



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 18, 2017

Spanish Police Hunt Suspected Terrorists in Attacks Killing 14 in Barcelona, Cambrils

Spanish police are hunting for a suspected terrorist who drove a van into crowds strolling the La Ramblas pedestrian mall in Barcelona on August 17. Hours later an Audi A3 car rammed into pedestrians in the Spanish seaside resort of Cambrils, 75 miles to the south, injuring six civilians and a police officer. One of the civilians later died. A total of 14 people were killed in the two attacks, with more than 100 being injured.



Two people connected with the attack, one from Morocco, the other a Spanish national, are in police custody. Police said that one of the arrested suspects in the Barcelona attack was a Spaniard born in Melilla, a Spanish territory in North Africa, and the other a Moroccan named as Driss Oukabir.

This is believed to be the first ISIS claim of an attack in Spain.

However, Spain has been victimized by jihadist attacks, including Europe's deadliest in March 2004. In that attack, bombs exploded on commuter trains in Madrid, killing 191 people in an attack claimed by Al Qaeda-inspired extremists.

ABC News reported that when a reporter asked a Catalonia police official if the driver remains on the loose, he replied: "That is right. He is neither of the two detained." Both Barcelona and Cambrils are located in Catalonia, an autonomous community located in Spain's northeast, on the Mediterranean coast.

Witnesses said the driver left the vehicle on the busy pedestrian mall lined with shops and fled on foot.

The SITE Intelligence Group cited a statement posted by the Amaq news agency, which was created by a Syrian journalist who joined ISIS and serves as an outlet for the terrorist group. The statement read: "The executors of the Barcelona attack were from the soldiers of the Islamic State, and the operation came in response to calls to target coalition states."

ABC News quoted a statement on the attacks in Spain from one of its contributors, John Cohen, the former principal deputy coordinator for counterterrorism at the Department of Homeland Security.

"ISIS promotes these types of attacks because they're easy," Cohen said. "You can take people who have received no training, who are using items that are easy to acquire. And they can still commit mass murder."

Cohen noted that U.S.-backed fighters have recently driven ISIS militants from their strongholds in Raqqa, Syria, and Mosul, Iraq. As ISIS continues to struggle on the battlefield, he theorized, the terrorist group could increasingly turn to these kinds of attacks.

"We have seen a dramatic increase in attacks by individuals who are inspired by ISIS or are loosely connected to ISIS in Europe and even in the U.S.," Cohen continued. "As ISIS suffers more defeats in Iraq and Syria we can only expect to see more attacks."



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A report from AFP said that the police believed the attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils were connected. Both attacks followed the same modus operandi, with the drivers deliberately targeting pedestrians with their vehicles.

Javier Zaragoza, a prosecutor advising the attorney general in terrorism matters, told AFP the attacks were most likely the work of an organized “cell.”

Otso Iho of Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre added there appeared to be “a much higher level of coordination than has been typically present in previous attacks.”

Furthermore, noted AFP, police said an explosion in a house in another part of Catalonia on the evening of August 16 was potentially linked to the attacks, believing those inside “were preparing an explosive device.”

The *Washington Post* reported that the Moroccan origin of the men was sure to cause alarm within European counterterrorism circles. Moroccan networks were also connected to the major terrorist attacks in France and Belgium in recent years. Spain has a significant Moroccan population, and there has been a spike in the arrivals of migrants from Morocco by sea this year.

Following this latest terrorist attack, President Trump sent a tweet to the Spanish people:

“The United States condemns the terror attack in Barcelona, Spain, and will do whatever is necessary to help. Be tough & strong, we love you!”

Photo: AP Images

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