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LAPD: 'Pre-emptive' arrests made to get terror info

Federal source says investigation 'trying to beat a ticking clock'

Tuesday, December 23, 2003 Posted: 4:42 PM EST (2142 GMT)

LOS ANGELES, California (CNN) -- In response to the national terrorism alert, Los Angeles police have made "a number of pre-emptive arrests," a high-ranking LAPD source said Tuesday.

Those arrests were made in the past 48 hours and included people who came to authorities' attention after the September 11, 2001, al Qaeda terror attacks in the United States.

The source stressed that none has been charged with any terrorism-related offense but were rounded up on unrelated charges -- in one case, credit card fraud -- in an effort to get information about possible threats. None of those picked up was identified.

A federal law enforcement source told CNN a number of grand jury subpoenas have been issued in the Los Angeles area in the past few days as part of a "massive investigative effort" -- with a real sense, the source said, of "trying to beat a ticking clock."

There are briefings -- sometimes several in a day -- involving various FBI field offices in key cities -- especially New York, Washington and Los Angeles -- in an effort to "coordinate the intelligence gathering," the federal source said.

Newly installed California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said security has been increased across the state.

"Airports, harbors, bridges, power plants and other key areas will receive extra security," he said. "This is an elevated state of readiness to ensure the safety of



Police search a car as part of stepped-up screening at Los Angeles International Airport.

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all of our people in California."

In addition to the arrests in California, numerous people named on America's terrorist watch lists have been prevented from entering the United States, a government official said Tuesday.

The official, who would not provide specifics, said the people were turned back at various locations. Another government official said a handful of flight crew members from other countries also have been stopped in recent days.

The United States has been working with airlines and governments of other countries in an attempt to improve their security, especially after Sunday's move by the Department of Homeland Security to raise the nation's terror threat level from "elevated" (yellow) to "high" (orange).

In addition, a senior State Department official said Tuesday the U.S. government has received intelligence that al Qaeda is planning attacks against U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen and Kenya. The official said the United States is getting "good cooperation throughout the [Persian] Gulf" in terms of providing extra security to U.S. facilities. ([Full story](#))

In Washington, high-level Pentagon officials, with the exception of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, were scheduled Tuesday to move at a moment's notice to secret locations, in a drill to practice what happens if the Defense Department is disabled by terrorists, U.S. officials said.

The so-called "continuity-of-government" exercise is a direct result of the heightened terror threat alert, the officials said. The secret locations are outfitted with communications and other facilities to keep the Pentagon functioning.

Missile batteries placed in Washington

Missile batteries were being moved into place around Washington, and possibly around New York City, and "irregular air patrols" were ordered because of what one senior Pentagon official called "specific, reliable, credible" intelligence regarding a possible terror strike.



Some of that relates to the possible use of aircraft originating in other countries as weapons in suicide attacks, a homeland security official said.

There are particular concerns about Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas

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and a handful of other cities and, according to some sources, two rural areas -- one in the East and one in the Southwest, the official said.

The threat level has been raised to high several times since the attacks on September 11, 2001, but officials at all levels said the threat this time around seems more serious than prior threats.

Some homeland security officials predicted the increased security could last into February, at a cost of about \$1 billion per week -- much of it in increased overtime costs for law enforcement personnel.

Thirty members of the Alabama National Guard were deployed Tuesday to assist with security in four major Alabama airports in response to the heightened terrorism threat alert.

New York Gov. George Pataki told reporters that he signed an executive order to allow state troopers from New York, Connecticut and New Jersey to ride and monitor commuter trains.

In addition, he said, "we've increased patrols along the Canadian borders and ... are working to make sure everything from airports to bridges, tunnels and other mass transit facilities have heightened security."

But Pataki urged visitors and residents to get out and enjoy the season. "Go to the restaurants, see the shows; there's no more exciting or better place to be."

CNN's Jeanne Meserve and Kathleen Koch contributed to this report.

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