
NUMBER OF TERRORISTS COMING TO EUROPE FROM SYRIA, IRAQ SEES MINOR RISE

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The number of Islamist militants entering Europe after fighting for terrorist groups, such as Daesh, has only marginally increased after the demise of Daesh at the hands of the Iraqi and Syrian armies, Europol Executive Director Rob Wainwright told Sputnik Tuesday.

"There has been some increase, but not the numbers that we were expecting * The numbers are not as high as we expected," Wainwright said on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos.

The EU police chief added that his organization was not aware of the reasons behind the limited rise but was still on the lookout for any terrorists seeking to cross EU borders and commit attacks.

"We don't know how many of them died in combat, how many of them have already moved from that region to other regions, but not yet Europe. But there are large numbers of unaccounted foreign fighters. They is still potential to return and take part in terrorist activities. It remains a top concern for Europol," he said, stressing that it was uncertain how many militants were planning to come to Europe in the future.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Daesh was defeated on both banks of the Euphrates river in Syria in early December. He later ordered a partial withdrawal of Russian troops that were helping the Syrian government combat terrorists. Daesh's defeat in Iraq was proclaimed that same month. Limited pockets of Daesh resistance still remain in both states, but the vast majority of the group's so-called caliphate, which spanned eastern Syria and northern Iraq between 2014 and 2017, has been retaken by government forces.

Europe has been a significant source of foreign fighters who traveled to join Daesh ranks. The Soufan Group think tank estimates that some 6,000 people left Europe – mainly France, Germany and the United Kingdom – to wage war on the side of terrorists in Syria and Iraq. Hundreds of fighters have since returned home. Syrian authorities have also warned that terrorists are likely to pose as refugees to get into Europe.

Kaynak/Source: