

Five face terror charges over Australia-Syria boat plan

SYDNEY (AFP) — Five young men face life behind bars after they were charged with counter-terrorism offences over a plan to sail to Indonesia to join jihadist groups in Syria, Australian police said.

The men, aged in their twenties and early thirties and whose passports had been cancelled, included notorious Australian Islamic preacher Musa Cerantonio, who was detained in the Philippines in 2014 and deported for reportedly urging people to join jihad in Iraq and Syria, the Australian Broad-

casting Corporation reported.

The men, who were arrested on Tuesday, bought a seven-meter (23-foot) boat and drove it 2,840 kilometers (1,765 miles) from Melbourne north to Queensland state where they planned to set sail to Indonesia, the Australian Federal Police said.

"The men... were each charged with one count of making preparations for incursions into foreign countries for the purpose of engaging in hostile activities," the Australian Federal Police said in a statement late Saturday.

"The maximum penalty for this offence is life imprisonment."

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation named two of the other men as Shayden Thorne and Kadir Kaya.

The Federal Police said there was no current or impending terrorism threat from the case and that the men were due at a Queensland state court hearing on Monday.

Canberra has been increasingly concerned about its citizens fighting with jihadist organizations such as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, saying

some 110 Australians had left the country to join such groups.

The government has also been worried about homegrown extremism and the terror threat level was raised to high in September 2014.

It has passed numerous national security laws including legislation allowing

for passports to be cancelled to prevent Australians from leaving the country.

At least six attacks have been filed on home soil over the past 18 months, but several have taken place, including the terror-linked murder of a Sydney police employee in October.

Maduro threatens to seize idle Venezuela plants, jail owners

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Nicolas Maduro threatened Saturday to take over idle factories and jail their owners following a decree granting him expanded powers to act in the face of a deep economic crisis.

Maduro's remarks came as Venezuela's opposition warned the embattled leader that if he tries to block an attempt to hold a recall referendum, society could "explode."

Speaking to supporters in the capi-

tal, Caracas, the president ordered "all actions to recover the production apparatus, which is being paralyzed by the bourgeoisie."

He also said that businesspeople who "sabotage the country" by halting production at their plants risk being "put in handcuffs."

Last month the country's largest food and beverage distributor, Empresas Polar, shut down its last operating beer plant. It says it has been unable to

access hard currency to buy raw materials.

Maduro accuses Polar and others of trying to destabilize the financially stricken country by exacerbating shortages of goods from foodstuffs to medicines to toilet paper.

Meanwhile dueling anti- and pro-government crowds demonstrated in Caracas on Saturday for and against a bid to recall the president. Maduro opponents demanded that the National Electoral Council rule on the validity of some 1.8 million signatures collected in favor of the referendum and allow it to move forward.

"If you obstruct the democratic way, we do not know what could happen in this country," opposition leader Henrique Capriles said at one rally. "Venezuela is a bomb that could explode at any moment."

Across town, Maduro ally Jorge Rodriguez vowed there would be no recall referendum.

"They got signatures from dead people, minors and undocumented foreigners," Rodriguez said.

Opposition leaders deny any fraud in the signature drive.

Friday's decree extended for 60 days Maduro's exceptional powers to address the crisis. Venezuela is suffering from multiple financial woes including rampant inflation and low prices for oil, the cornerstone of its economy.

Opposition leaders accuse Maduro and his predecessor, the late President Hugo Chavez, of mismanaging the economy. Maduro alleges that conservative political interests are waging what he calls an "economic war" seeking his ouster.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (center) speaks during a meeting with ministers at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Venezuela May 12, 2016. (Reuters)

8 dead, 44 hurt in South Texas bus crash

LAREDO, Texas (AP) — A charter bus headed to a casino crashed in far South Texas on Saturday, killing eight people and injuring 44 others in a one-vehicle rollover, officials said.

Seven people died at the scene on US Highway 83 about 46 miles north of Laredo and another died later at a Laredo hospital, Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Conrad Hein said.

"The driver of the bus lost control and rolled over," he said. "Everything's real preliminary right now."

Hein said the driver was among

the survivors. His name and the names of passengers were not immediately available, Hein said.

The trooper said it was raining Saturday morning but it was uncertain if that was a factor in the crash that occurred just before 11:30 a.m. He said no other vehicles were in the area at the time.

"Our troopers are looking into what happened but it's going to take us

some time," he said of the investigation. "We just know the driver lost control."

The National Transportation Safety Board said Saturday night it was sending a team to also investigate the wreck. They were expected to arrive Sunday.

Webb County Volunteer Fire Department Chief Ricardo Rangel told the Laredo Morning Times the bus belonged to OGA Charters was headed to a casino in Eagle Pass, about 125 miles northwest of Laredo. The bus company is based in San Juan, in Hidalgo County in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. A message left at the bus company Saturday was not immediately returned.

Hein said 23 people were taken to Doctors Hospital in Laredo, where the eighth victim died. Fifteen were taken to Laredo Medical Center. Seven were taken to a Dimmit County hospital in Carrizo Springs.

Priscilla Salinas, a spokeswoman for Laredo Medical Center, said bus passengers being treated there were in stable condition. She said she could share no additional information.

The highway at the accident scene was reopened by early evening. Laredo is about 150 miles southwest of San Antonio.

PRINCE GUITAR — A bright yellow, uniquely shaped guitar used by Prince to perform such tunes as "Cream" and "Gett Off" is going up for auction. Heritage Auctions is selling one of the late artist's "yellow cloud" electric guitars beginning June 24 with an opening bid of \$30,000. The guitar was one of several custom guitars Prince used in the 1980s and 1990s. The instrument features a serial number and comes with a letter of authenticity from Prince guitar technician Zeke Clark, who noted that the guitar's neck was broken in France in 1994 and later repaired. Other items up for auction in Beverly Hills, California, include Prince record sales awards and an original demo tape featuring the songs "Just as Long as We're Together," "My Love Is Forever" and "Jelly Jam." (AP)

Incumbent favored in Dominican Republic election

SANTO DOMINGO (AFP) — Voters in the Dominican Republic's presidential election Sunday are expected to give the country's incumbent leader, Danilo Medina, a fresh chance to make progress against grinding poverty and widespread crime.

Medina's centrist PLD party has been in power for 12 years in the Spanish-speaking country, which shares the island of Hispaniola with its troubled neighbor, Haiti.

The Dominican Republic's economy is booming thanks to the millions of dollars foreigners spend visiting the Caribbean tourist haven's luxury hotels and beaches. The economy grew seven percent last year, and inflation was at a measly 2.3 percent.

But 40 percent of the nation's 10 million residents are estimated to live in poverty and the unemployment rate is about 14 percent, according to government figures.

containing an area of five hundred fifty-seven thousand seven hundred eighty-nine square meters (557,789 sq.m.), more or less. The administration and maintenance of the Balete Pass National Shrine shall be under the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of National Defense shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 3. The amount necessary to carry out the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office under the Department of National Defense. Thereafter, such amount as may be needed for the maintenance of the Balete Pass National Shrine shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 4. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.

Franklin M. Drilon
FRANKLIN M. DRILON
President of the Senate

Feliciano Belmonte Jr.
FELICIANO BELMONTE JR.
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This Act which originated in the House of Representatives was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on October 20, 2014 and February 2, 2016, respectively.

Francis Yano
FRANCIS YANO
MARINO B. DRILON JR.

H. No. 844

Republic of the Philippines
Congress of the Philippines
Metro Manila
Sixteenth Congress
Third Regular Session

Begun and held in Metro Manila, on Monday, the twenty-seventh day of July, two thousand fifteen.

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10796]

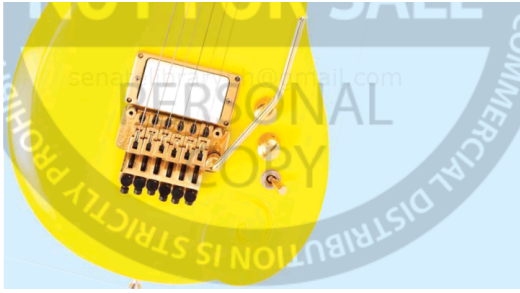
AN ACT DECLARING THE BALETE PASS IN STA. FE, NUEVA VIZCAYA AS A NATIONAL SHRINE TO BE KNOWN AS THE BALETE PASS NATIONAL SHRINE

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. The Balete Pass in Sta. Fe, Nueva Vizcaya, more particularly described as follows, is hereby declared as a national shrine to be known as the Balete Pass National Shrine. A parcel of land situated at Barangay Tactac, Sta. Fe, Nueva Vizcaya, bounded on the east, along lines 10-20 by Lot 1329, Lot 1327 and Lot 1325, CAD No. 768-D; on the south, along lines 1-2 by portion of the Talavera River Watershed Forest Reserve; on the west, along lines 2-7 by the Wildlife Sanctuary; on the north, along lines 7-10 by the Balete Pass Forest Reserve; Thence

| | | |
|-------|---------------|-----------|
| 1-2 | S. 74° 09' W. | 400.00 m. |
| 2-3 | N. 33° 59' W. | 360.00 m. |
| 3-4 | N. 85° 40' W. | 390.39 m. |
| 4-5 | N. 04° 20' E. | 80.00 m. |
| 5-6 | N. 73° 35' E. | 282.73 m. |
| 6-7 | N. 33° 59' W. | 180.00 m. |
| 7-8 | N. 78° 20' E. | 550.00 m. |
| 8-9 | S. 77° 10' E. | 270.00 m. |
| 9-10 | N. 68° 41' E. | 136.90 m. |
| 10-11 | S. 13° 59' E. | 127.70 m. |
| 11-12 | S. 04° 54' E. | 106.34 m. |
| 12-13 | S. 13° 38' W. | 16.59 m. |
| 13-14 | S. 13° 25' E. | 184.23 m. |
| 14-15 | S. 11° 01' W. | 21.63 m. |
| 15-16 | S. 13° 46' W. | 21.76 m. |
| 16-17 | S. 60° 47' E. | 45.01 m. |
| 17-18 | S. 17° 16' W. | 7.95 m. |
| 18-19 | S. 41° 09' W. | 111.13 m. |
| 19-20 | N. 71° 17' W. | 21.02 m. |
| 20-21 | S. 69° 14' W. | 154.12 m. |

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Critics complain that crime has worsened under Medina, and say that his party has been in power for too long.

Medina also faces allegations he has unfairly used electoral funds, and broad international criticism over policies that discriminate against the Dominican-born children of Haitian migrant workers.

Thousands of these Dominicans never received local identification, and cannot vote in their own country. They say his government has intentionally marginalized them for racist, economic and social reasons.

Nevertheless the 64 year-old Medina is the most popular leader in Latin America. According to a survey by Mexican consultancy Mitofsky, Dominicans give him an 89 percent approval rating.

If re-elected, it would be his fourth consecutive term in office.

