



WATCHLINE



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Vehicle Ramming, Knife Attack Shocks British Parliament – A man using a rental car on Wednesday [rammed](#) into dozens of people on Westminster Bridge in London and then crashed the vehicle on the grounds outside Parliament, where he stabbed a police officer to death before he was fatally shot by police. In the wake of the attack, five people were killed, including the officer, and 40 were injured. The incident led to a lock-down of the area, including parliament's chamber, where its elected members (MPs) were sheltered. Other public sites, such as the London Eye, were evacuated. One of the deceased victims was an American, and many of casualties were visiting tourists, including French school children. ISIS media arm Amaq said that the attacker was "[a soldier of Islamic State](#)," but such claims do not always link the terror group to the perpetrator. Also, the attack occurred on the anniversary of the Brussels coordinated attack in 2016.

Assessment: For a time, the ramming method was limited to protracted incidents, mostly in Israel and France, but now they are more common, especially in Europe. Another disturbing trend is increased lethality, as seen in the Nice-Bastille Day and Berlin Christmas market attacks last year. The Berlin attacker, like Wednesday's perpetrator, used a knife in the deadly rampage. In Germany, the assailant fatally stabbed the truck driver as he stole the vehicle, but in this week's incident in London, the attacker exited the vehicle after the ramming and fatally stabbed a police officer. Ramming attacks do not always end when the vehicle stops. Civilian involvement in patient care outside of Parliament surely made a difference in this mass casualty incident. Also, an apparent [terrorist copycat](#) was stopped in Antwerp before his ramming attack.



Miscreant Granted Death Wish at Paris's Orly Airport – A man, who managed to get both an assault rifle from a soldier and modest attention from onlookers at Paris's Orly Airport shouting that he wanted to "die by Allah." The spectacle began early Saturday morning when the man fired a pellet gun at police when stopped at a checkpoint in Garges-les-Gonesse, north of Paris, near his home. After escaping the scene, he dumped his own car and hijacked another in Vitry-sur-Seine and then drove to France's second-busiest airport where he carried a bag into the terminal, and overpowered a soldier from behind, holding the gun to her head, and finally wresting free the weapon. Once he broke clear with the weapon, he was killed by her partners.

Assessment: The Paris native was found to have nearly twice the legal limit of alcohol in his blood, as well as cannabis and cocaine, which may have had more to do with initiating his actions than a jihadist penchant. [Reports](#) indicate that he had a drug habit and criminal record, but was not a devout Muslim and had "never been a terrorist," according to his father, though [others say](#) he "fell under the influence of Islamist radicals" while serving prison time. Also, the green shopping bag he carried into the airport terminal contained gasoline. In an incident in New York's Port Authority Bus Terminal in midtown Manhattan last Thursday, a Jersey City man, a wanted fugitive, was arrested without incident after returning to a store to retrieve a bag that contained components of a "flash bang grenade," as well as a knife, bolt cutters, and screw drivers. Transportation terminals are a perennial target for acts of terror, and in the case of Orly, as with [Brussels one year ago](#), sometimes a hasty or last-minute choice.

Al Qaeda Urges Muslims to 'Kill Americans' after Air Strike – Al Qaeda issued an appeal to "Kill the Americans without consenting anyone" in retaliation for an air strike in Jihah, Syria last week which allegedly hit a mosque, killing and wounding "more than 300 worshipers." The terror group issued an official statement in English on the messaging app, Telegram, which instructed "Muslims in general and the youth of Islam in particular" to kill Americans at will. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that 49 Syrians were killed in the Thursday night bombing. The Pentagon confirmed that it carried out the strike, but also issued an aerial photograph showing the mosque still standing across the street from the building housing "a meeting of senior al Qaeda terrorists" that was in fact destroyed.

Assessment: This type of propaganda is typical of terror groups, and al Qaeda in particular, feeding the notion that the U.S. and other Western powers are targeting innocent Muslims, women, children, etc. [Twitter announced](#) this week that it has shut down 377,000 accounts that promote terrorism in the last six months. It cannot be overstated how important these battles along propaganda lines are in terms of recruitment and eventual (lone wolf) attacks.



El Nino? Ushers in Rain, Calamity to Peru – Heavy rains associated with exceptionally warm water in the Pacific Ocean have brought some of the worst flooding in decades and mudslides along the arid landscape along coastal Peru. At least half of the country has been impacted, including Lima, which has been without power since Monday. Some 800 cities and towns have declared a state of emergency, over 120 bridges have washed out and at least 115,000 homes were destroyed and 72 lives were lost. Flooding is expected to continue over the next two weeks.

Assessment: From the standpoint of meteorologists, there is [hesitancy](#) to name this an El Nino event for technical reasons. However, Peru climatologists "declared a 'coastal El Nino'" to convey to the public of the seriousness of the threat. It is unknowable if lives were saved by such warnings. Responders should heed such weather warnings and help to communicate threats to the public where an ounce of preparedness is worth a pound of mitigation.

London Terrorist Exercise Simulates Attack on Tourist Ship – A fast-moving police boat [pulled up](#) alongside a hijacked cruise boat on the River Thames as specially-trained members of the Metropolitan Police boarded the vessel to neutralize terrorists and free hostages, as part of London's latest full-scale terrorist exercise last weekend. More than 200 responders participated in the drill that simulated "a marauding terrorist attack," which is the term the British responders use for active-shooter incidents. As exercises routinely address different attack methods, it was not based a specific threat.

Assessment: Counterterrorism officials have looked closely at water-borne attacks or terrorist insertions on land since the Mumbai attacks in November 2008. NYC, like London and many world cities, grew from maritime commerce over the last few centuries. Besides tourist boats, there are several public and private ferry services in N.Y. Harbor waters that bring commuters to Manhattan, such the Staten Island ferry, which transports hundreds of passengers per trip (with a 4-6,000 [capacity](#) per boat). FDNY is well aware of the security and safety issues surrounding the ferries, its "343" and "Firefighter II" boats, for example, can move their decks to [line up](#) with many vessels, including the Staten Island ferry's deck to facilitate rescue operations.

FDNY EMT Killed Trying to Reclaim Stolen Ambulance – FDNY Emergency Medical Technician Yadira Arroyo died in the line of duty last Thursday after her ambulance was stolen by a man, allegedly a career criminal, who used it to run her over. EMT Arroyo and her partner from Station 26 were [responding to a call](#) in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx when they were alerted that someone was riding on the rear bumper. When EMT Arroyo got out to investigate, the man jumped in the driver's seat and ran her over, killing the 14-year veteran and mother of five. Her partner, who was seriously injured in the incident, took immediate action, struggling in the cab with the suspect, who crashed the ambulance after a short distance, and was subdued by a MTA police officer on his way to work.

Assessment: The outpouring of support for EMT Arroyo has been extraordinary. Besides the thousands of FDNY members expected at the [funeral service Saturday](#) in the University Height section of the Bronx, thousands of other members of service from across the country are arriving in NYC to pay their respects. [Donations](#) are being accepted by the FDNY Foundation on behalf of the Arroyo Children's Fund. The incident is stark reminder of how quickly the unexpected can occur to any member of service.



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