

January 2020 Terror Attacks

This is the first of a series of brief monthly and quarterly reports published by Sec-Ter OA Group on armed attacks occurring in the Europe. The objective is to provide qualitative and quantitative data that will contribute to further analysis.

In January 2020 there were four terrorist attacks within Europe, all concentrated in the first 10 days of the month.

January 3rd, Paris, France: a French citizen who had converted to Islam and with known mental issues, attacked random civilians inside the Villejuif park. The attacker, armed with a knife and a fake suicide vest, initially approached a first civilian but ceased the offensive action after realizing that he was a Muslim. He then attacked three other people, injuring two and killing one. The attacker was then shot and killed by agents.^{1 2 3 4}

January 5th, Metz, France: an individual armed with a knife and “known for his radicalization and personality disorder” was shot and injured by the police. He yelled “Allahu akbar” and threatened the officers before being taken down.^{5 6 7 8}

January 5th, Gelsenkirchen, Germany: a Turkish citizen hit a police car with a stick and tried to attack officers standing near the vehicle. He also wielded a knife and was consequently shot at and killed after refusing to surrender. Authorities indicated that the individual was mentally ill. No terrorist motivation has been detected.^{9 10 11}

January 10th, Whitemor, United Kingdom: two individuals serving time at the HMP attacked with knives and injured five penitentiary guards before being blocked. The two were also wearing fake, cell-made, suicide vests. The attackers were both known

¹ <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/villejuif-le-parcours-de-nathan-c-ce-enieme-converti-a-la-folie-islamiste-20200105>

² https://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2020/01/03/une-attaque-au-couteau-a-villejuif-fait-un-mort-et-deux-blesses-graves_6024726_1653578.html

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50986028>

⁴ <https://www.france24.com/en/20200104-french-prosecutors-treating-deadly-stabbing-outside-paris-as-terror-attack>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/05/police-in-france-shoot-man-with-knife-after-islamist-radical-attack>

⁶ <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/metz-un-homme-radicalise-blesse-par-la-police-apres-avoir-menace-des-passants-05-01-2020-8229279.php>

⁷ <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/france-une-deuxieme-personne-interpellee-apres-l-arrestation-d-un-homme-radicalise-arme-20200106>

⁸ https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/faits-divers/metz-un-homme-radicalise-brandit-un-couteau-et-crie-allahu-akbar_2113479.html

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51003868>

¹⁰ <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-police-in-gelsenkirchen-shoot-dead-knife-wielding-attacker/a-51895038>

¹¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-knife-attack-police-shoot-dead-gelsenkirchen-a9271756.html>

as Islamist extremists and one of them was serving time for previous terror charges.¹²
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Summary table

Location	Site	Date	Target	Sex	Weapon(s)	Nationality	Mental ill.	Motivation	Dec. attackers	Dec. vict.	Inj. vict.
Paris (France)	Urban	3rd	Civilians	M	knife/fakeSV	French	yes	islamist	1\1	1	2
Metz (France)	Urban	5th	Unclear	M	knife	unknown	yes	islamist	0\1	0	0
Gelsenkirchen (Germany)	Urban	5th	Police officers	M	knife	Turkish	yes	unknown	1\1	0	0
Whitemoor (United Kingdom)	Prison	10th	Prison guards	M	knife/fakeSV	British (2)	no	islamist	0\2	0	5

A summary table of the attacks (rows) and details on the events (columns), specifically: attack location, site type, target, attacker(s) gender, attacker(s) nationality, attackers' presumed mental illness, the ideological motivation, number of deceased attackers, number of deceased victims, number of injured victims.

Comments

Except for the attack perpetrated inside the Whitemoor Penitentiary, all others took place in urban context and targeting both, civilians and law enforcers. While the attackers in Gelsenkirchen and Magas clearly targeted police agents, the one in Metz still raises many questions as it is not clear if the perpetrator (whose identity isn't public) planned to attack law enforcers or he simply turned against them as they reached the scene after being called.

The attack occurring in Paris clearly indicates an Islamist extremist motivation as the perpetrator was identified as a convert, carrying Islamist material with him and even ceasing a first attack after realizing that his target was Muslim.

Not much to say about the Turkish individual killed in Gelsenkirchen as the case was not classified as a terrorist attack. The individual was indicated by German authorities as mentally ill. However, the targets were once again police agents.

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31987242>

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-51062381>

¹⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-51049853>

¹⁵ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/breaking-hmp-whitemoor-knife-attack-21253658>