

Anti-NATO protesters face terrorism charges for home brewing equipment

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It didn't take long before protesters became Terrorists in NDAA USA

(Reuters) - Three anti-NATO protesters arrested in a late-night raid days before start of the 60-nation summit have been charged with terrorism for possession of 'explosive devices', police and their attorney said on Saturday.

But supporters of the three men arrested Wednesday evening at a residence in the Bridgeport neighborhood of Chicago disputed the charges and said the police had confused beer-making equipment with explosives.

The Chicago Police Department said the men were charged on Friday with conspiracy to commit terrorism, providing material support for terrorism, and possession of an explosive incendiary device. They were the only people charged among a group of nine arrested at the same time.

"The charges are utterly ridiculous. CPD doesn't know the difference between home beer-making supplies and Molotov cocktails," said Natalie Wahlberg, a member of the Occupy Chicago movement protesting over income inequality.

The National Lawyers Guild, the group of volunteer lawyers representing the protesters, said police "broke down doors with guns drawn and searched residences without a warrant or consent," according to a statement on the group's Facebook page.

The police department declined to comment on the details of the raid conducted by a special investigation unit.

Thousands of security personnel have been deployed to monitor demonstrations in the week leading up to the two-day NATO summit that starts Sunday. President Barack Obama and representatives from some 60 countries are to discuss the war in Afghanistan and other international security issues.

The three men charged are: Brian Church, 20; Jared Chase, 24; and Brent Vincent Betterly, 24. Church and Betterly are from Florida, and Chase is from New Hampshire, the Chicago Tribune reported, citing a police official.

Police officials would not confirm the men's places of origin to Reuters. A bond hearing for the three charged is scheduled for Saturday afternoon.

"NLG attorneys are questioning why it took the city 48 hours, the limit on holding arrestees without a court hearing, to impose such serious charges," the lawyers' group said. "(Police) have provided no evidence of criminal intent or wrongdoing on the part of the activists."

One of the six people released on Friday, Darrin Annusseck, 36, said he was handcuffed in a police interrogation room for 18 hours, not allowed to go to the bathroom, and was never questioned. Police have declined to comment on his detention.

Those charged had been surrounded by squad cars outside a pharmacy last week and questioned by police over their plans during NATO, their lawyer said.

On Friday, roughly 2,500 people protested loudly but peacefully, mostly over economic issues, at a downtown Chicago plaza and throughout the surrounding streets.

Police said more than a dozen people have been arrested related to NATO, mostly for trespassing. One man was arrested during the protests after he climbed a bridge tower to rip down a banner advertising the NATO summit, police said.

(Reporting by Eric Johnson; Editing by Jackie Frank)

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