

# BRUSSELS AIRPORT TO STAY CLOSED UNTIL SATURDAY

News / Airports / Routes



The Latest on the attacks in Brussels and related investigations (all times local):

9:05 p.m.

Two officials say the suspected bombmaker in the Paris attacks was one of two suicide bombers who died in the Brussels airport blasts.

The officials said that Najim Laachraoui's DNA was verified as that of one of the attackers on Tuesday, after samples were taken from remains found at the blast site in Brussels airport.

One European intelligence official and one French police official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to divulge details of the Belgian investigation. Both officials were briefed on the investigation.

Laachraoui's DNA was also found on the suicide belts used in the Paris attack, and authorities believe he was the bombmaker in the Nov. 13 attacks in the French capital.

--By Lori Hinnant in Paris and Paisley Dodds in London.

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8:15 p.m.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israelis know what Belgians are enduring and offered them his country's expertise in combating attacks.

Netanyahu said at a news conference on Wednesday night that he had spoken with the Belgian prime minister and the EU foreign minister and wished Belgians a speedy recovery to the wounded in the name of the Israeli people.

Netanyahu said that "if there is one people in the world who knows what they are going through, it is the citizens of Israel who have bravely and heroically faced terror attacks for many years."

He said that "I offered them full Israeli assistance in the struggle against terror, intelligence and security assistance."

He said the world needs to unite and act against terrorism.

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8 p.m.

Authorities in the Bahamas say they are investigating whether one of the Brussels attackers, Khalid El Bakraoui, also had Bahamian nationality.

Minister of National Security Bernard Nottage said Wednesday in Parliament that there is an Interpol red notice that confirms that El Bakraoui had Belgian nationality and "then it says Bahamian not confirmed."

Nottage says that Bahamian police have indicated that there is no evidence to suggest he is Bahamian, "but that matter is being investigated."

Belgian authorities identified El Bakraoui as the suicide bomber who targeted the subway. They said his brother, Ibrahim El Bakraoui, was a suicide bomber at the airport.

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7:30 p.m.

A relative of two young Americans missing since the Brussels attacks says the couple embraced the opportunity to live and travel in Europe.

Justin and Stephanie Shults had just waved goodbye to Stephanie's mother as she walked through airport security when bomb blasts tore through the airport Tuesday.

The couple moved to Brussels for work in 2014. Stephanie's cousin Larry Newsom said "they've taken full advantage of living over there and experiencing the world. They travel every month to a

new place in Europe."

Stephanie Shults, originally from Lexington, Kentucky, and her husband, from Tennessee, met in graduate school at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

Newsom said the family hoped "they've just been helping people, which is very much their nature. But we can't believe they wouldn't have checked in."

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7:15 p.m.

Brussels airport is going to remain closed at least until Saturday because of the double bomb attack there.

Airport spokeswoman Florence Muls says the date was pushed further back late Wednesday because authorities want to maintain a security perimeter until late Friday to continue their investigation into the attacks.

Every day the airport is closed, some 600 flights are being cancelled or diverted to other airports close by.

The bombings Tuesday at Brussels airport and a city subway station left 34 dead, including three bombers, and wounded 270 people.

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7 p.m.

The chairman of the U.S. House Intelligence Committee says it appears to him that the attacks Tuesday in Belgium were targeting Americans.

Republican Rep. Devin Nunes of California told reporters Wednesday after briefings with U.S. intelligence officials that one blast at the Brussels airport was close to counters for United Airlines, American Airlines and Delta Airlines — all U.S. carriers. Coupled with another blast on the subway close to the U.S. embassy, Nunes said it looks like an attack on Americans.

He says "if you are going to pick some locations (in Brussels) where you might hit Americans, those would be the locations."

No other officials have suggested that the attack was targeting Americans. The subway blast was also close to the European Union headquarters in Brussels.

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6:50 p.m.

President Barack Obama has declared that fighting the Islamic State group is his "No. 1 priority" and has pledged that the United States will pursue the jihadist group until it is destroyed.

Speaking Wednesday while on a trip to Argentina, Obama says "I've got a lot of things on my plate, but my top priority is to defeat ISIL and to eliminate the scourge of this barbaric terrorism that's been taking place around the world."

The American president says "the issue is, how do we do it in an intelligent way?"

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, meanwhile, announced he is coming to Brussels on Friday to talk with European officials about fighting terror.

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6:30 p.m.

An official in the Turkish president's office says the Brussels attacker who was deported from Turkey was Ibrahim El Bakraoui.

The official corrected Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's account, saying El Bakraoui, who was caught in June at the Turkish-Syrian border, was deported to the Netherlands in July, not Belgium.

Turkey says it warned both Belgium and the Netherlands that he was a "foreign terrorist fighter."

The official says Dutch authorities later allowed him to go free because Belgian authorities could not establish any ties to terrorism. The official cannot be named because he was not authorized to speak publicly on the issue.

A Belgian prosecutor says El Bakraoui was a 29-year-old Belgian who blew himself up at the Brussels Airport on Tuesday.

—Suzan Fraser in Ankara.

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6:10 p.m.

Secretary of State John Kerry is traveling to Brussels on Friday to discuss the deadly attacks with top Belgian and European officials.

State Department spokesman John Kirby says Kerry will visit the Belgian capital to "formally express the condolences of the United States for the loss of life" in Tuesday's bombings at the Brussels airport and subway.

He also will voice support for Belgian efforts to investigate the attacks and combat violent extremism.

At least 34 people were killed, including three suicide bombers, and more than 270 were wounded in the attacks claimed by Islamic State extremists.

Kerry is currently in Moscow for talks with President Vladimir Putin and other officials on Syria and Ukraine.

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5:50 p.m.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says one of the Brussels attackers was caught in Turkey in June and deported to Belgium.

Erdogan says Wednesday that the Belgian authorities released the suspect despite Turkish warnings that he was "a foreign fighter."

Erdogan did not name the attacker. He said the man was detained at Turkey's border with Syria at Gaziantep and that Turkey formally notified Belgian authorities of his deportation on July 14.

Erdogan says "despite our warnings that this person was a foreign terrorist fighter, Belgium could not establish any links with terrorism."

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5:35 p.m.

Neighbors of two brothers who committed suicide attacks in Brussels are expressing shock and bewilderment at what happened.

John Valderrama lived across the hall from the brothers in the Schaerbeek neighborhood, but says he never heard anything suspicious. He said he only saw one person come in or out of the fifth-floor apartment.

He was surprised when hours after Tuesday's attack, police burst into the brothers' apartment, where they discovered a large cache of TATP explosives.

Valderrama says "when I saw them I went 'Whoa!'"

Another neighbor, Erdine, said he was about to drive his son to school around 7:30 a.m. Tuesday when he saw two people carrying heavy bags out of the building.

The 36-year-old, who declined to give his last name due to the situation, says he saw a cab driver open his trunk. He says "the taxi driver tried to get the luggage. And the other guy reached for it like he was saying, 'No, I'll take it.'"

Prosecutors say the taxi driver tipped them off to the Schaerbeek address after the attacks.

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**SOURCE:** AP

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