

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Spanish police kill 5 in resort hours after Barcelona attack

BARCELONA, Spain — Police on Friday shot and killed five people wearing fake bomb belts who staged a car attack in a seaside resort in Spain's Catalonia region hours after a van plowed into pedestrians on a busy Barcelona promenade, killing at least 13 people and injuring over 100 others.

Authorities said the back-to-back vehicle attacks — as well as an explosion earlier this week elsewhere in Catalonia — were connected and the work of a large terrorist group. Three people were arrested, but the driver of the van used in the Barcelona attack remained at large and the manhunt intensified for the perpetrators of the latest European rampage claimed by the Islamic State group.

Authorities were still reeling from Thursday's Barcelona attack when police in the popular seaside town of Cambrils, about 130 kilometers (80 miles) to the south, fatally shot five people near the town's boardwalk who had plowed into a group of tourists and locals with their blue Audi 3. Six people, including a police officer, were injured, though it wasn't clear how badly.

Catalonia's interior minister, Joaquim Forn, told Onda Cero radio that the five suspects killed in a subsequent shootout with police were wearing fake bomb belts.

"They were fakes, but very well made, and it wasn't until the bomb squad carried out the controlled explosion of one that they could determine they were fakes," he said.

Trump defends Confederate statues, berates his critics

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. — With prominent Republicans openly questioning his competence and moral leadership, President Donald Trump burrowed deeper into the racially charged debate over Confederate memorials and lashed out at members of his own party in the latest controversy to engulf his presidency.

Out of sight, but still online, Trump tweeted his defense of monuments to Confederate icons — bemoaning rising efforts to remove them as an attack on America's "history and culture."

And he berated his critics who, with increasingly sharper language, have denounced his initially slow and then ultimately combative comments on the racial violence at a white supremacist rally last weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Trump was much quicker Thursday to condemn violence in Barcelona, where more than a dozen people were killed when a van veered onto a sidewalk and sped down a busy pedestrian zone in what authorities called a terror attack.

He then added to his expression of support a tweet reviving a debunked legend about a U.S. general subduing Muslim rebels a century ago in the Philippines by shooting them with bullets dipped in pig blood.

Colleges brace for more violence amid rash of hate on campus

BOSTON — Nicholas Fuentes is dropping out of Boston University and heading south, pressing ahead with his right-wing politics despite receiving online death threats.

The 19-year-old joined a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last weekend and posted a defiant Facebook message promising that a "tidal wave of white identity is coming," less than an hour after a car plowed into a crowd of counter-protesters.

Now, he's hoping to transfer to Auburn University in Alabama.



Injured people are treated in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday after a white van jumped the sidewalk in the historic Las Ramblas district, crashing into a summer crowd of residents and tourists.

AP Photo/Oriol Duran

"I'm ready to return to my base, return to my roots, to rally the troops and see what I can do down there," Fuentes said in an interview this week.

At college campuses, far-right extremist groups have found fertile ground to spread their messages and attract new followers.

The real revolution in NKorea is rise of consumer culture

PYONGYANG, North Korea — Like all North Korean adults, Song Un Pyol wears the faces of leader Kim Jong Un's father and grandfather pinned neatly to her left lapel, above her heart. But on her right glitters a diamond-and-gold brooch.

Song is what a success story in Kim Jong Un's North Korea is supposed to look like. Just after Kim assumed power in late 2011, she started managing the supermarket floor at a state-run department store, which has freezers stocked full of pork and beef and rows of dairy, bakery and canned goods. She watches as customers fill their shopping carts, take their groceries directly to be scanned at the checkout counter and pay with cash or bank debit cards.

Song is part of a paradigm shift within North Korea: Three generations into the Kim family's ruling dynasty, markets have blossomed and a consumer culture is taking root. From 120 varieties of "May Day Stadium" brand ice cream to the widespread use of plastic to pay the bills, it's a change visibly and irreversibly transforming her nation.

While Kim has in recent weeks gained attention for his threat to fire missiles near Guam, his trademark two-track policy focuses on the development of both nuclear weapons and the economy. His acceptance of a more consumer-friendly economy is meant to foster economic growth and bring profits into the regime's coffers. But like his pursuit of nuclear weapons, it's a risky business.

Facing even more international sanctions and a flood of Chinese imports that has generated a huge trade imbalance, there are good reasons to believe the North Korean economy is in a bubble that could soon burst. Prices for gasoline imports have soared more than 200 percent in less than six months, the AP has found. The price of rice is also believed to be sharply rising, although

harder to independently confirm because of the difficulty in visiting local markets.

Estimates of N. Korea's nuclear weapons hard to nail down

WASHINGTON — The U.S. intelligence agencies' assessments of the size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal have a wide gap between high and low estimates. Size matters and not knowing makes it harder for the United States to develop a policy for deterrence and defend itself and allies in the region.

The secrecy of North Korea's nuclear program, the underground nature of its test explosions and the location of its uranium-enrichment activity has made it historically difficult to assess its capabilities.

Some U.S. assessments conclude North Korea has produced or can make around 30 to 60 nuclear weapons, said two U.S. officials who weren't authorized to discuss sensitive intelligence matters and demanded anonymity. Such a wide range affects how the U.S. considers addressing the threat. More North Korean bombs could indicate second-strike capacity and then there are questions about how much nuclear firepower the country could mobilize on a moment's notice.

Estimates by civilian experts cloud the picture even further. Most put the arsenal anywhere from a dozen to about 30 weapons.

"The bottom line is that we really don't know how many nuclear weapons they have," said Bruce Bennett, a senior international and defense researcher at RAND specializing in northeast Asian military issues. "Does it make a difference? Absolutely."

Warship captain in collision that killed 7 to lose command

WASHINGTON — Poor seamanship and flaws in keeping watch contributed to a collision between a Navy destroyer and a commercial container ship that killed seven sailors, Navy officials said, announcing that the warship captain will be relieved of command and more than a dozen other sailors will be punished.

Adm. William Moran, the vice chief of naval operations, told reporters Thursday that the top three leaders aboard the USS Fitzgerald, which was badly damaged in the June collision off the coast of Japan, will be removed from duty aboard the ship. They are the commanding officer, Cmdr. Bryce Benson; the executive officer, Cmdr. Sean Babbitt; and Master Chief Petty Officer Brice Baldwin, who as the ship's command master chief is its most senior enlisted sailor.

"The collision was avoidable, and both ships demonstrated poor seamanship," the Navy's 7th Fleet said in a statement, noting that "flawed" teamwork among those assigned to keep watch contributed to the collision.

The actions are being taken by Rear Adm. Joseph Aucoin, commander of the 7th Fleet, based at Yokosuka, Japan, because he lost confidence in the three, Moran said.

The Navy said the three had shown "inadequate leadership." Separately, seven junior officers were relieved of their duties because they had shown "poor seamanship" and bad teamwork, 7th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Clay Doss said Friday.

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