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French Police Arrest Five Chechens Suspected of Preparing Attack

By The Moscow Times

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A French policeman guarding a street in Paris.

Police arrested five Chechens in southern France on suspicion of preparing an attack, a police source said on Tuesday, nearly two weeks after Islamist militants killed 17 people during three days of violence in the French capital.

The source said four of the Chechens were arrested in Montpellier or nearby, and a fifth in Beziers. The Midi Libre newspaper reported that a cache of explosives was found during police searches.

The case has not been passed onto the anti-terrorist section of the Paris prosecutor's office, a judicial source said. Local television chain LCI said organized crime and score-settling between Chechen gangs was at the source of the suspects' plan.

France remains on security alert after gunmen stormed the Paris offices of the Charlie Hebdo

newspaper on Jan. 7 and killed 12 people, in what they said was revenge for cartoons it had published mocking Islam. A further five people were killed during two further days of violence that shocked France.

Hundreds of thousands of people protested in Russia's Chechnya region on Monday against what its Kremlin-backed leader called "vulgar and immoral" cartoons of the prophet Muhammad published by Charlie Hebdo.

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