

Fate Of Paris Attacks Mastermind Unclear After Bloody Raid

BY THOMAS ADAMSON
AND KARL RITTER
Associated Press

SAINT-DENIS, France — The hunt for the mastermind of last week's attacks took a bloody turn Wednesday to a Paris suburb where a fierce gunbattle with police left at least two people dead and eight arrested. The fate of the alleged ringleader was unclear, with authorities saying he was not taken alive and they were trying to determine if he died in the raid.

Police launched the operation after receiving information from tapped phone calls, surveillance and tipoffs suggesting that 27-year-old Abdelhamid Abaaoud was holed up in an apartment in Paris' Saint-Denis neighborhood.

Terrified residents awoke to gunfire and explosions as a SWAT team swooped in and "neutralized" what Paris Prosecutor Francois Molins called a "new team of terrorists" that appeared ready for a new attack.

Molins said the identities of the dead were still being investigated, but that neither Abaaoud nor another fugitive, Salah Abdeslam, was in custody.

"At this time, I'm not in a position to give a precise and definitive number for the people who died, nor their identities, but there are at least two dead people," Molins said.

The site of Wednesday's raid is not far from the Stade de France soccer stadium; three suicide bombers blew themselves up outside the stadium during an international soccer game as part of the attacks last Friday that left 129 people dead and hundreds wounded.

Molins said police units including snipers threw grenades and fired 5,000 rounds in an hourlong gunbattle that began before dawn on Wednesday. The dead included a woman who was believed to have blown herself up with a suicide belt, though Molins said "this point needs to be verified by an analysis of the body and human remains."

Five police officers were wounded and a SWAT team dog was killed in the intense gunbattle during which the third floor of the apartment building collapsed.

Residents described hunkering down in fear.

"We tried to stop our children hearing the noise," said Farah Appane, who lives about 80 yards (meters) from where the raid took place. "My 19-month-old was crying. Our 8-year-old said 'What is it? Are there more attacks?'"

She said she could hear



CAROLYN COLE/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS
Hundreds of police and soldiers are surrounding the area of operations on Nov. 18 in Paris. At least two people are dead, including a woman suicide bomber, in the northern Paris neighborhood of Saint-Denis.

gunfire on and off for over an hour, followed by "one really huge boom."

The head of one of the special forces units that took part in the raid, Jean-Michel Fauverge, said police used drones and robots equipped with cameras in an attempt to see what was going on inside during the raid but there was too much debris.

When they entered the building they found a body that had fallen from the third floor to the second, he told the French newspaper *Le Figaro*.

"The corpse was mutilated, probably from grenades and he wasn't recognizable," Fauverge said. "Other people were in the stairwell, two men hiding under blankets and whatever they could find. We arrested them."

Molins said five men were taken into custody in the apartment building, including two who were pulled from the rubble. A woman and two other men, including the man whose apartment was used as the cell's hideout, were arrested on a nearby street.

Authorities didn't release their identities; Molins would only say that Abaaoud and Abdeslam were not among them.

Investigators have identified Abaaoud, a Belgian of Moroccan descent, as the chief architect of the attacks Friday against the soccer stadium, a crowded concert hall and popular night spots in a trendy Paris neighborhood.

A U.S. official briefed on intelligence matters said Abaaoud was a key figure in an Islamic State external operations cell that U.S. intelligence agencies have been tracking for months.

Abaaoud is believed to have escaped to Syria after a January police raid in Belgium, but he has bragged in

Islamic State propaganda of his ability to move back and forth between Europe and Syria undetected.

Belgian Justice Minister Koen Geens also said he could not confirm whether Abaaoud was among those killed in the raid.

Speaking after the seven-hour siege ended, French President Francois Hollande praised the bravery of the security services and said that France was "at war" with the Islamic State group, which has claimed responsibility for the attacks. He called for an international coalition to destroy the group, which controls territory in Syria and Iraq.

Britain said one of the Royal Navy's most advanced warships would support a French aircraft carrier that is on its way to join operations against IS militants in Syria.

In its English language magazine, the Islamic State group said it will continue its violence and "retaliate with fire and bloodshed" for insults against the Prophet Muhammad and "the multitudes killed and injured in crusader airstrikes."

On Wednesday, a video was posted on the Daily Mail website that appears to come from security cameras showing a nearly empty restaurant erupt into chaos with bullets smashing into walls and diners and staff diving for cover. A gunman is seen briefly when he approaches the restaurant's terrace and points his rifle at someone laying on the ground. A moment later he leaves, and a woman rises and dashes for safety.

The restaurant is not named in Daily Mail's accompanying article but examination by The Associated Press suggests it is Casa Nostra, a pizzeria near the Bonne Biere, another restaurant hit

by the attackers and where five people were killed.

The attacks have put France on edge and the raid Wednesday only heightened fears that there could be more cells preparing to strike.

French authorities have said seven attackers were killed Friday — six who blew themselves up and one who was killed by police. Abdeslam got away, as well as possibly another, so far unidentified, assailant, officials said.

Molins said Wednesday that investigators found a cell phone in a garbage can outside the Bataclan concert hall where 89 of the victims of Friday's carnage died. It contained a text message sent about 20 minutes after the massacre began. "We're off, it's started," it read.

Molins said investigators were still trying to identify the recipient of the message.

A Spanish security official said Wednesday that French authorities had sent a bulletin to police across Europe asking them to watch out for a Citroen Xsara car that could be carrying Salah Abdeslam, whose brother, Ibrahim, was among the attackers who blew themselves up.

French authorities have said most of the attackers — five have been identified so far — were unknown to them. But two U.S. officials said that many, though not all, of those identified were on the U.S. no-fly list. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the issue publicly. French authorities declared a state of emergency after the attacks, and security forces have conducted 414 raids, making 60 arrests and seizing 75 weapons, including 11 military-style firearms, the Interior Ministry said. Parliament is expected to vote by the end of the week to extend the state of emergency for three months.

Boko Haram Kills 49 In Suicide Bombings

YOLA, Nigeria (AP) — The suicide bomber exploded as truckers were tucking into dinner at the bustling marketplace where vendors urged them to buy sugar cane. At least 34 people were killed and another 80 wounded in Yola, a town packed with refugees from Nigeria's Islamic uprising, emergency officials said Wednesday.

Later Wednesday, two more suicide bombers killed at least 15 people in the northern city of Kano and injured 53, according to police. Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency said more than 100 were wounded.

The blasts were the latest by Boko Haram, Nigeria's home-grown extremists whose 6-year insurgency has killed 20,000 and forced 2.3 million to flee their homes.

Boko Haram was named Wednesday as the world's most deadly extremist group in the Global Terrorism Index. Deaths attributed to Boko Haram increased by 317 percent in 2014 to 6,644 compared to 6,073 blamed on the Islamic State group. Boko Haram pledged allegiance to IS in March and calls itself that group's West Africa Province.

Wednesday's explosions came as President Muhammadu Buhari pressed his campaign against Nigeria's endemic corruption, blamed for hampering the fight against the insurgents. Buhari accused his predecessor's national security adviser of stealing billions of dollars meant to buy weapons to fight Boko Haram, when soldiers had just a few bullets and the Islamic extremists were rampaging across northeast Nigeria.

Despite Heavy Airstrikes, IS Threat Persists

WASHINGTON (AP) — In measuring progress in the American-led air war against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, numbers tell one story but results tell another.

Fighter jets, bombers, attack planes and drones are dropping an average of 2,228 bombs per month on targets ranging from training camps and machine gun positions to oil facilities and weapons shacks. The Pentagon says it doesn't do body counts, but the attacks are believed to have killed upward of 20,000 IS fighters. The U.S. price tag: \$5 billion since August 2014, an average of \$11.1 million each day.

The bombing has damaged or destroyed hundreds of military vehicles (including American tanks surrendered by Iraqi soldiers), thousands of buildings, hundreds of pieces of oil infrastructure and thousands of fighting positions, among other targets, according to U.S. Central Command figures.

This sounds like a pummeling designed to bury an enemy, particularly one facing the military might and technological power of the United States.

But what has been the result? In a word, stalemate, although U.S. military officials say they see the tide gradually turning in their favor.

Passport In Attacks Fuels Fear Of Refugees

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — After the bombs and Kalashnikov fire of the Paris attacks, a mere document — a passport — found near the body of an attacker is generating a new wave of dread throughout Europe and beyond. But whether the document ended up there by chance, or was part of an elaborate plot to sow panic, is not clear.

Regardless of the answer, the passport has played into the Islamic State group's hands by raising concerns that militants may be marching alongside the thousands of asylum seekers flowing into Europe. That possibility is redefining the debate over immigration in Europe and even the United States, and prompting a backlash against Muslim refugees.

The far-right French leader Marine Le Pen called for an immediate end to the flow of migrants into France, while across the Atlantic about half of U.S. governors are taking steps to prevent absorbing Syrian refugees in their states, citing the passport.

"This terrorist attack will clearly change Europe's refugee policies and how the arrivals in Europe are treated," said Konrad Pedziwiatr, a sociologist and expert on Islam in Europe at the Krakow University of Economics.

"Already the open-door policy (in Germany and Sweden) of welcoming refugees was going to be reformed because the inflow is so significant that countries cannot cope with the numbers," he said. "What the Paris attacks add to this difficult situation is the additional element of fear."

Obama Threatens To Veto Bill On Refugees

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Wednesday threatened a presidential veto of House Republican legislation aimed at increasing screenings for Syrian and Iraqi refugees before they enter the United States, calling new requirements in the bill "untenable."

The legislation, which sets high hurdles for refugee admissions, including FBI background checks and individual sign-offs by top federal officials, "would provide no meaningful additional security for the American people, instead serving only to create significant delays and obstacles in the fulfillment of a vital program that satisfies both humanitarian and national security objectives," the White House said.

President Barack Obama would veto the legislation if it reaches his desk, the statement concluded.

Republican leaders, eager to respond quickly to Friday's terror attacks in Paris, had described the bill as a middle-ground approach. It institutes tough new screening requirements, but steers clear of demands from some Republicans, including presidential candidates, for religious questioning or a complete end to the U.S. refugee program.

Gunman Kills 2 Bosnian Soldiers; Injures 3 Civilians

BY AIDA CERKEZ
Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — A man suspected of killing two soldiers and wounding three people Wednesday blew himself up at his home after the killing spree, police said.

Armed with an automatic rifle, the man killed two Bosnian soldiers in a betting shop and then shot at a public bus. Fragments of the broken glass injured the driver and two passengers.

The suspect then fled to his home nearby and a detonation could be heard before police entered the house.

"The suspect killed

himself using an explosive device," said police spokesman Irfan Nefic.

The attack happened in the Sarajevo suburb of Rajlovac, right across the street from the gate of a Bosnian army barracks. Authorities refused to say whether the attack was an act of terrorism before the investigation is over but Bosnia's prime minister Denis Zvizdic said after an emergency session of his cabinet it was "an attack on the state."

A witness who refused to be identified for fear of retribution told The Associated Press the man walked into the betting shop, separated the two soldiers from other

visitors and shot them. He wore a band around his head with some Arabic letters, the witness said.

The Bosnian Army issued a statement saying two of its soldiers were killed and one — a passenger in the bus — was slightly injured. The security level has been raised on military locations throughout the country.

Bosnian Muslims traditionally practice a moderate form of Islam, preached by the country's official Islamic Community but some have embraced radical teachings from foreign fighters who came to help Muslims during the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

Authorities said that 94 Bosnians have gone to

fight in Syria. Their records show that 56 of them have returned, while 26 died there.



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