

EUROPE: 'Five years ago you didn't think about it so much'

Continued from 1A

Minister David Cameron told the BBC on Tuesday. He said Britain's threat level remains "severe," meaning an attack is considered highly likely.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks at the Brussels airport and in the city's subway that left dozens dead and scores more wounded.

French President Francois Hollande said the attacks targeted all of Europe and he warned of a long "war" ahead.

Though people in Western Europe have dealt with the threat of violence from Muslim extremists as well as homegrown nationalist and revolutionary movements for decades, the idea that a "war" is playing out in their streets is hard to imagine. But the recent frequency and scale of attacks have made some Europeans feel that it's just something they have to get used to.

"Five years ago you didn't think about it so much," said Francesca Cervellini, a 20-year-old Italian tourist as she passed by the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm. "It didn't happen so often before. Now it's everyday life. It's normal."

In Moscow, security has been tightened notably at everyday locations in the wake of a series of attacks in the past 15 years. There are metal detectors at the entrances to all subway stations, all passenger rail stations do luggage scans, most indoor shopping centers have metal detectors and glowering guards. Airports do luggage scans at the entrance.

In Western Europe people are more reluctant to trade civil liberties and an open society for more security. But after each attack that equation changes, at least temporarily, said Catherine Muller, of the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton, England. "Terrorism is one of the risks people normally overestimate because it is very scary and has a strong emotional effect," said Muller.

While those fears are perfectly understandable, she said, it's important to remember that "no matter what policies or laws are in place, there's not going to be 100 percent security."

In Germany the fear of terrorism is less acute than in France or Belgium, but the risk of such attacks is something far-right and nationalist groups focus on a lot, especially in connection with the influx of migrants from the Middle East.



AP Photo/Thibault Camus
People walk towards the illuminated Eiffel Tower illuminated with the Belgium national colors black, yellow and red in honor of the victims of Tuesday's attacks at the airport and the metro station in Brussels, in Paris.

Explosions rock Brussels

Bombs exploded Tuesday at the Brussels airport and in the city's subway, killing at least 31 people and wounding more than 180 people. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks.



There haven't been any attacks by Islamic extremists in Germany since Arid Uka shot dead two American servicemen at Frankfurt airport in 2011. However there have been several attempted attacks that failed or were foiled.

German mainstream politicians have also been at pains to point out that Germany is a target for Islamic extremists and it's probably a matter of when, not if, such an attack happens.

Even in small countries on Europe's periphery the same fears are palpable.

Denmark witnessed an attack in February last year, when a gunman, apparently inspired by the Charlie Hebdo shooting massacre in Paris a few weeks earlier, opened fire against a free-speech seminar and outside a synagogue.

Sweden hasn't seen an attack since a suicide bomber blew himself up in Stockholm in December 2010, but failed to kill anyone else. But reports of hundreds of extremists from Sweden joining Islamic State fighters in Syria and last

year's unprecedented influx of migrants from the Middle East and Africa have sparked concerns that an attack will happen sooner or later.

"It could happen tomorrow or in a year or in five years," said Dani Amouri, a 23-year-old Stockholm resident who left Lebanon five years ago. "In Sweden, Denmark, Germany, everywhere. There is no peace in the world anymore. Not even in Europe."

Duncan, who represents the Scottish Conservatives in the European Parliament, was supposed to give visitors from Scotland a tour of the European Parliament on Tuesday. Instead they had to stay in their hotels.

He said the violence made him think about what, if anything, one can do to be more vigilant when moving in public places without overreacting.

"It's not like a film where you can see the villain approaching," Duncan said. "Is it someone carrying a backpack? Is it someone who doesn't look like me? I can't tell you what I should try to avoid."

Islamic State claims bombings in Brussels

By RAF CASERT and RAPHAEL SATTER
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Islamic extremists struck Tuesday in the heart of Europe, killing at least 34 people and wounding scores of others in back-to-back bombings of the Brussels airport and subway that again laid bare the continent's vulnerability to suicide squads.

Bloodied and dazed travelers staggered from the airport after two explosions — at least one blamed on a suicide attacker and another apparently on a suitcase bomb — tore through crowds checking in for morning flights. About 40 minutes later, another rush-hour blast ripped through a subway car in central Brussels as it left the Maelbeek station, in the heart of the European Union's capital city.

Authorities released a photo taken from closed-circuit TV footage of three men pushing luggage carts in the airport, saying two of them apparently were suicide bombers and that the third — dressed in a light-colored coat, black hat and glasses — was at large. They urged the public to reach out to police if they recognized him. The two men believed to be the suicide attackers apparently were wearing dark gloves on their left hands, possibly to hide detonators.

In police raids Tuesday across Belgium, authorities later found a nail-filled bomb, chemical products and an Islamic State flag in a house in the Schaerbeek neighborhood, the state prosecutors' office said in a statement.

In its claim of responsibility, the Islamic State group said its members detonated suicide vests both at the airport and in the

subway, where many passengers fled to safety down dark tunnels filled with hazy smoke from the explosion. A small child wailed, and commuters used cell phones to light their way out.

European security officials have been bracing for a major attack for weeks and warned that IS was actively preparing to strike. The arrest Friday of Salah Abdeslam, a key suspect in the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris, heightened those fears, as investigators said many more people were involved than originally thought and that some are still on the loose.

"In this time of tragedy, this black moment for our country, I appeal to everyone to remain calm but also to show solidarity," said Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, who announced three days of mourning in his country's deadliest terror strike.

"Last year it was Paris. Today it is Brussels. It's the same attacks," said French President Francois Hollande.

Shockwaves from the attacks crossed Europe and the Atlantic, prompting heightened security at airports and other sites.

Belgium raised its terror alert to the highest level, shut the airport through Wednesday and ordered a city-wide lockdown, deploying about 500 soldiers onto Brussels' largely empty streets to bolster police checkpoints. France and Belgium both reinforced border security.

Justice ministers and interior ministers from across the 28-nation EU planned an emergency meeting, possibly Thursday morning, to assess the fallout. The subway blast hit beneath buildings that normally host EU meetings and house the union's top leadership.

Attack is 2nd major bombing for Utah teen

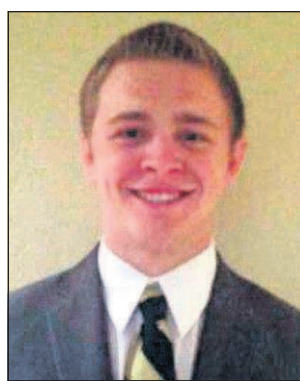
SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Surviving a major bombing is the extraordinary — and repeated — situation that one Utah teen can live to tell about.

Mason Wells, a 19-year-old from Sandy, Utah, is expected to make a full recovery from the bombing attack at the Brussels airport Tuesday, which left him with a surgery scar, severed Achilles tendon, head gash, shrapnel injuries and severe burns.

Wells had once again found himself at the center of a major attack — standing within feet of a bomb that exploded at the Belgian airport. The blasts in the Belgian capital killed 31 people and wounded dozens at the airport and a subway station.

Three years ago, Wells and his father felt the ground shake and narrowly escaped death from an April 2013 attack in the U.S., when a pressure-cooker bomb exploded a block away from where they were watching his mother run the Boston Marathon.

"Hopefully he's run his lifelong odds and we're done," said Chad Wells about the oldest of their five children. "I think it will make him a stronger person...Maybe the Boston



Wells

experience was there to help him get through this experience."

The former high school football and lacrosse player had four months left on his two-year Mormon mission, and was planning to major in engineering at the University of Utah next fall. He also wanted to reapply to the Naval Academy after barely missing the cut after high school, his father said.

His father said he woke up to the latest news on the TV before calling his son's mission president in France and found out his son was injured but alive. More than eight hours later, they finally spoke to their son, who was groggy and exhausted after surgery. The teen is in good spirits but his family is still figuring out when they'll get to see him, and if he'll finish his mission.

"I'm completely shocked by the news. It's the kind of thing as a parent you never, ever want to wake up to," Chad Wells said. "We're just grateful that's he lived through this experience."

Other Mormon missionaries at the Brussels airport were also hospitalized. Richard Norby, 66, of Lehi, and Joseph Empey, 20, of Santa Clara, were with Wells and also hospitalized with serious injuries from the blast.

Empey is doing well after being treated for second-degree burns to his hands, face and head, his parents, Court and Amber Empey said in a statement. He also had surgery for shrapnel injuries to his legs. "We have been in touch with him and he is grateful and in good spirits," the family said.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert praised the Utah natives as "people of faith who have forsaken everything — family, friends, school and careers — in order to share a message of hope and love with the world." Thousands of Utah Mormons have served proselytizing missions around the world. Church members account for as many as two-thirds of the state's population.

Fearing copycat attacks, U.S. officials step up security

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration stepped up security at major transit hubs across the country after Tuesday's airport and subway bombings in Brussels, as top U.S. intelligence officials warned of the risk for copycat attacks at home. President Barack Obama vowed to help Belgium track down those responsible for the deadly explosions.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson stressed there is no "specific, credible intelligence" pointing to a similar plot in America, but he said the Transportation Security Administration would deploy additional security at major airports and rail stations in different cities. Officials also reviewed additional security measures for travelers from Belgium, among more than three dozen countries whose citizens generally don't need a visa to enter the U.S.

The State Department warned Americans about potential risks to travel in Europe. "Terrorist groups continue to plan near-term attacks throughout Europe, targeting sporting events, tourist sites, restaurants and transportation," it said in a statement. Officials advised U.S. citizens to "exercise vigilance" in public places or on mass transportation and to take "particular caution" during religious events or

large events.

The attacks in the Belgian capital underscored the growing threat posed by the Islamic State group on both sides of the Atlantic. The bombs in Brussels' airport and subway locked down the European Union's capital just a few months after attacks shocked Paris and San Bernardino, California.

"We will do whatever is necessary to support our friend and ally Belgium in bringing to justice those who are responsible," Obama declared in Havana, where he was closing his historic, three-day visit. The attack immediately overshadowed events on the island, with Obama addressing the tragedy at the top of a keynote speech to the Cuban people and again at an exhibition baseball game.

"The world must unite," Obama said after offering his condolences in a telephone call with Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel. "We can and we will defeat those who threaten the safety and security of people all around the world."

Several Americans were injured, including an Air Force officer and his wife and four children who were at the airport. The service member is stationed at Joint Force Command Brunssum, in the Netherlands, but the military wouldn't identify him by

name. Officials said he was a lieutenant colonel.

Following the attacks, U.S. European Command announced new prohibitions on unofficial military and Defense Department employee travel to Brussels "until further notice." Official travel to the NATO hub in the city now requires approval.

Secretary of State John Kerry, accompanying Obama in Cuba, said in a statement the U.S. was working to determine the status of all Americans in Brussels. The embassy there issued a statement telling U.S. citizens to stay where they are and "take the appropriate steps to bolster your personal security."

In the United States, the Homeland Security Department said it could further enhance security measures "as appropriate, to protect the American people." It urged Americans to report any suspicious activity to law enforcement authorities.

Johnson said last week that officials were monitoring world events while evaluating whether to raise the nation's security posture or issue another bulletin via the government's National Terror Advisory System. A bulletin was issued in December after American-born Syed Rizwan Farook and his Pakistani wife, Tashfeen Malik, killed 14 people in San Bernardino.



Jacob Tyler Jones

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