

6 killed in 'terrorist attack' at U.S. consulate 3 cops, 3 assailants die in 15-minute gunbattle outside complex in Turkey



NBC News and news services
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ISTANBUL, Turkey - At least six people were killed Wednesday during a 15-minute gunbattle outside the U.S. consulate in Istanbul.

Several armed men opened fire on the police checkpoint at the complex's main entrance at around 11 a.m. local time, officials said.

Istanbul Gov. Muammer Guler said that three police officers and three attackers were killed during the shootout. "There is no doubt that this is a terrorist attack," he said.

Police have launched an operation to capture at least one suspect who is believed to have escaped.

Pistols and shotguns

Guler said two of the attackers were Turkish nationals. A policeman and a tow-truck driver were also injured, he said.

Istanbul prosecutor Aykut Cengiz Engin said the attackers were armed with pistols and shotguns.

A U.S. Embassy spokeswoman said there were no reports of casualties among American consulate employees.

Television images appeared to show four bodies on the ground in front of the high-walled complex.

U.S. intelligence sources told NBC News that the attack is seen as particularly troubling because of the recent string of incidents targeting U.S. diplomats around the world.

Ross Wilson, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, immediately requested "additional security presence" at American diplomatic missions in the country.

'Shot him in the head'

Yavuz Erkut Yuksel, a witness, told CNN-Turk television that the attackers emerged from a white vehicle.

"One of them approached a policeman while hiding his gun and shot him in the head," Yuksel said.

Enis Yilmaz, who was going to the consulate for a visa application, told Reuters that one of the assailants drove off in a vehicle.

"They (assailants) were four people. Three of them got out of the car and fired at the police. I saw them dead afterwards lying on the ground and many more dead among the police," he said.

Ulus Durgut, 24, who was going to the heavily-guarded compound on the European side of Istanbul, described the attacker as "bearded men" with "long hair".

Mutlu Gunes, a 13-year-old eyewitness, told reporters he was on his way to a mosque when he spotted several men preparing guns and placing them inside a Ford Focus car before driving to the nearby consulate.

"The three of them got out of the car. One of them shot a policeman in the chest and I saw one terrorist killing himself after being shot by police. Then I hid under a car," Gunes told reporters.

Turkey has seen armed attacks from a variety of groups over the years, including Maoists, Trotskyists, Kurdish separatists and Islamist militants.

The secure U.S. consulate building was built after homegrown Islamic militants linked to al-Qaida carried out suicide bombings that targeted two synagogues, the British Consulate and a British bank in Istanbul in 2003, killing 58 people.

The Associated Press and Reuters contributed to this report.