

Molenbeek mayor received terror suspects list including on-the-run Salah Abdeslam one month before Paris attacks

EC chief says Schengen is 'comatose' and warned euro may collapse without it, as Brussels emerges from four days of lockdown

By Isabelle Fraser

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- **Mastermind Abaaoud planned to don suit to blend in and attack commercial centre**
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Latest

What has happened today?

Two brothers who took part in the Paris attacks that killed 130 and the suspected chief organiser were on a terror suspect watch list handed by Belgian intelligence to the mayor of Molenbeek a month ago, it emerged today, write **Henry Samuel in Paris and Matthew Holehouse in Brussels.**

Françoise Schepmans, mayor of Molenbeek, a Brussels district dubbed a “terrorists’ den” due its links with jihadists, has admitted receiving a list with the names and addresses of more than 80 people suspected as Islamic militants living in her area.

This included Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a Molenbeek resident who had left for Syria to fight for the Islamic State in early 2014 and was killed last week outside Paris, along with Brahim Abdeslam , who blew himself up on the boulevard Voltaire and his brother Salah Abdeslam - currently on the run.

Ms Schepmans told the New York Times: “What was I supposed to do about them? It is not my job to track possible terrorists.” That, she added, was “the responsibility of the federal police”.

Belgium has come under criticism in France over its perceived intelligence failings before and after the attacks, with Le Monde newspaper calling it a "clearing house for jihadism" that risks becoming a fractious "nation without a state".

The Belgian capital has been under the highest-level threat alert since Saturday, meaning that authorities fear a “serious and imminent attack”. Yet schools and subways began reopening across the city on Wednesday, despite the fact that Salah Abdeslam is still on the run, along with another suspect named as Mohamed Abrini, 30, seen driving a car with Abdeslam two days before the atrocities.

Mohamed Adbeslam, the brother of terrorists Salah and Brahim, on Wednesday confirmed having met Abrini but denied any knowledge of the terror plot, saying he thought his brothers were going “skiing”.

He even claimed to have received messages of support from the families of victims.

"Fortunately, there are many people who believe me and I get a lot of messages of support, from a lot of French in particular, families of victims," he said.

"I totally understand their anger against me and my family. But I also want to tell them that, while unfortunately we did nothing, we did not want what happened in Paris.

In neighbouring France, François Hollande urged fellow countrymen to deck their homes with the national flag during a day of mourning on Friday for victims of the Paris attacks.

The French president will lead a solemn ceremony along with victims' families at the Invalides, which houses a military museum and Napoleon's tomb.

Manuel Valls, the prime minister, on Wednesday warned that France's war on terror would last a long time amid a "permanent" threat of more attacks.

France has placed 124 people under investigation since a state of emergency was issued hours after the Paris attacks, and has conducted more than 1,230 searches, recovering 230 arms, according to Bernard Cazeneuve, the interior minister.

On Wednesday, a French court handed a six-month suspended jail sentence to a man suspected of mentoring at least two young jihadists. Olivier Corel, 69, nicknamed the White Emir is suspected of radicalising Mohammad Merah, who killed seven people in Toulouse in 2012, and Fabien Clain, whose voice was identified on an audio tape in which Isil claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks.

The sentence, however, was for illegal possession of a hunting rifle.

23:45

Eagles of Death Metal: "We can't wait to return to the Bataclan?"

The Eagles of Death Metal were inspired by the "shared heroism" they witnessed during the Bataclan theatre massacre, and "can't wait" to return to the venue to play once more.

Members of the band hid and others attempted to flee as gunfire rang out suddenly during their performance, and they became witnesses to the horror that would ultimately claim 89 lives in the bloodiest of the November 13 attacks in Paris.



Eagles of death metal on stage Photo: LEON/DALLE

The fear and confusion the band felt as Jihadists fired indiscriminately on the crowd in the iconic rock venue have been replaced in the days since by grief, and defiance.

“I want to be the first band to play in the Bataclan when it opens back up because I was there when it went silent for a minute,” Jesse Hughes, the band’s front man, told Vice in an interview released on Wednesday.

[Read the full article](#)

16:30

Summary of events

- The Mayor of the Brussels district of Molenbeek received a list with the names of more than 80 suspected jihadists living in the area just one month before the Paris attacks. The New York Times reported that on this list attacks mastermind Abdelhamid Abaaoud, and the two brothers who took part - Brahim and Salah Abdeslam - who remains at large. Their apartment was just 100 metres from the Mayor's office, and could be viewed from her window.

- Brussels is coming back to life after four days of lockdown following the intelligence that there would be an "imminent" attack on the city. The metro is slowly reopening, as are schools and nurseries. Armed guard remains in place throughout the city, and it continues to be on Level 4 terror alert, meaning that an attack is imminent.
- Jean-Claude Juncker has admitted that Schengen is "comatose" and warned that the euro will collapse without it. The president of the European Commission was responding to parties such as Ukip who argue that Schengen has granted "free movement of jihad".
- Germany contributing 650 soldiers to France's Mali operation to grant them relief in their fight against Isil. Meanwhile, the French interior minister has confirmed that the climate change conference in next week Paris will go ahead, and said that more police officers had been drafted out to borders and to Le Bourget where it is taking place.
- Last night we learned that the suspected ringleader of the Paris attacks Abaaoud returned to the Bataclan concert venue while a police operation to kill the remaining gunmen was still under way. This meant he was there minutes before President Hollande was in the vicinity.
- We also learned that police are searching for another man in connection with the Paris attacks. Mohammad Abrini, 30, Belgian of Moroccan origin, was seen by police on video footage at a car fuelling station in Ressons, a town north of Paris, on the day before the attacks. The Renault Clio the two were seen in was one of the cars used in the attacks. A Belgian police notice describes Abrini as "dangerous and probably armed".

16:45

Brussels football team to play without fans sue to security fears

Brussels football team Anderlecht will play its Belgian league match against OHL Leuven behind closed doors because of the highest threat alert applying to the capital.

A day after local authorities forced FC Brugge to play Thursday's Europa League game against Napoli without fans because of the Belgium's second-highest threat applying to the rest of nation, Brussels authorities forced Anderlecht to do likewise next weekend.

Anderlecht general director Herman Van Holsbeek called it "unique for the club, a measure with serious consequences" that would hit the finances of the club.

16:27

Eagles of Death Metal say they will finish the gig that the attackers interrupted

The drummer for Eagles of Death Metal, Julian Dorio, has said that he is "counting down the days until I get to finish that concert."

He added that he was "forever changed" by the event: "To everyone who, in the face of unrelenting evil, went toe to toe using courage, compassion, and love as their weapons. You all are my heroes."

November 13, 2015. I, along with my bandmates @eodmofficial, had the privilege to play to one of the most energetic crowds of our tour when, nearly half way through the show, the unimaginable occurred. Absolute and unnecessary evil turned our world on its head. I am beyond grateful that I was able to find a way out of the venue, but I am mourning those who did not, including our mate, Nick Alexander. My thoughts are with their families. I'm home safe. And now I have a new family abroad. To Arthur, who ran for his life right beside me and selflessly put us in a taxi before himself, thank you. To Fabrice, a fan who lent me his phone later that night so I could call @emilydorio and attempt to put her at ease, thank you. To everyone who, in the face of unrelenting evil, went toe to toe using courage, compassion, and love as their weapons. You all are my heroes. Last but certainly not least, the outreach and support back home is appreciated more than you'll ever know. I will never forget it. I am forever changed but hold fast to the love around us. I'm counting down the days until I get to finish that concert. Peace & love.?

14:05

Brussels highest terror alert to remain

Brussels' top level terror alert is due to remain until at least next Monday. The Belgian federal prosecutor has prolonged the detention of Abraimi Lazez, a Moroccan from Molenbeek, for one month.

He is accused of taking part in "terrorist murders" and helping Abdeslam escape. The prosecutor said yesterday that traces of blood and two pilots were found in his car.

Ali O., a Frenchman also from Molenbeek, is also suspected of helping Abdeslam escape, and will appear in court on Friday.

The Belgian government has ordered health and emergency services to take precautionary measures to ensure their services aren't infiltrated by extremists.



Two Belgian Army soldiers patrol in a shopping street in the centre of Brussels Photo: AP

"We have to be sure that we can see everybody has an identification badge," Health Minister Maggie De Block told VRT network. "When ambulances arrive, we have to see from where they come, who is in it. Really as a precaution."

Meanwhile, Mohamed Adbeslam, the brother of terrorists Salah and Brahim, confirms he met Mohamed Abrini, the man now wanted by Belgian over the massacres - and claims he has received messages of support from the families of victims.



A soldier patrols Place Stephanie - Stefaniaplein in Brussels Photo: AFP/Getty

He insists he had no idea his brothers were planning the atrocity, and has said they told their mother they were going skiing before the attack.

"Fortunately, there are many people who believe me and I get a lot of messages of support, from a lot of French in particular, families of victims," he said.

"I totally understand their anger against me and my family. But I also want to tell them that, while unfortunately we did nothing, we did not want what happened in Paris."

12:03

Fly the tricolore on French day of mourning on Friday

President Francois Hollande called for French citizens to adorn their homes with flags during the day of mourning for victims of the Paris attacks.

Friday will be a day of homage to the victims, during which the president said citizens "could participate by decorating their homes with the blue, white and red flag," government spokesman Stephane Le Foll said.

10:43

Brussels slowly comes back to life

Brussels is creaking back to life to life today, writes **Matthew Holehouse**.

The terrorist threat level remains Four, meaning an attack is imminent.



A Belgian soldier patrols at the Central Station subway stop in Brussels Photo: Reuters

But most of the tube lines are running, and 300 police have been deployed to guard schools, which are open.

The ministry of health has warned the emergency services to be on guard for attacks.



Belgian soldiers patrol at the Central Station subway stop in Brussels Photo: Reuters

It has also told fire stations to secure their equipment to prevent it being stolen, allowing terrorists to pose as fire officers.



Zoya Sheftalovich
@zoyashef

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So this just happened in Brussels.

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10:21

Molenbeek mayor received list of 80 suspected jihadist residents one month before attacks

The Mayor of the Brussels district of Molenbeek received a list with the names of more than 80 suspected jihadists living in the area just one month before the Paris attacks.

The New York Times reports that the list included the two brothers who took part in the attacks - Brahim and Salah Abdeslam - as well as Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the suspected mastermind.

He was a Molenbeek resident who left for Syria to join the so-called Islamic State in 2014.

Mayor of Molenbeek, Françoise Schepmans, said in an interview: "What was I supposed to do about them? It is not my job to track possible terrorists".

That "is the responsibility of the federal police", she said.

The brothers lived very close to Ms Schepmans' office: their flat was just 100m from City Hall, visible from her office.

A third brother, Mohamed Abdeslam, worked for the mayor's administration.

The New York Times also reports that the mayor of the eastern Belgian town of Verviers, Muriel Targnion, was given a similar list of 34 residents who authorities suspected as jihadists.

But that was all that was on the list: "All I was given was a number," she said. "No names, no addresses. Nothing."

10:10

Paris St Germain to wear 'Je Suis Paris' shirts



Alexander Marquardt
@MarquardtA

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Today Paris Saint-Germain replaces sponsor Emirates with "JE SUIS PARIS" on jerseys for match against Malmo.

[twitter.com/PSG_English/st...](https://twitter.com/PSG_English/status/666666666666666666)

3:56 AM - 25 Nov 2015

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09:45

Juncker: Schengen is 'comatose' and euro will collapse without it

Jean-Claude Juncker has admitted that Schengen is "comatose" and warned that the euro will collapse without it, writes **Matthew Holehouse**.

Speaking in the European parliament in session to mark the Paris attacks, the president of the European Commission responded to parties such as Ukip who argue that Schengen has granted "free movement of jhad".

"Please don't get things mixed up. We should not exploit in an absurd manner these tragic events," said Juncker.

"We have to safeguard the spirit behind Schengen. Yes, the Schengen system is partly comatose. But those who believe in Europe, its values, its principles and its freedoms, must try to breath new

life into the spirit behind Schengen.

"If the spirit leaves our hearts, we will lose more than Schengen.

"A single currency does not exist if Schengen fails. It is not a neutral concept. It is not banal. It is one of the pillars of the construction of Europe."

09:37

Salah Abdeslam's brother calls for him to surrender

The brother of a fugitive Paris attack suspect is urging him to surrender to police immediately.

Mohamed Abdeslam said on RTL radio today that he shares the pain of victims' families and wishes he and his family could have done something to prevent the bloodshed across Paris on November 13.

Abdeslam had two brothers involved in the attacks. Brahim Abdeslam blew himself up in front of a Paris cafe, and Salah Abdeslam is believed to have been another potential bomber but escaped the scene. An international warrant is out for his arrest.

"Let him turn himself in for his parents, for justice, for the families of victims, so that we can find out what happened," Mohamed Abdeslam said.

He said he saw his brothers a few days before they left their Brussels suburb for Paris, but had no idea what they were plotting, and hasn't heard from Salah since.

09:02

More than 10,000 French police ready for climate conference

France will from Sunday dispatch 8,000 police, gendarmes or soldiers along its borders and 2,800 at Le Bourget - the site outside Paris where the global climate conference is due to take place starting on Monday.

Most world leaders, including Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin, are due to attend.

In all, 120,000 security forces will be deployed around the country, said Bernard Cazeneuve, the French interior minister.

08:59

Germany contributing 650 soldiers to France's Mali operation

German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday that Berlin will contribute up to 650 soldiers to the French-led operation against jihadists in Mali.

The move is aimed partly at providing some relief to France in its global fight against the Islamic State jihadists, according to German news agency DPA, quoting the minister following a parliamentary defence committee meeting.

08:55

Abaaoud planned to wear suit to blend in while attacking Paris's commercial centre

Henry Samuels writes: Abdelhamid Abaaoud and his accomplice had planned to don suits to "blend in" with businessmen at La Défense district where the Isil operatives had planned a terror attack on November 18 or 19, François Molins, the Paris prosecutor said.

Abaaoud and the unidentified individual both died last Wednesday during a police assault on a flat in Saint-Denis, a northern Paris suburb.

08:37

Brussels starts to reopen after lockdown

Students in Brussels have begun returning to class after a two-day shutdown over fears that a series of simultaneous attacks could be launched around the Belgian capital.

Special measures are being taken at primary and secondary schools plus universities, with student movements limited around or outside school buildings during the day.



Children pass a police officer as they arrive for school in the centre of Brussels Photo: AP

Underground transport in Brussels is also slowly starting up again after a four-day closure. Sections of the main metro are in operation, but services are not running to outlying suburbs.

Belgian authorities set the city on maximum alert overnight on Friday amid warnings of an imminent security threat. More than 1,000 security personnel and soldiers have been deployed.



An armed soldier stand guards as pupils go to school at the French lycee in Brussels Photo: AFP

04:00

Attack ringleader returned to Bataclan even while police operation was under way

Henry Samuel in Paris writes that the suspected ringleader of the Paris attacks returned to the Bataclan concert venue while a police operation to kill the remaining gunmen was still under way, the Paris prosecutor has revealed.

Telephone analysis shows that Abdelhamid Abaaoud had returned to the area around the scene - where 90 people were killed by three assailants – while police were still attempting to free hostages on November 13.

This means that he was in the vicinity within minutes of President François Hollande, who insisted on showing up to offer support to victims and police shortly after the terrorists were killed.



French President Francois Hollande (C), flanked by French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve (L) and French Prime Minister manuel Valls (R) addresses reporters near the Bataclan concert hall in central Paris following the terrorist attack Photo: Getty Images

The Isil terrorist also visited the scene where minutes earlier he and at least two other terrorists opened fire on Parisians in cafes and restaurants in the 10th and 11th arrondissements.

François Molins, the Paris prosecutor, said that Abaaoud had boarded a metro going back to the centre of Paris and the phone he was believed to be using was detected in the 10th, 11th and 12th districts, and by the Bataclan concert hall while attacks there ongoing.

“He revisited the area while the BRI (elite police unit) was still on the scene,” he said.



French fire brigade members aid an injured individual near the Bataclan concert hall following fatal shootings in Paris Photo: REUTERS

Abaaoud was among three people who died during a police raid on a flat in Saint-Denis, a northern Paris suburb, in the days after the attacks. One of the three has still not been identified but is believed to have died when a suicide vest exploded.

Investigators are convinced Abaaoud and the unidentified man were planning a suicide attack on the French capital's La Defense business district on November 18 or 19, Mr Molins added.

Meanwhile, the hunt continued for suspect Salah Abdeslam, who fled to Belgium after apparently jettisoning his suicide vest. Belgian authorities issued an international arrest warrant for a "dangerous" man seen driving a car with Abdeslam two days before the atrocities.



Spectators fleeing the Bataclan concert hall from the backdoor and windows Photo: Daniel Psenny/Le Monde/AFP

Mohamed Abrini, 30, was filmed along with Abdeslam at a petrol station in Ressons, France on the motorway to Paris, in a Renault Clio which was later used in the attacks, Belgium's federal prosecutor said in a statement.

The developments came as France and America pledged to “intensify airstrikes” against Isil in Syria and Iraq and “widen their scope” as President Barack Obama declared: “Nous sommes tous français” in the wake of the Paris attacks.

However, Mr Hollande ruled out sending French ground forces. “Local forces on the ground that we have accompanied will do this work on the ground, once we have hit Isil (with airstrikes),” he said.

Mr Hollande said it was “urgent to shut the border between Syria and Turkey so that no terrorist comes notably to Europe to perpetrate barbaric attacks like those we have known”.

Both called on Bashar al Assad’s departure as part of a political solution to the Syrian crisis but neither would put a time frame on this, with Mr Hollande merely saying “as soon as possible”.

01:46

'No specific, credible threat' to US from Isil: White House

President Barack Obama's national security team believes there is "no specific, credible threat" to the United States from Islamic State, the White House said Tuesday, amid stepped up coalition strikes on the extremist group.

"The president directed his national security team to continue to intensify ongoing efforts to degrade and destroy Isil," the White House said, calling for increased cooperation with allies.

For all of yesterday's developments click here



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