

CORPS

RELAY

Special Bulletin

Vienna Terror Attack (2nd November 2020) and UK's Terrorism Threat Level Upgraded to SEVERE

A lone gunman attacked six locations in central Vienna on Monday evening, starting outside the main synagogue. Witnesses described the man firing into crowds in bars with automatic rifles, as many people took advantage of the last evening before a nationwide curfew was introduced because of COVID-19. Police confirmed on Tuesday that four civilians were killed in the attacks - two men and two woman - with 23 others wounded, including a police officer.

Austrian police were initially hunting for several assailants, but subsequently announced that there was only one gunman who was shot dead by police as he fired on passers-by.

Austrian authorities named the gunman as a Kujtim Fejzulai, an "Islamist terrorist" who had been jailed for 22 months in April 2019 for trying to travel to Syria to join IS jihadists. He was released early in December under more lenient terms for young adults, after convincing the authorities that he no longer held extremist Islamist views. Originally from North Macedonia, Fejzulai had both Austrian and Macedonian citizenship. He had posted a photo on a social media, showing himself with weapons, before the attack. Police searched Fejzulai's home and seized video material. As well as being heavily armed, he was wearing a fake explosive belt.

The gunman opened fire with a shortened Kalashnikov assault rifle, but was also armed with a machete and a pistol. Police sealed off much of the historic centre of Vienna, urging the public to shelter in place. Many sought refuge in bars and hotels, while public transport throughout the old town was shut down and police scoured the city.

Whilst it is unclear if the gunman was intending to target the Jewish community, it is possible that having noted that the synagogue was closed and secure, he decided to rain his terror on anyone in the area. Significantly, previous attacks on synagogues such as the synagogue in Halle, Germany demonstrates that even automatic machine gunfire could not immediately break through robust wooden doors, and this may have been a factor in the incident, given that the Stadttempel synagogue is protected by heavy wooden doors, and may also have appeared to be empty of people at the time of the attack.

There had been a previous deadly terror attack against the Jewish community in Vienna which took place on 29 August 1981. In that machine-gun and grenade attack two people were killed and 30 others wounded as they took part in a Barmitzvah service at the Stadttempel synagogue. Two Palestinian gunmen, Marwan Hasan and Hesham Mohammed Rajeh were convicted of terrorism charges and attempted murder. Rajeh was also convicted of the earlier slaying of Heinz Nittel, head of the Austrian-Israel Society.

The raising of the MI5 JTAC Threat Level from ‘substantial’ to ‘severe’ is significant in that the decision-makers may well have factored in a possible link between the gunman with ISIS links in Austria and like-minded individuals in the UK with whom he may have been in contact, possibly via social media, or some other networking arrangements.

This attack has had parallels and comparisons drawn with the 2015 Bataclan attack, although that is based partially on the previous assumption of multiple gunmen. It may be coincidental that the 5th anniversary of the Bataclan Attack is November 13th 2020. This comes after three terrorist incidents in France in recent weeks, as well as increased hostility towards the French and France within a number of Islamic Countries and Communities. The Vienna Attack has had no identified links to any of the recent activity in France shared to date.

Top Tips

1 - Be a Hard Target, not a Soft Target

- Restrict both pedestrian and vehicular access to authorised persons and vehicles only – Stop Tailgating, Check ID's and record all visitors and contractors
- Be able to physically secure and “lockdown” your premises in an emergency
- Prepare and practice your “invacuation” procedure to secure people within the building, the same way you practice your evacuation plan for getting people out the building
- Have the right calibre of trained people in place, including well trained Security teams

2 - Keep Informed, Keep Communicating

- Maintain a good flow of intelligence and information, including close liaison with local Police and Counter-Terrorism advisors
- Always ensure that Security teams are alert to suspicious behaviour, record it and report it (internally or to the authorities if deemed necessary). Remember, if in doubt, **Report It**. At worst it was a couple of minutes out your day, but at best it could save lives.
- Ensure your staff, not only your security staff, are familiar and have completed the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) training (which is free, takes approximately 45 minutes and can be accessed [here](#))

3 - Get Ready, Stay Ready

- Ensure that Contingency and Emergency plans are in place, up to date and are easily accessible for all relevant personnel
- Carry out regular tests (including Penetration Tests) and drills of all security and safety systems, taking remedial action for any weaknesses that are identified
- Implement both internal and external security audits to identify and remove vulnerabilities

- Make sure all colleagues are familiar with “RUN HIDE TELL” guidance, ideally displaying the free posters somewhere within the building

Useful Numbers		
Event	Agency	Number
If an attack is happening	Police	999
If you see something suspicious	Anti-Terrorist Hotline OR Police	0800 789 321 999
If you would like any guidance or support with your Security	Corps Security Central Support	0141 378 7000
If you would like any specific advice on Counter-Terrorism matters	Corps Consult	020 7566 0516

Current National Threat Level

The threat to the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) from terrorism is **SEVERE**

The threat to Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland-related terrorism is **SEVERE**

NOTE:

Threat levels are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack

- **LOW** means an attack is highly unlikely
- **MODERATE** means an attack is possible, but not likely
- **SUBSTANTIAL** means an attack is likely
- **SEVERE** means an attack is highly likely
- **CRITICAL** means an attack is highly likely in the near future