

Terrorism in Belgium and Western Europe; Attacks against Transportation Targets; Coordinated Terrorist Attacks

In the aftermath of the March 22, 2016 attacks in Brussels, Belgium, START compiled the following statistics from the Global Terrorism Database. Early reports on the Brussels attacks indicate that the perpetrators executed a series of coordinated attacks targeting an airport and a subway station with explosives. Two of the attacks were reportedly carried out by suicide bombers. More than 30 people were killed, and more than 200 people were injured across both locations. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility for the attack.

BY THE NUMBERS

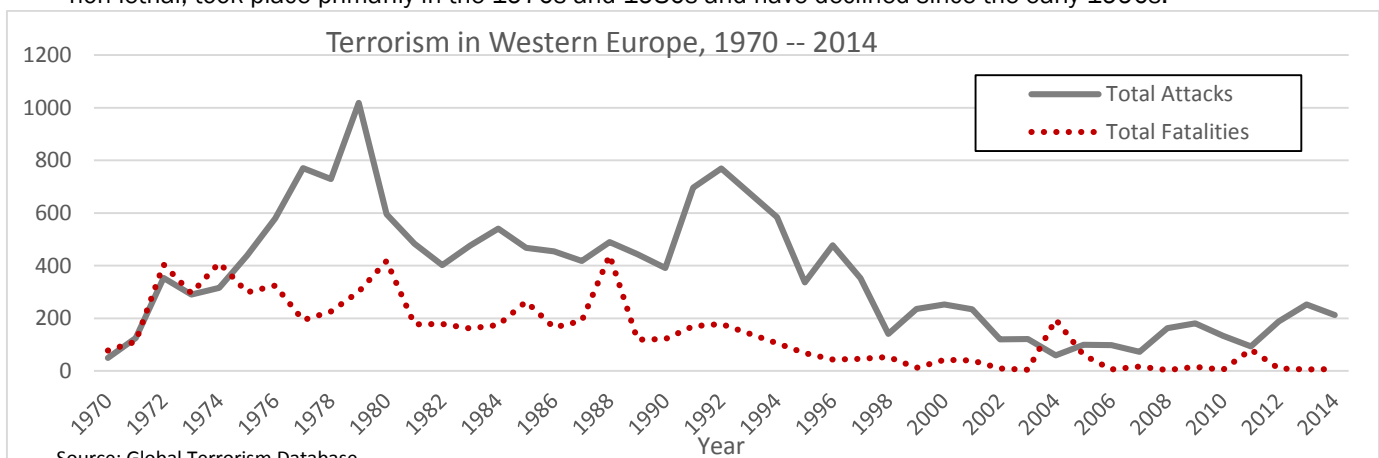
- More than 140 terrorist attacks took place in Belgium between 1970 and 2014, causing more than 40 deaths and 230 injuries.
- More than 7,400 terrorist attacks worldwide between 1970 and 2014 targeted some form of transportation, including airports and aircraft, representing 5.3 percent of all attacks.
 - More than 460 targets of terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2014 were airports, representing 6.4 percent of all transportation targets.
 - More than 130 targets of terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2014 were subway systems, representing 1.9 percent of all attacks on transportation targets.
- Recently, attacks on transportation targets have been somewhat less prevalent. More than 1,400 such attacks took place between 2010 and 2014, comprising 3.0 percent of all attacks.
- More than 10,000 terrorist attacks worldwide between 2000 and 2014 (14%) were conducted in coordination with other attacks.
- ISIL, under its current incarnation, carried out more than 750 coordinated attacks in 2013 and 2014.
- More than 1,600 terrorist attacks were committed by ISIL in 2013 and 2014.
- More than 41,000 terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2014 (58%) involved the use of explosives.
- More than 3,600 terrorist attacks between 2000 and 2014 (5.1%) were suicide attacks.

TERRORISM IN BELGIUM AND WESTERN EUROPE

1970-2014

Between 1970 and 2014, more than 140 terrorist attacks took place in Belgium, causing more than 40 deaths and 230 injuries.

- The majority of these attacks (68%) and deaths (68%) took place during the 1970s and 1980s.
- More than three-quarters (82%) of the terrorist attacks in Belgium were non-lethal. This figure is slightly higher than the percentage of non-lethal attacks in Western Europe more broadly (75%).
- Historically, the most active perpetrator group in Belgium was the Communist Combatant Cells (CCC), which was responsible for 24 percent of the attacks in Belgium during this time period, despite the fact that they were primarily active in 1984 and 1985.
- Patterns of terrorism in Belgium generally reflected trends in Western Europe, where terrorist attacks were frequently non-lethal, took place primarily in the 1970s and 1980s and have declined since the early 1990s.



2004-2014

- Certain exceptionally deadly attacks have taken place in Western Europe in recent years.
 - Like the attacks in Belgium, Islamist perpetrator groups conducted coordinated attacks targeting public transportation in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. The attacks in Madrid targeted commuter trains, killing more than 190 people and wounding approximately 1,800. The attacks in London targeted subway trains and a bus, killing more than 50 people and wounding nearly 800.
 - More recently, ISIL claimed responsibility for a series of coordinated attacks in Paris in November 2015 targeting several restaurants, a theater, and a stadium. Combined, these attacks killed more than 130 people and wounded several hundred others.
 - In 2011 far-right extremist Anders Breivik carried out a pair of attacks in Norway against government and civilian targets in which more than 70 people were killed and more than 300 were wounded.

ATTACKS ON TRANSPORTATION TARGETS

OVERVIEW

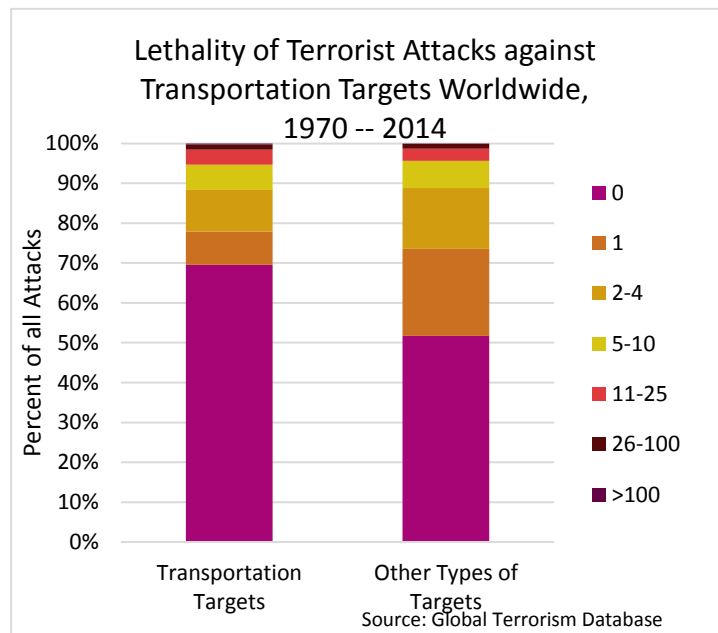
More than 7,400 terrorist attacks worldwide between 1970 and 2014 targeted some form of transportation, including airports and aircraft. These types of targets made up 5.3 percent of all terrorist attacks, and 9.1 percent of all terrorist attacks on civilian targets (excluding attacks against government, military, or police).

- Recently, attacks on transportation targets have been somewhat less prevalent, comprising 3.0 percent of all attacks and 5.5 percent of attacks against civilian targets between 2010 and 2014.
- The tactic of targeting of transportation infrastructure was not used uniformly around the world. Among countries that experienced at least 50 terrorist attacks against civilian targets between 1970 and 2014, the highest proportion of attacks against transportation targets took place in China (52.1%) and the lowest was in Central African Republic (1.1%).
- In Belgium, attacks against transportation targets comprised 16.3 percent of all attacks between 1970 and 2014.
- Terrorist attacks against transportation targets were slightly less likely to be carried out by suicide attackers (2.0% of attacks), compared to attacks against other types of targets (2.7%).
- Terrorist attacks against transportation targets worldwide were slightly more likely to be part of coordinated, multi-part attacks (13.5 percent of attacks), compared to attacks against other types of targets (12.5%).

LETHALITY

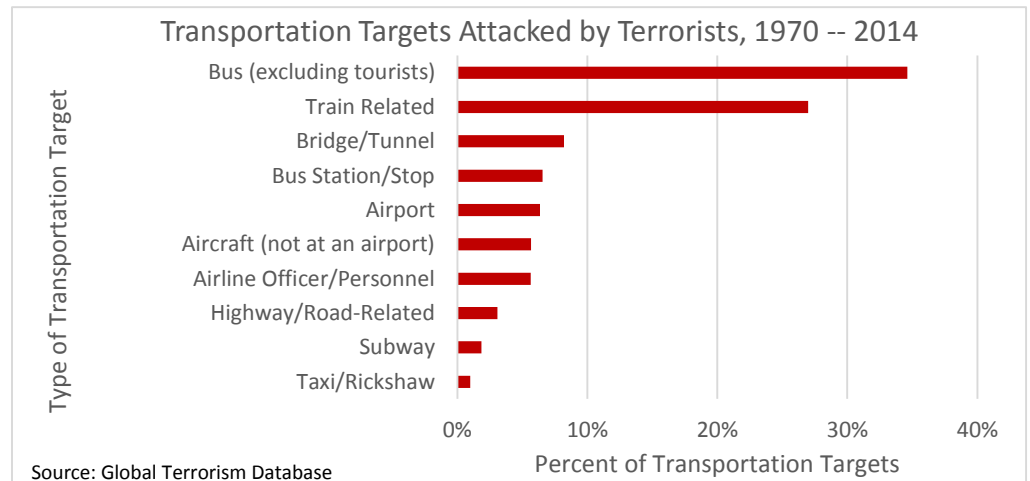
The average lethality of terrorist attacks against transportation targets between 1970 and 2014 was 2.8 deaths per attack. This is 22 percent higher than the average lethality of attacks against other types of targets (2.3 deaths per attack).

- Attacks against transportation targets were more likely to be non-lethal (69.6 percent of attacks) than attacks against other types of targets (51.8%). However, they were also less likely to cause between one and ten deaths, and more likely to be highly lethal.
- Attacks against transportation targets caused more than 25 fatalities in 1.6 percent of attacks, compared to 1.3 percent of attacks against other targets.



TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION TARGETS

The types of transportation most frequently targeted in terrorist attacks worldwide were buses and trains, which comprised 61.6 percent of all transportation targets worldwide between 1970 and 2014. In contrast, airports represented 6.4 percent of all transportation targets, and subway systems made up 1.9 percent of all transportation targets.



COORDINATED TERRORIST ATTACKS 2000-2014*

Like the recent attacks in Brussels and Paris, some highly lethal terrorist attacks were carried out as part of coordinated events in which perpetrators execute multiple attacks simultaneously, or nearly simultaneously, typically in a single country or city.

- Between 2000 and 2014, 14 percent of all terrorist attacks that occurred worldwide were conducted in coordination with other attacks.
- On average, individual attacks that were carried out as part of a coordinated event were slightly more deadly, causing 2.84 total fatalities on average, compared to isolated attacks, which caused 2.35 total fatalities on average. The average number of perpetrator fatalities among attacks that were part of a coordinated event were slightly higher as well—0.39 perpetrator deaths per attack, compared to 0.33 for isolated attacks.

PERPETRATORS OF COORDINATED ATTACKS

The perpetrator of the attack was unidentified for 40 percent of all coordinated terrorist attacks that took place worldwide between 2000 and 2014. The remaining 60 percent were disproportionately carried out by a relatively small number of perpetrator groups.

- ISIL, under its current incarnation, carried out more than 750 coordinated attacks during this time period—specifically in 2013 and 2014. However, this is a conservative assessment because the Global Terrorism Database records the names of perpetrator organizations at the time of the attack. Thus, it is important to note that al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), ISIL's predecessor, carried out at least 400 coordinated attacks as well. Also, 25 coordinated attacks were attributed to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), another identity previously assumed by ISIL, and several other coordinated attacks were carried out by provinces of the Islamic State, including the Sinai Province and the Tripoli Province.
- Other organizations that have carried out more than a hundred coordinated attacks include Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Communist Party of India- Maoist and unaffiliated Maoists in India, al-Shabaab primarily in Somalia and Kenya, Tehriki-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), the New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines, Fulani militants in Nigeria and the Central African Republic, and al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

LOCATIONS OF COORDINATED ATTACKS

More than 10,000 coordinated terrorist attacks took place in 104 countries between 2000 and 2014. Much like terrorism in general, these attacks were concentrated among a small number of countries.

- More than half of all coordinated attacks (54%) took place in Iraq, Pakistan, India, Nigeria, and Afghanistan.
- Among countries that experienced more than 50 attacks between 2000 and 2014, France had the highest proportion of attacks that were carried out as part of multi-part, coordinated events, with 40 percent. The majority of these (87%) were carried out in Corsica by separatists including the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC), causing property damage but no deaths and few injuries.

*A full report on coordinated attacks can be found at

http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_ParisMassCasualtyCoordinatedAttack_Nov2015.pdf.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The data presented here are drawn from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The GTD contains information on more than 140,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

The GTD is a project of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). START aims to provide timely guidance on how to reduce the incidence of terrorism and disrupt terrorism networks, as well as enhance the resilience of society in the face of terrorist threats at home and abroad. Additional information about START is available at www.start.umd.edu.

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