Four killed, a dozen injured in Stockholm attack

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In a horrific attack around 3 p.m. local time Friday, a man drove a lorry into a crowd, killing at least four people and injuring many more on Drottninggatan (Queen Street), outside the Åhlens department store in Stockholm, Sweden.

The lorry crashed into the department store, reportedly coming from a direction in which lorries are not allowed, and caught fire. The driver then engaged in a gunfight with police before managing to flee the scene of the crime.

A witness, Annevi Petersson, who was in the fitting room of the department store at the time of the attack, told the BBC: "I heard the noise, I heard the screams, I saw the people. As I walked out, just outside the store there was a dead dog, the owner screaming. There was a lady lying with a severed foot. There was blood everywhere. There were bodies on the ground everywhere."

The lorry used during the attack was stolen from Swedish brewery Spendrups, which said the truck had been stolen on its way to a restaurant delivery earlier in the day. "Someone jumped into the driver's cabin and drove off with the vehicle while the driver was unloading," a brewery spokesperson told the TT news agency.

Swedish officials declared that the incident was a "terrorist attack." Calling for tightening security. Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said that Sweden had "been attacked" in an apparent terrorist incident, and was strengthening its borders. He declared that Sweden would do "whatever it takes" for people to feel safe. "Terrorists want us to be afraid ... to not live our lives normally, but that is what we are going to do," he said.

In the early evening, Swedish police said it had arrested a man in north Stockholm who, they said, "may have links to the incident." The daily newspaper *Aftonbladet* reported that he claimed responsibility for the attack.

Police initially declined to provide details about the arrested man, including his nationality. However, early this morning, Stockholm time, the authorities reported that the suspect was a 39-year-old father of four from Uzbekistan, who had become interested in Islamist propaganda online.

"We have arrested a person who is of interest to us. We also released an image of a person we were looking for. The person arrested matches this description," Jan Evensson of the Stockholm Police said at a press conference on Friday night.

After the attack, a number of shopping locations in Stockholm were evacuated at the request of the police. The Stockholm subway was shut down, and all trains to and from Stockholm central station were cancelled for the rest of the day and the station was evacuated. All of the national film chain SF's Stockholm cinemas were closed yesterday evening.

Security has also been tightened in the city, with heavily armed police posted at locations throughout Stockholm.

In neighboring Norway, police at Oslo airport and in the major cities have been allowed to be armed until further notice, according to a police statement. Police in Norway do not normally carry weapons.

The Stockholm attack came amid deepening social and political tensions in Europe, and the launching of a direct US military strike against the Russian-backed regime in Syria on Friday morning, European time. Only a few weeks ago, the Swedish government announced plans to reintroduce the draft, as Sweden lines up behind Washington and the major European powers for conflict with Russia.

The Stockholm attack follows a number of Islamist

attacks across Europe, including in Nice, Berlin and London, in which vehicles were used as weapons.

On Bastille Day (July 14) last year, a man drove a lorry into a large crowd gathered to watch fireworks in Mediterranean coastal town of Nice, killing 86 people and injuring more than 300. The suspect, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, was known to police only for petty theft and street fighting, though he had reportedly become interested in the Islamist terror networks active in the Syrian war backed by Washington and its European allies.

On December 19, Anis Amri drove a lorry through the crowded Breitscheidplatz Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring 56. Amri was known to German intelligence, who apparently had some information about his plans for an attack.

On March 22 of this year, 52-year-old British man Khalid Masood drove a rental car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge in London then entered into the Parliament building grounds and fatally stabbed a police officer before being gunned down by police. The attack killed 5 people and injured 49.

Every attack has been used as a pretext to reinforce the security apparatus and give extraordinary power to the armed forces, while strengthening border controls and attacking immigrants fleeing from areas torn by NATO-led wars, who were branded as "terrorists."

Under the state of emergency imposed in France after the terrorist attacks carried out in Paris by members of NATO-backed Islamist terror networks fighting in the war in Syria, President François Hollande seized on the Nice attack for mass recruitment into the military and paramilitary police reserves that work closely with the army for operations inside France.

After the Christmas market attack, Berlin introduced measures including expansion of deportation, the construction of a European surveillance apparatus, "intelligent video surveillance," and more powers for the police.

The latest horrific attack underscores yet again that police-state measures do not prevent disoriented individuals from carrying out the attacks. Nevertheless, European officials who condemned the Stockholm attack all pledged to step up their efforts against "terrorism."

"An attack on any of our member states is an attack on us all," said the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. "We stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the people of Sweden and the Swedish authorities can count on the European Commission to support them in any which way we can."