Terrorist Attacks in Brussels

Location: Brussels, Belgium
Date Prepared: 22 March 2016

Executive Summary

- Multiple – and apparently coordinated – terrorist attacks have occurred in Brussels, including at Zaventem Airport and on the Brussels Metro.
- Belgian authorities have raised the terrorism alert to its highest level (Four) and deployed security forces throughout the country, especially in the capital.
- All airport operations and public transport have been suspended for 22 March. The Eurostar international rail line has suspended service to and from Brussels Midi station. Significant disruptions are occurring and Brussels is in a state of lockdown.
- Security has been increased at airport throughout Europe in response to these incidents, which Belgian media has reported as terrorist attacks. Elevated security will likely continue in the coming days and weeks.
- The Belgian government has asked those in the country to shelter in place and to avoid public movement at this time. The situation remains fluid and developments should be monitored.

Analysis

Multiple coordinated attacks have occurred in Belgium on 22 March 2016. Two explosions took place at the departures hall of the main passenger terminal at Brussels’ Zaventem Airport (EBBR/BRU) at approximately 08:00 local time (07:00 GMT). Belgian officials confirmed that the explosions were suicide attacks, causing significant damage to the terminal and resulting in at least 13 deaths and dozens of injuries. At 09:00 local time (08:00 GMT) another explosion was reported at the Maelbeek Station of the Brussels Metro, located in close proximity to the European Union headquarters. Another 10 people have been reported killed in the metro attack, with an unknown number of injured.

Security forces, including the police and military, have been deployed in increased numbers throughout the country. The Belgian government has requested that those in the country shelter in place and avoid public movement for the time being. Emergency responders continue to operate, and the potential that further incidents at transport infrastructure cannot be ruled out at this time. Severe disruptions in the capital are likely to persist for the short term. False alarms and incidents are likely to be reported and the situation is very fluid. Communications are also experiencing disruptions in Belgium, as the mobile phone network is saturated at this time.

Security has been increased at airports and public transport hubs throughout Europe as a result of these incidents; The U.K., Netherlands, France and Germany have all confirmed implementing heightened security measures, and other countries are likely to follow. Multiple governments have or will conduct meetings regarding terrorism countermeasures and may implement further restrictions in the coming days. European travel will likely experience delays in general in the coming days, and flights from North America to Europe may also experience increased security and possible delays. Travelers should reconfirm travel and check for delays and enhanced security checks.
More security forces raids are likely in the coming days and weeks and the threat of terrorism will remain a serious concern; additional incidents in Belgium or elsewhere in Europe in the foreseeable future cannot be discounted.

**Recommendations**

**Monitor**
- Travelers and individuals with interests in Belgium should monitor local media to stay abreast of the current situation. The situation remains fluid at this time and additional incidents may occur.
- It should be noted that telecommunication infrastructure is currently under great strain due to massive demand, and mobile phone service is sporadic. Individuals and businesses with interests in Belgium should anticipate possible disruptions when trying to establish contact with those in Belgium.
- Risk managers should establish contact with their travelers and personnel to determine their location and status.
- Travel around Brussels should be minimized and non-essential travel to Belgium should be postponed until the situation stabilizes.
- Managers should monitor travel plans in the region for the coming days/week to ensure necessary planning is in place, including transportation and accommodation plans. Delays and disruptions in other locations should be anticipated due to heightened security as well as in response to false alarms as security forces and travelers will be nervous.
- Travelers who have not already done so and who have access to the Travel Guard Assistance website are encouraged to sign up for travel Alert messages; other alerting options may be available through a travelers’ respective diplomatic mission’s notification system.

**Prevent**
- Those in Brussels should shelter in place, avoid public areas and follow all other directives issued by security forces or authorities. Travel to Belgium not deemed essential should be reconsidered for the next several days until the situation clarifies and it becomes easier to travel and conduct business.
- Travelers and individuals should carry proper ID and be prepared to cooperate with local security forces.
- Individuals should be aware of suspect packages and suspicious behavior. If something is noticed, it should be reported as a precaution.
- Managers should consider longer term prevention strategies such as security awareness training and e-learning.

**Respond**
- The situation in Belgium is fluid as an investigation into the attacks is underway; individuals should maintain a low profile and avoid exposure for the time being.
- Travelers should anticipate potential disruptions as a result of security initiatives and prepare for longer than normal commuting/travel times in central Brussels.