

Britain

Lawmaker's killing fuels concern

UK terror-prevention program questioned

LONDON, Oct 19, (AP) — The killing of British lawmaker David Amess is once again fueling concern about a government program aimed at preventing at-risk young people from becoming radicalized, with critics saying change is urgently needed to ensure it works.

Questions surfaced soon after Amess was stabbed to death Friday afternoon amid reports in the British media that the man arrested had been referred to the Prevent program several years ago but was not currently on the security service's counter-terrorism watchlist. The suspect is being held under the Terrorism Act on suspicion of murder, and police say he may have had a "motivation linked to Islamist extremism."



Amess

Under Prevent, Britons are asked to report anyone they suspect may be on the road to becoming radicalized - so the person can get help. The hope is that early intervention will help thwart terrorist attacks. Teachers, prison officers and local government agencies are legally required to make such referrals, but anyone is able to.

But the program, conceived in the years following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S., has been repeatedly criticized since it was expanded in the aftermath of the deadly bombings of London's transport network in 2005. Its detractors say it's not as effective as it could be and that it unfairly targets Muslim communities.

An independent review of Prevent was launched in 2018 after 36 people were killed in four terror attacks, including the bombing of an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, but it has yet to release any conclusions.

The success of such programs is difficult to measure - since their failures are public but their wins are nearly impossible to tally. But experts say it's clear that Prevent could do better, including by working more closely with communities to build their trust and encourage people to seek out its services.

"I think Prevent does work in many cases, and I think it's an unfair expectation to have to believe it works 100% of the time - no government program ever works 100% of the time. So one case of failure doesn't necessarily mean the whole program is rubbish," said Peter Neumann, a professor of security studies at King's College London. "But it is equally wrong to just say everything is fine and let's just carry on. There are problems with Prevent. It needs to be reviewed, and it should be reinvented."

As it stands, the program was conceived essentially as a police program, Neumann said. Those links to the police make it difficult for family members to refer people, even if they have concerns about radicalization. By contrast, some other European countries have relied on community-led independent initiatives, he said.

Decentralized

In Belgium, de-radicalization programs are much more regional and local than they are national. This is partially because the country's government is decentralized but focusing on the local level is also thought to help the programs counter the phenomenon as quickly as possible.

Spain's recently instituted program puts an emphasis on cooperating with associations that work with what authorities consider at-risk groups. "In other European countries because Prevent is not led by the police, it's led by local community figures, it has more of an appeal of seeking help and trying to do something about someone who is in trouble," Neuman said.

In Britain, by contrast, the strong association of Prevent with police may deter family members - the people closest to those at-risk - from reporting them.

"If they feel that by contacting Prevent they are basically getting them locked up, a lot of parents will be very reluctant," said Neumann.

Former Justice Secretary Robert Buckland agreed that the program needs to be about more than just policing. He said it should encourage far more cooperation among the police, community groups, schools and the health service to make it easier to share information and intervene effectively.

"We've got to make sure that every arm of the state is abso-

lutely working together in order to understand as much as possible about these individuals," Buckland, who was a member of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Cabinet until September, told Times Radio.

When reports are made to Prevent, they are initially screened by police, with those who may be genuinely at risk of radicalization referred to a local panel for review. If a panel decides further assistance is needed, it is supposed to develop an individual aid package that may include things like education and employment support, as well as mentoring.

Some 6,297 people were referred to Prevent in the 12 months through March 2020, a 10% increase on the previous year, according to the latest government statistics. Less than a quarter of these were referred to a local panel, with 697 being offered further support.

One ongoing criticism of Prevent is that it amounts to spying on Muslim communities. Part of the program's problem is its history. It began in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, when policymakers were focused on terrorism carried out by Islamic extremists. While rightwing extremists now pose a growing threat, critics believe Prevent is still too centered on the Muslim community. Groups like Amnesty International have long criticized the program.

Of the 697 people who were offered support packages by local Prevent panels, 43% were referred due to fears about far-right radicalization and 30% were linked to Islamic extremism, according to the Home Office.

Conduct

The government promised to conduct an independent review of Prevent in February 2019, but it was delayed when the first person named to lead the inquiry was forced to step down because of concerns about his objectivity. Work resumed after a new leader was appointed in January.

The review is designed to determine whether Prevent is working and what else can be done to protect people from the influence of extremists. No date has been set for when its findings will be published.

"There are problems with Prevent," Neumann said. "So I think this would be a ... tragic opportunity to basically rebrand and reinvent Prevent."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Boris Johnson led a somber British Parliament on Monday in honoring the Conservative lawmaker stabbed to death as he met constituents at a church hall, an attack that has raised questions about how the country protects its politicians and grapples with extremism at home.

The tributes from shaken and grieving colleagues came as detectives tried to determine whether David Amess was targeted simply because he was a legislator, or for more individual reasons. A 25-year-old British man with Somali heritage, Ali Harbi Ali, was arrested at the scene and is being held under the Terrorism Act on suspicion of murder. Police say the suspect may have had a "motivation linked to Islamist extremism."

The prime minister told lawmakers that "this House has lost a steadfast servant."

"Sir David was taken from us in a contemptible act of violence, striking at the core of what it is to be a Member of this House and violating the sanctity both of the church in which he was killed and the constituency surgery that is so essential to our representative democracy," he said, referring to the open meetings British lawmakers hold with those they represent.

The death of the popular legislator - who had served in Parliament for almost 40 years and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2015 - shocked Britain, especially its politicians. It came five years after Labour Party lawmaker Jo Cox was shot and stabbed to death by a far-right extremist. Cox was the first British lawmaker to be killed since a peace accord ended large-scale Northern Ireland violence almost 30 years earlier.

The House of Commons returned Monday from a three-week break for a session that opened with a prayer from the Speaker's chaplain, Tricia Hillas, and a minute of silence from hundreds of lawmakers in the chamber.

Then lawmakers from all parties stood recall Amess fondly as a hard-working legislator who never sought high office but, as Johnson put it, "simply wanted to serve the people of Essex," his home county.



Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, (right), and Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, speak to members of the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing from Myrtle Beach, S.C. at their airbase in Saudi Arabia Friday, Dec. 12, 1990. Powell has died from COVID-19 complications. He was 84. (AP)

Powell's credibility put on line in 2003

A trailblazing legacy, blotted by Iraq war

WASHINGTON, Oct 19, (AP) — A child of working-class Jamaican immigrants in the Bronx, Colin Powell rose from neighborhood store clerk to warehouse floor-mopper to the highest echelons of the US government. It was a trailblazing American dream journey that won him international acclaim and trust.

It was that credibility he put on the line in 2003 when, appearing before the United Nations as secretary of state, he made the case for war against Iraq. When it turned out that the intelligence he cited was faulty and the Iraq War became a bloody, chaotic nightmare, Powell's stellar reputation was damaged.

Still, it wasn't destroyed. After leaving government, he became an elder statesman on the global stage and the founder of an organization aimed at helping young disadvantaged Americans. Republicans wanted him to run for president. After becoming disillusioned with his party, he ended up endorsing the last three Democratic presidential candidates, who welcomed his support.

For many Iraqis and others, Powell will forever be associated with that 2003 speech and the bloodshed that followed. But with Powell's death Monday at age 84 of COVID-19 complications, Republicans and Democrats remembered him as a historic figure, a groundbreaking soldier-turned-statesman, the first Black secretary of state and first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Powell rejected comparisons between himself and previous icons like George Marshall, the World War II general who became America's top diplomat. But he embraced a local-kid-does-good narrative that reflected his humble roots.

He was fond of recalling his youth in the Bronx, working first as a clerk in a neighborhood store and then as a sweeper in the massive Pepsi-Cola plant directly across the East River from the United Nations headquarters, a job he frequently referred to in meetings at the United Nations. A geology student at City College of New York, Powell made clear that he found his calling in the Reserve Officer Training Corps or ROTC, which would initiate his 35-year career in the Army.

Powell served two tours in Vietnam and rose through the ranks with various stints in Cold War-era Europe before President Ronald Reagan tapped him as his national security adviser. President George H.W. Bush then appointed him chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where he oversaw the ouster of Saddam Hussein's Iraq from Kuwait in 1991.

It was then that the "Powell Doc-

Powell had mixed legacy among some African Americans

trine" emerged; it was a strategy for the use of American military power that relied on the deployment of overwhelming force and a clear and defined exit strategy from conflict.

Powell held the Joint Chiefs of Staff position into the Clinton administration, where he recalled arguments with Cabinet members over military intervention in the Balkans, which Powell believed was unwise.

"I thought I would have an aneurysm," Powell wrote in a memoir about a White House incident in which then-US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright asked what good the armed forces are if they were never used. Powell ended up succeeding Albright as secretary of state in 2001.

And while his military career had taken him from the minefields of Vietnam to West Germany's strategic Fulda Gap, it was his role as secretary of state in wartime that almost did him in.

Powell was the first of President George W. Bush's Cabinet members to publicly blame Osama bin Laden for the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the first of Bush's top national security

aides to visit Pakistan, just a month later, to make clear to the Pakistanis that they must join the US-led coalition or be labelled an enemy.

Amid significant security concerns in the aftermath of 9/11, Powell flew to Islamabad, his plane blacked-out as it went into a corkscrew landing to avoid potential rocket strikes, to tell then-Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf that his support in the operation to avenge the attacks was non-negotiable. It worked, at least in the short-term.

Powell was personally skeptical of the 2003 Iraq invasion and cautioned against the war privately. But he dutifully presented the administration's case for invasion not only in diplomatic meetings with his counterparts but also in the now-infamous speech before the U.N. Security Council in February 2003.

Confronted with widespread doubts about the accuracy of the American and British assessment of Saddam's capabilities and intentions, many compared the stakes of Powell's speech to be similar to those of former United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's electrifying 1962 presentation to the council about the Soviet Union's placement of missiles in Cuba.

In Powell's speech - which he would later call a "blot" on his record - he brandished a vial that he said could have contained anthrax that intelligence agencies insisted Saddam was producing in mass quantities.

"Less than a teaspoon of dry anthrax, a little bit - about this amount," he told the council, waving the vial. "This is just about the amount of a teaspoon. Less than a teaspoonful of dry anthrax in an envelope shut down the United States Senate in the fall of 2001."

Some, including several critics of the Bush administration, believed Powell had hit the mark, but unlike Stevenson 41 years earlier, whatever convincing he accomplished was quickly erased.

No anthrax or, in fact, any weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq after the end of the war, which led to a protracted US military occupation of the country that many believe resulted in a broader destabilization of the Middle East, including the rise of the Islamic State, that persists to this day.

Europe

Diplomat honored: Portugal paid official homage Tuesday to Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese diplomat who during World War II helped save thousands of people from Nazi persecution, by placing a tomb with his name in the country's National Pantheon.

Leading Portuguese politicians and public figures attended the formal televised ceremony as the tomb was placed alongside other celebrated figures from Portuguese history at the landmark Lisbon building. (AP)

Polish ruling a threat: The European Union top official said on Tuesday that the recent ruling from Poland's constitutional court challenging the supremacy of EU laws is a threat to the bloc's foundations.

Addressing EU lawmakers in Strasbourg, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said she is deeply concerned by the ruling, which she said is "a direct challenge to the unity of the EU" and undermines the protection of judicial independence. (AP)

Car crashes in Greece: A vehicle carrying 10 migrants hoping to head from Greece north into the Balkans crashed in northern Greece overnight, leaving one person dead and nine injured, including one seriously, police said Tuesday.

Police said Tuesday that the seven-seater car had been heading out of the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki towards the border when it veered off a highway into a ditch shortly before midnight. A passing motorist alerted emergency services. (AP)

Ahli United Bank offers its services to its customers during the anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammad holiday

On the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) for Hijri year 1443, Ahli United Bank (AUB) congratulates and extends its warm wishes to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the government, the citizens of Kuwait and all residents across the country. May Allah the Almighty bless the nation with prosperity and joy.

During this occasion, all AUB branches in Kuwait will be closed from Thursday 21 October 2021 and will resume work on Sunday 24 October 2021.

AUB has reconfirmed that during this period customers will be able to conduct their banking services through the Bank's electronic



channels, including mobile and internet banking (www.ahliunited.com.kw), and through the 24/7 telebanking 'Hayakom' service through 1812000.

Furthermore, customers can also conduct their financial transactions through the Bank's ATMs which are conveniently located across Kuwait.