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Chechens Accused of Recruiting Jihadists in Paris

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Six men of Chechen origin are facing terrorism charges in France over a suspected recruiting ring sending jihadi fighters to Syria, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

The men, aged 32 to 38, were handed preliminary charges Thursday for alleged preparation of terrorist acts and for terror financing, a spokeswoman for the prosecutor's office, which handles terrorism cases for France, said Friday.

The suspects were apprehended in the southern commune of Albi and the suburbs of Toulouse on Feb. 8 during an anti-terror operation led by France's General Directorate for Internal Security, according to Le Figaro newspaper.

Four of the suspects were residing in France as political refugees, one was a dual citizen of Russia and France and another received French citizenship in 2009. All six were ordered held without bail.

In January, five Chechens in possession of explosives were reportedly arrested during police

raids in the southern French cities of Beziers and Montpellier. Reports that the suspects were terrorists rapidly emerged in the media. Authorities later dismissed these reports, claiming the suspects in their custody were involved in organized crime but were not terrorists.

(AP, MT)

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