

Beat: Travel

Bomb threat causes evacuations in Amsterdam

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USPA News - The main Dam Square in the Dutch capital of Amsterdam was evacuated and cordoned off for hours on Wednesday after a "very serious" bomb threat against an upscale department store, authorities said, but nothing suspicious was found. The bomb threat was made after 3 p.m. on Wednesday against the De Bijenkorf's flagship store on the Dam Square, though details of the threat have not been released.

"We have experts who investigate bomb threats and they had reason to take it very seriously," a police spokeswoman said. The bomb threat led police to start a large-scale operation to hastily evacuate both the store, its parking garage, and the busy square in front of it. Other buildings in the area were also evacuated though people were allowed to stay inside some buildings which were further away. Videos from the scene showed police officers ordering residents and tourists to quickly leave the square where one of the royal palaces is also situated. "Here speaks the police: everybody leave the Dam Square," one officer said through a police van's loudspeaker as cops on foot, motorbikes, and in cars carried out the evacuation. The evacuation and closures continued until around 7:30 p.m. local time, more than four hours after the evacuation began. "Police have examined the buildings and found nothing unusual," a police spokesperson explained. "There will be further investigations into the bomb threat." The terrorism threat level in the Netherlands was raised to "substantial," the second highest of four possible levels, in March 2013, meaning the chance of an attack is real. In December 2002, all 10 Ikea stores in the Netherlands were evacuated after the furniture chain received a letter warning of bomb attacks. As a result, two bombs were found at Ikea stores in Amsterdam and in the town of Sliedrecht. One of the bombs exploded, injuring two police officers. The explosives were later linked to a wider attempt to extort millions from Ikea.

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