

International

Racism and anti-Semitism have no place in Germany

Investigator tells German broadcaster: 'He planned to kill'

HALLE: Germany must crack down on hate, violence and hostility, Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday, a day after a gunman attacked a synagogue and killed two people nearby in a live-streamed rampage. There could have been many more victims had the suspected perpetrator, German national Stephan B, breached the gates to the synagogue in the eastern city of Halle, Merkel said.

The gunman failed to get into the synagogue in Wednesday's attack, but went on to kill two bystanders in his live-streamed rampage, which appeared to be modeled on last year's gun attack on a New Zealand mosque. "I am, like millions of people in Germany, shocked and dejected by the crime that was perpetrated in Halle yesterday," Merkel said to loud applause in an address to a trade union congress in Nuremberg.

"We all know, we only just avoided a terrible attack on the people in the synagogue," she added. "There could have been many more victims." In a video of more than 30 minutes that the attacker live-streamed from a helmet camera, he was heard cursing his failure to enter the synagogue before shooting dead a woman passer-by in the street and a man in a nearby kebab restaurant.

Two other people were injured but regional broadcaster MDR said their condition was not critical. "We are happy about every synagogue, every Jewish community and all Jewish life in our country," Merkel said. "That means ... the representatives of the state must use all the means of the state to crack down on hate, violence and hostility towards people." A military

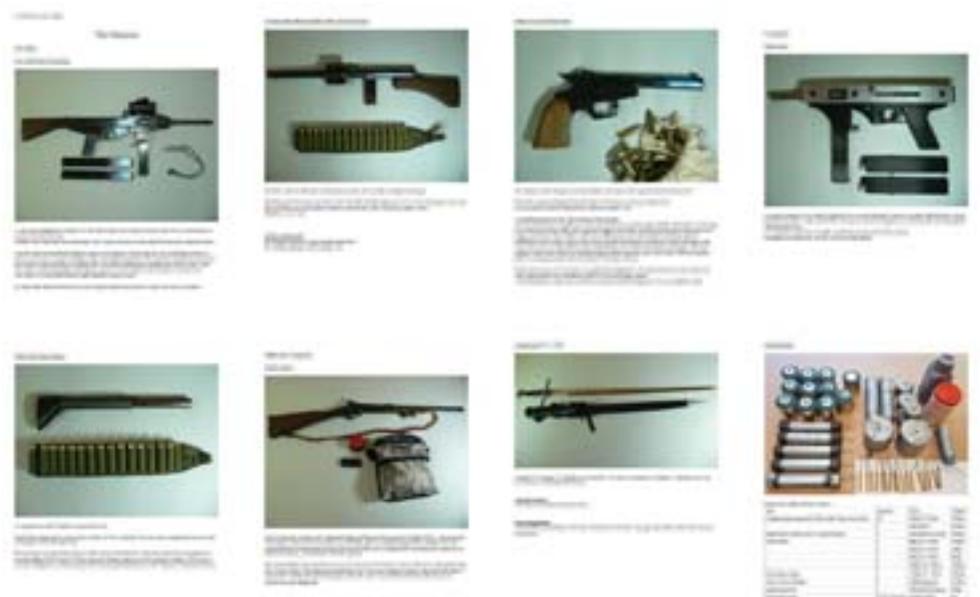
source said Stephan B. had done military service, but received no special training. His full name cannot be published under German privacy laws.

German media said investigators had searched the attacker's home. MDR reported that he lived with his mother in Benndorf, west of Halle. "He planned to kill people," MDR quoted one investigator as saying. Earlier, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited the synagogue and told reporters: "Today is a day of shame and disgrace ... It fills us all with horror that an attack took place in our country, a country with this history". "I'm very sure the overwhelming majority of this society in Germany wants Jewish life to be part of this country," Steinmeier said. "We must protect Jewish life."

Attacks

Most Jewish institutions in Germany's large cities have a near-permanent police guard due to occasional anti-Semitic attacks by both far-right activists and Islamist militants. Josef Schuster, president of the council of Germany's Jewish community, criticized police for not being stationed outside the synagogue that was attacked as dozens prayed inside.

"If police had been stationed outside the synagogue, then this man could have been disarmed before he could attack the others," Schuster told Deutschlandfunk public radio. In the event, the synagogue's solid locked gates and high walls provided ample protection against the attacker's seemingly improvised weapons. Schuster said that while it was normal



HALLE: This online document obtained by AFP on 4chan platform shows pictures of hand-made weapons and munitions. The document appears to be by German killer Stephan Balliet according to SITE monitoring group. — AFP

Halle gunman's fumbling, furious assault caught on camera

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: After minutes of stillness punctuated by clicks and muttering, the camera pitches up and shows the close-shaved, youthful face of a man looking into the lens. On Wednesday in the east German city of Halle, the man before the camera is preparing to commit a violent assault against a synagogue that will devolve into a random, blundering search for fresh targets.

The shooter's technique recalls the self-presentation of the man who killed 51 and wounded dozens at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March. In a heavy German accent, he hurriedly babbles a brief anti-Semitic diatribe blaming Jews for being "at the root of problems" in Western societies. Then the shooter readies an apparently home-made shotgun before driving the short distance to the synagogue, blasting hip-hop over a bluetooth speaker. Parking in the leafy street by the high brick wall of the Jewish cemetery, the man who introduced himself as "Anon" is discouraged

when he sees the massive wooden synagogue doors bolted shut. When he fails to barge open smaller entrances, he lights the fuse of a home-made bomb and hurls it over the wall. A shocked old man in a cap hurriedly turns his bicycle away as the shooter walks from the explosion. After the door resists another bomb, a 50-something woman in a pink shirt, light scarf and glasses walks by, grumbling at the bizarrely-dressed attacker but apparently almost unfazed.

He levels an automatic weapon and fires a short burst into her back. Further efforts to force the door prove useless, and after pitching more bombs and a molotov cocktail over the wall, he fires another, longer burst into the lifeless body of the woman lying by his car. "Pig!" he shouts, before realising he has punctured a tyre. The automatic weapon lets the killer down when a man stops his van soon after to check on the dead woman. Attempting to fire a new burst, the gun only clicks and he fumbles to

practice in his experience for all synagogues to have police guards while services were being conducted inside, this appeared not to be the case in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, where Halle is located.

However, the head of Germany's police union was sceptical about providing that level of protection. "We'd have to guard every synagogue, every church, every mosque, every

holy place in Germany around the clock, so I don't know if this was a mistake or if this really couldn't have been foreseen." Oliver Malchow told ARD public television. Germany's federal prosecutors ramped up their legal case yesterday, saying they would ask the investigating judge at the Federal Court of Justice to issue an arrest warrant against Stephan B, who was detained on Wednesday. —Reuters

change the magazine. When the frightened passer-by has driven off, attempts to blast the lock off the synagogue door with a shotgun are equally unsuccessful. "Sorry guys. I'm a fucking idiot. I can't kill shit," he tells his imagined viewers in English as he drives away. Inside the synagogue, worshippers have watched the attacker's attempts to penetrate the building on the security cameras. "We barricaded our doors from inside and waited for the police," Jewish community leader Max Privorotzki told Stuttgarter Zeitung. "In between, we carried on with our service."

A few streets away, the gunman spots a kebab shop and pulls up, grabbing his cobbled-together arsenal. "Doener. That'll do," he says under his breath. He tosses one of the bombs inside, firing a final burst with the automatic before it jams for good. But his arrival is enough to scare patrons and the owner, and several men flee from the plush red-upholstered benches into the depths of the store.

"He was really calm, like a professional. Perhaps he's done something like this several times," proprietor Rifat Tekin, who escaped by ducking behind the salad counter, later told broadcaster NTV. From the shooter's perspective, there is more wrestling with weapons and

cursing as he attempts to harm the men cowering at the back of the shop, who are pleading for their lives.

Cartridges rattle onto the floor from his seemingly inept fingers. After briefly stepping outside and scaring pedestrians, he returns to the shop where he executes one of the men at point-blank range with two shotgun blasts, cutting off his cry of "No!". "At least I've demonstrated how useless improvised weapons are," he mutters to himself and the camera on his way out, a lone bottle of cola somehow still standing on one table, another toppled next to an abandoned meal and a pair of glasses at the next.

The police cut off his first attempt at escape in the car, and he exchanges fire with them before falling to the ground for several seconds, struck by a bullet as he attempted to drive off. "I'm bleeding, I've been shot in the neck," he says once he is underway again, groaning with pain and grimacing in the moments his face is visible. He turns the car radio on over hectic, cartoonish music from his bluetooth speaker, but the presenters are discussing the US-China trade war rather than his failed onslaught. "Sorry guys, that was it. A total loser..." the killer says, before tossing the still-broadcasting smartphone out of the window. —AFP