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## DÜSSELDORF NEO-NAZI BOMB ATTACK DEFENDANT ACQUITTED

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31.07.2018

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Deutsche Welle (31 July 2018)

A German man accused of bombing a Düsseldorf train station 18 years ago has been acquitted. The attack, which injured 10 people from eastern Europe, sent shockwaves through Germany.

A German court on Tuesday acquitted Ralf S. of attempted murder charges for the July 2000 bombing of a train station in eastern Düsseldorf.

The prosecution had demanded a life sentence for the 52-year-old, who is a known neo-Nazi, but the Düsseldorf District Court found there was insufficient evidence for a conviction.

### Key events in the case

- A pipe bomb containing about 200 grams (7 ounces) of TNT exploded at Düsseldorf's Wehrhahn train station on the afternoon of July 27, 2000.
- Ten people, most of them Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, were badly injured, including a pregnant woman who lost her baby and her foot.
- Police investigating the crime received more than 900 tips from the public and testimony from more than 1,000 people, but were unable to successfully prosecute any suspects.
- Officers questioned Ralf S. for several hours in the wake of the bombing and placed him under surveillance, but they failed to amass enough evidence tying him to the crime.
- In June 2014 a prison inmate told police that S. □ who was briefly in custody over an unrelated offense — had boasted about carrying out the attack, using a racial slur against immigrants.

Nine of the 10 victims were of foreign heritage, but they had all made Germany their home when they were killed. The 10th victim was a German police officer. Every one of them was shot in cold blood.

Why is this significant? The Düsseldorf bombing sent shockwaves across Germany, mainly because it appeared to be a right-wing extremist attack targeting Jews, and came around the same time as a number of attacks against foreigners. The failure of the justice system to solve the case led to questions about possible flaws in the initial investigation □ especially in the light of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders, which showed that police and intelligence agencies avoided pursuing the lines of inquiry that led to Germany's far-right scene. The neo-Nazi NSU was

responsible for 10 murders, two bomb attacks and several bank robberies between 2000 and 2007.

Who is Ralf S.? The defendant was a former soldier who traded in army goods and military memorabilia. He was also a known gun fanatic, who often patrolled his neighborhood in eastern Düsseldorf dressed in combat gear and accompanied by his dog. Many of those who knew Ralf S. at the time of the attack said they believed he was capable of carrying it out.

What was the evidence? Prosecutors argued that Ralf S. rented an apartment where he allegedly constructed the bomb and a remote detonator. The suspect was said to have boasted "I'm a tough nut" to a female friend after he was questioned. According to a report in the Kölner Stadtanzeiger newspaper, he had called another well-known neo-Nazi in the area, Sven Skoda, to request the latter supply him with an alibi.

nm/rt (AFP, dpa)

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