were hidden there and threatened more attacks unless [France](#) withdraws its military forces from [Afghanistan](#).

The interior minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, said that the dynamite was old and that there was no detonator to set it off, suggesting that the threat to holiday-season shoppers had been minimal. But the scare dramatized the risks inherent in President [Nicolas Sarkozy](#)'s decision in April to increase the number of French troops in Afghanistan to about 3,000 and expand their role to include combat operations.

"In the present situation, I call on everybody to be very careful and very moderate," Sarkozy told reporters in Strasbourg, France, where he was addressing the [European Parliament](#). "Vigilance in the face of terrorism is the only possible line, because unfortunately anything can happen, and firmness, because we do not compromise with terrorists, we combat them."

Belgian police cited the presence of French and other European troops alongside those of the United States in Afghanistan as a possible motive for six North African immigrants arrested Thursday in Brussels and charged with belonging to a terrorist group. Belgian authorities said three of the six had been to Afghanistan and one had returned recently intending to carry out a suicide attack in concert with the [al-Qaeda](#) terrorist network.

A Frenchman of Tunisian origin, taken into custody in the French Alpine town of Grenoble as part of the same investigation, was charged Monday with illegal association "related to a terrorist enterprise," French authorities announced. He was suspected of helping run a now-closed Web site, Minbar, which Belgian authorities described as a propaganda vehicle for Islamist extremism.

One of the six arrested in Brussels, Malika al-Aroud, was a frequent contributor to the site; her husband was also among those arrested. Aroud's previous husband, a Belgian of Tunisian origin named Abdessater Dahmane, killed himself in a 2001 suicide bombing in northern Afghanistan that targeted and killed the main anti-[Taliban](#) military chieftain at the time, Ahmed Shah Massoud. The suicide bombing took place two days before the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and at [the Pentagon](#)

The French news organization [Agence France-Presse](#) said it received a letter at its Paris headquarters Tuesday morning warning that several "bombs" had been placed in the men's section of Printemps, one of two giant department stores near the Gare St. Lazare train station in central Paris. The letter, posted in Paris on Monday, seemed designed to help police find the explosives, specifying that a bomb was in the third-floor restroom "in the first toilet as you enter." But it warned that next time, there would be no

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such notice.

"Get this message to your president of the republic so he withdraws these troops from [Afghanistan] before the end of February 2009," added the letter, signed by the Afghan Revolutionary Front. "Otherwise we will be in action again in your capitalist department stores, and this time without warning you."

The letter, written in French with a number of grammatical errors, went on to say two more "bombs" had been placed in the women's toilets on the second floor. Alliot-Marie said police found five sticks of dynamite in all, without specifying where they were discovered.

Soon after hearing of the letter, police cordoned off the area and evacuated the store, which normally would have been crowded with shoppers and tourists buying holiday presents and enjoying decorated show windows that are an annual attraction. Several hours later, police took down their barriers and the store reopened for business under increased security.

The Paris [newspaper Le Monde](#) recalled that a caller to the news agency had made similar threats last Wednesday, leading police to evacuate the store for several hours. In addition, it said, a Taliban military commander warned in a video distributed last month that France faced retribution if it did not pull the troops out of Afghanistan.

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