

### US cities on high alert

Major US cities deployed police in large numbers, some with heavy weapons patrolling transit hubs, after around 35 people were killed in attacks on a Brussels airport and subway, though officials said there was no evidence of specific threats to the United States. New York, Los Angeles and Chicago stepped up their security and major airlines scrambled resources to cope with closings at the airport in Belgium's capital.

### Europe cuts air, rail links with Brussels

Europe froze air and rail links to Brussels as the authorities tightened security in alarm over the deadly blasts. Belgium's crisis centre urged people not to move. "No public transport. Stay where you are, also in schools, companies," it said on Twitter. Security forces tightened security at nuclear plants across the country, the Belga news agency said.

### Belgians turn to Twitter to offer rooms, rides

Brussels residents turned to Twitter to offer people stranded in the Belgian capital rooms and transport after the attacks. A new Twitter account called "Brussels Lift" was created to offer practical help by connecting "people who need to travel with drivers who have empty seats". No trams or buses were running and some people walked long distances across the city to get home. Facebook also activated its "safety check" feature after the attacks, enabling users to reassure friends and relatives.

# TERROR STRIKES BELGIUM



Rescue workers treat victims outside the Maelbeek underground station, yesterday.



Injured people outside the Zaventem airport.



A refugee boy holds up a placard in Greece.



An injured man lies at the scene of blasts.



People pay tribute to the victims in Brussels.

## MAJOR ISLAMIST ATTACKS IN EUROPE SINCE 2004

**November 13, 2015, FRANCE:** Islamic State jihadists armed with assault rifles and explosives killed 130 people dead and wounded more than 350 people in the deadliest attack in French history.

**January 7, 2015, FRANCE:** Two men armed with Kalashnikov rifles storm the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical weekly known for caricatures of Islam and other religions. They killed 12 people including eight cartoonists and journalists as well as two police officers.

**July 7, 2005, BRITAIN:** Four suicide bombers blow themselves up in coordinated attacks on London's underground rail network and a bus, leaving 52 people dead and 700 wounded. The attacks is the worst on British territory.

**March 11, 2004, SPAIN:** A dozen shrapnel-filled bombs explode on four commuter trains heading for Madrid's Atocha station, leaving 191 dead and about 2,000 injured. The attack was claimed by al-Qaeda affiliated militants.

AFP, PARIS

## WORLD REACTION ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY, LIBERTY

World Leaders yesterday vowed to defend democracy against terrorism after blasts at Brussels airport and in the EU's institutional heart left around 35 dead and more than 200 injured. Around Europe, national leaders pledged support for Belgium and many characterised the attacks -- explosions that ripped through Brussels airport and a metro train during rush hour -- as an assault on liberty itself.



The airport blast suspects. Manhunt is on for the man in white. The other two are believed to be dead.

### HERE ARE SOME OF THE REACTIONS WORLD LEADERS GAVE AFTER THE BARBARIC ATTACK:



"We must be together regardless of nationality or race or faith in fighting against the scourge of terrorism"  
US PRESIDENT  
BARACK OBAMA



"(The) barbarous crimes... demonstrate once again that terrorism has no borders"  
RUSSIAN PRESIDENT  
VLADIMIR PUTIN



"We will never let these terrorists win"  
BRITISH PM  
DAVID CAMERON



"A very sad day for Europe"  
EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF  
FEDERICA MOGHERINI



"The whole of Europe has been hit"  
FRENCH PRESIDENT  
FRANCOIS



"An attack against democratic Europe. We will never accept that terrorists attack our open societies"  
SWEDISH PM  
STEFAN LOVFEN

"We will work in every way with... the Belgian security services to find, identify and punish the perpetrators of today's crimes"  
GERMAN CHANCELLOR  
ANGELA MERKEL

SOURCE: AGENCIES

## Manhunt begins

AGENCIES

Belgium launched a huge manhunt yesterday after a series of bombings claimed by the Islamic State group ripped through Brussels airport and a metro train, killing around 35 people.

Belgian authorities published surveillance camera images showing three male suspects pushing trolleys with suitcases past the check-in area. Two have dark hair and were both wearing a glove on only one hand, and a third, being hunted by Belgian police, is wearing a hat and a white coat.

Several raids were also under way across Belgium, the federal prosecutor said, adding that a bomb, an Islamic State flag and chemicals had been found in one apartment.

Meanwhile, US officials yesterday said they strongly believed that a strike in Brussels was possible, particularly after Belgium's arrest last week of a key suspect in the Paris attacks. Still, they were not aware of any US intelligence about where or when the attack would occur.

The attacks came just four days after the arrest of French citizen Salah Abdeslam.

US believe that the attack date was already on the schedule before his arrest, and possibly advanced somewhat because of his arrest.

Belgian authorities had been on alert after Abdeslam told investigators he had been planning an attack on Brussels.

## US PRESIDENT'S HISTORIC CUBA VISIT

# 'I believe in the Cuban people'

AFP, Havana

US President Barack Obama told Cubans in an unprecedented live television address that he had come to the communist island to "bury" decades of Cold War conflict.

Speaking from Havana's ornate Gran Teatro on the last day of his historic visit -- the first by a US leader in 88 years -- Obama compared the United States and Cuba to "two brothers that have been estranged."

"I have come here to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas," Obama yesterday said to cheers.

"Creo en el pueblo cubano," he said, repeating himself in English: "I believe in the Cuban people."

By contrast, Cuban President Raul Castro, sitting in a theater box with other high-ranking officials, sat stone-faced as Obama said: "Voters should be able to choose their governments in free and democratic elections."

It was the first time a US president had been allowed to give a speech aired live on Cuba's strictly controlled state television.

Immediately after the speech, he left to meet with dissidents that have been harassed and sometimes arrested under Castro's rule.

Obama drew some of the loudest applause when he called on the US Congress to lift a decades-old economic embargo.

The sanctions were imposed in a failed attempt to break the communist regime that came to power after Raul's brother Fidel Castro overthrew a widely hated, US-backed government in 1959, and then made Cuba a fierce Soviet ally.

However, human rights issue has caused visible tensions.

At a joint press conference on Monday, Castro angrily denied that Cuba holds any political prisoners. He attacked the United States, saying rights there were also violated when it came to health care, social security, and "double standards."

Castro also said that Washington needs to return sovereignty over Guantanamo, a corner of Cuba under US control and the location for a controversial US military prison housing foreigners allegedly involved in terrorism.



## ROW OVER UNLOCKING SAN BERNARDINO ATTACKERS' iPhone US may not need Apple's help

AFP, Los Angeles

The US government said Monday it may have found a way to crack the iPhone of one of the San Bernardino attackers without Apple's help, possibly avoiding a showdown with the tech giant.

In a court filing, federal prosecutors said that on Sunday, an unidentified "outside party" had demonstrated to the FBI a possible way to unlock Syed Farook's iPhone.

"Our top priority has always been gaining access into the phone used by the terrorist in San Bernardino," Justice Department spokeswoman Melanie Newman said in a statement.

"With this goal in mind, the FBI has continued in its efforts to gain access to the phone without Apple's assistance,

even during a month-long period of litigation with the company."

She said the government was "cautiously optimistic" that the latest option to recover data from the iPhone would work.

A California federal judge who was set to preside over a hearing in the contentious case on Tuesday granted the government's request for a delay and asked that a status report be filed by April 5.

The new development may help avert -- at least for now -- a full-blown showdown between the US government and the world's most valuable company that could have wide ramifications on digital security and privacy.

Privacy advocates hailed the FBI's apparent drawback in the case as a win for Apple and encryption.

Federal prosecutors and Apple for weeks have traded a volley of legal briefs related to the FBI's demand that the tech company help investigators unlock Farook's work phone.

The FBI says the device may contain critical information for its probe into the December 2 shooting that left 14 people dead and was the deadliest terror attack in the US since 9/11.

Apple, however, has balked at a court order to help investigators, citing customer privacy and security concerns.

The company, backed by security experts, civil rights advocates and other tech giants -- including Google, Facebook and Microsoft -- contends that assisting the FBI would jeopardize users' data and set a dangerous precedent.

## Trump, Clinton court pro-Israeli lobby

AFP, Washington

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump exchanged jabs Monday as they separately courted a massive crowd of pro-Israel lobbyists, putting their differing views on supporting the Jewish state front and center in their White House battle.

Trump declared Monday that his first foreign policy priority would be to dismantle the Iran nuclear deal and what he said was Tehran's global terror network.

"My number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran," the Republican frontrunner told the conference of the US pro-Israel lobby AIPAC in Washington.

Democrat Clinton positioned herself as an unwavering friend to Israel, while bashing her rival as

prejudiced and insufficiently supportive of one of America's closest allies.

"We need steady hands, not a president who says he's neutral on Monday, pro-Israel on Tuesday and who knows what on Wednesday, because everything's negotiable," the Democratic frontrunner told nearly 18,000 attendees at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference.

"Israel's security is non-negotiable."

At AIPAC, Trump dismissed the former secretary of state as "a total disaster," and proclaimed his own "lifelong" love and support for Israel.

## Suu Kyi to run foreign ministry

AFP, Naypyidaw

Aung San Suu Kyi will be foreign minister in Myanmar's first civilian government for decades, her party said yesterday, giving the democracy champion a formal post despite being blocked from the presidency.

Suu Kyi was the sole woman and one of only six members of her National League for Democracy party in a cabinet list read out to lawmakers early yesterday by the parliament speaker Mann Win Khaing Than, who did not specify which position she or others would hold.

But NLD spokeswoman Zaw Myint Maung later confirmed she would lead the foreign ministry and hinted that she would also hold other roles, without specifying which ones.

"She will be the foreign minister, mainly. If she wants to share the duties she has in other ministries with qualified people, she can assign them," he told reporters.

The NLD only named 15 ministers for 18 posts



chosen by the civilian government, sparking speculation that Suu Kyi would take on four portfolios -- widely believed to be foreign affairs, education, energy and the president's office. A parliamentary vote to confirm the posts is expected later in the week.

The Nobel laureate has already vowed to rule above the man picked as president, Htin Kyaw, in the government which comes to power next week in the former army-ruled nation.

Myanmar has undergone a stunning political transformation in recent years, blossoming from isolation under the junta to become an increasingly vibrant nation. Its growing political openness was crowned by a historic November election that saw the NLD storm to victory.

But the country still faces huge challenges, including the continued might of an army that for years viewed Suu Kyi and her party with deep suspicion.

The NLD has operated under a veil of secrecy since the polls, only revealing its choice of president