

July 14, 2016 - Attack on Bastille Day celebrations in Nice, France

ASERO Worldwide insights and analysis

EVENT SUMMARY

- On the night of Thursday July 14, 2016 a large truck ploughed into crowds celebrating Bastille Day along the Promenade des Anglais in Nice in the south of France killing at least 80 people, including children, and injuring many others. The attack took place just after 22:30 as the fireworks ended amid a crowd of between 1,000 – 1,500 people.
- The driver of the truck was shot dead by police.
- The incident is presumed to be a terrorist attack. To date, there has been no claim of responsibility.
- Witnesses reported that the driver was 'zigzagging' through the crowd. He reportedly drove for roughly 2 kilometers (1.3 miles) at a speed of 50 kilometers per hour (km/h).



Image of the truck believed to be a 25-tonne, unmarked articulated truck

- Authorities have reported that the driver of the truck had fired on the crowd as he drove. Following the attack, it was reported that the truck was loaded with weapons and grenades. There are also unconfirmed reports that the weapons found in the truck were fake or inactive.
- Authorities reportedly found identity papers in the truck belonging to a 31-year-old French citizen and resident of Nice with Tunisian origins.
- This attack comes eight months and one day after ISIS carried out a coordinated armed assault and suicide attack out on six locations in Paris and nearby areas killing 129 people and wounding another 352 people, 99 of those critically.

INSIGHTS

- Utilizing a vehicle or truck to carry out a large scale terror attack is not a new phenomenon or modus operandi. In July 2008, a terrorist attacked several cars on Jaffa Road in Jerusalem Israel using a bulldozer, killing three people and injuring 30 others before being shot to death. There have been three copycat attacks carried out since that attack in Israel

including an attack in August 2014 in which a Palestinian terrorist slammed a construction tractor into a bus in Jerusalem before being shot dead by police.

However, it is important to emphasize that the number of fatalities and casualties resulting from this attack extends far beyond what we have seen in past attacks and may be the deadliest attack using this 'running down' modus operandi.

- It is important to note that, in a similar manner to previous attacks including the most recent June 2016 mass shooting at an Orlando night club, it does not appear that the terrorist perpetrator had any intent or plan to escape in the aftermath of the attack. The terrorist was not only prepared to die in the attack but also understood that he would most likely be killed in a confrontation with law enforcement, making it a form of suicide operation.
- We must be aware of the ease and availability of a vehicle or truck, as opposed to other types of weapons, and how it may be effectively used to carry out a large scale attack with mass fatalities.

We believe that this attack will highlight the use of vehicles as an effective tool for carrying out large scale attacks and we may expect to see this become an increasingly attractive and preferred modus operandi among terrorists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We must recognize that this threat and modus operandi is extremely difficult to combat. That being said, it is important to consider this scenario as part of any security planning.
- In an incident of this nature, there is a point at which people, including law enforcement and security personnel, come to the realization that a driver has not simply lost control of his vehicle but that, instead, a terror attack is being carried out. It is clear that, while maybe not immediately, police at the scene in Nice did identify this incident to be an attack and were able to shoot and kill the attacker.

With that in mind, it is necessary to hold discussions and training with relevant law enforcement and security personnel on recognizing when an incident is, in fact, a terror attack and to implement the necessary rules of engagement accordingly.

- Israeli security and law enforcement agencies have considerable experience in managing large scale celebrations from the security perspective. For example, streets are cordoned off from vehicle entry to a point as far as possible from the center of the celebrations. At this point, we do not know to what extent vehicles were permitted into the Promenade area or what types of physical security measures may have been in place.