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HALLOWEEN TERROR

The incident, where a 29-year-old drove a rented truck down a bicycle path in Lower Manhattan, is being investigated as an act of terror by the police

8 people were killed

12 injured when the driver hit people on the cycle path; attacker was later shot at by

- Among the dead are **five Argentinian friends** on holiday and a Belgian visitor

The attacker | Sayfullo Saipov, 29

- An Uzbek national from Tashkent who arrived in the **United States in 2010** and has lived in Ohio and Florida
- Moved to Paterson, New Jersey – **40 km from the scene** of Tuesday's attack – and started working for Uber
- **Had a green card**, says a law enforcement official
- Police records show he was **arrested in Missouri last year** over a traffic fine
- He brandished what appeared to be two handguns **(weapons later determined to be a paintball gun and a pellet gun)**

Terror through vehicles | Vehicles have previously been used as weapons of terror, often by supporters of the Islamic State (IS) group

Barcelona attack

August 17, 2017: Driver deliberately runs a van into crowds on Barcelona's popular Las Ramblas Boulevard

- It is followed hours later by a car attack in the seaside resort town of Cambrils
- 15 people killed in the carnage

London | June 3: Attackers strike pedestrians with a van and go on a stabbing spree in the London Bridge area, killing eight

March 22: A 52-year-old Briton mows down pedestrians on Westminster Bridge near Britain's Parliament and stabs a policeman, killing five people

Heartbreaking: People reacting to the incident in New York on Tuesday. • AFP

Berlin | December 19, 2016: A Tunisian national hijacks a truck and speeds into a crowd, killing 12

Nice | July 14, 2016: A Tunisian ploughs a truck into crowd, killing 86

We must not allow ISIS to return, or enter, our country after defeating them in the Middle East and elsewhere. Enough!
— DONALD TRUMP, President

This was... a cowardly act of terror aimed at innocent civilians, aimed at people going about their lives who had no idea what was about to hit them – BILL DE BLASIO, New York City Mayor

Map: The New York Times | Text: AFP

Step up extreme vetting: Trump

Calls for termination of green card scheme that reportedly allowed suspect to gain residency

VARGHESE K. GEORGE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he would end the popular U.S. green card lottery as police said a radicalised Uzbek man staged the deadly truck ramming in New York after entering the country under the programme.

"I am starting the process of terminating the diversity lottery programme," he said. The programme awards U.S. permanent resident visas to around 50,000 applicants from around the world each year, opening the door as well for members of their broader families to follow them.

Earlier, Mr. Trump had blamed the programme on Chuck Schumer, the senior Democratic Senator from New York. "The terrorist came into our country through what is called the 'Diversity Visa Lottery Program,' a Chuck Schumer beauty. I want merit-based" immigration, Mr. Trump tweeted.

"We are fighting hard for merit-based immigration, no more Democrat Lottery Systems. We must get MUCH tougher (and smarter)... I have just ordered Homeland Security to step up our already Extreme Vetting Program. Being politically correct is fine, but not for this!" he said.

'Send him to Gitmo'

He also said that there was a need for punishment that's "far quicker and far greater than the punishment these animals are getting right now".

"They'll go through court for years. At the end, who knows what happens. We need quick justice, and we need strong justice. Much quicker and much stronger than we have right now. Because what we have right now is a joke, and it's a laughing stock."

Later, he also said that he would "certainly consider" sending the suspect Sayfullo Saipov to military detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. "I would certainly consider that... Send him to Gitmo," Mr. Trump mused, using the nickname for the notorious jail site.

Warning from Mayor

However, New York's Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio warned against stereotyping of people based on their ethnicity.

"The last thing we should do is start casting aspersions on whole races of people or whole religions or whole nations.... That only makes the situation worse," he said.

He added: "Anyone who wants to come into this country should be very thoroughly vetted as an individual... But the minute you start generalising it, especially to a whole religion, then unfortunately we're sending the exact negative message that a lot of our enemies want and the terrorist wants to affirm – that this nation is somehow anti-Muslim.

"We've got to do the exact opposite. We've got to show we respect all people in America. That's about as American of a value as there is," he said.

Not business as usual: Revellers march amid police presence during a Halloween parade in New York on Tuesday, hours after the attack in Manhattan. • AP

Marathon to be held as planned

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

The New York Marathon will be held as planned on Sunday albeit with heightened security measures, despite the truck attack, city officials said on Wednesday.

"It will go on as scheduled. It will be an extraordinary event, as it always is," Mayor Bill de Blasio told a news conference.

He said security will be tepped up for the race involving more than 50,000 runners and 2.5 million people lining the streets of the Big Apple.

'Uzbek national Saipov planned the attack for weeks'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

The Uzbek immigrant who killed eight people in New York's worst attack since September 11, 2001 planned the assault for weeks and left behind handwritten notes in Arabic hailing the Islamic State group, police confirmed on Wednesday.

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, who said Sayfullo Saipov, the suspect, was associated with the IS jihadist group, called him a "depraved coward".

"That's what this was –the actions of depraved coward. There is a no grand statement to what was done," he told a news conference Wednesday.

Allegiance to IS

Handwritten notes in Arabic, pledging allegiance to IS, were found at the scene in the upmarket neighbourhood of TriBeCa, close to schools and not far from the 9/11 Memorial to the victims of the 2001 al-Qaeda hijackings.

"The gist of the note was that the Islamic State would endure forever," said John Miller, the head of New York police intelligence and counter-terrorism.

Police said it was too early in the investigation to determine when Saipov may have become radicalised, but Mr. Cuomo told CNN that it happened after he moved to the United States. He had been a legal permanent resident after arriving in March 2010.

While *The New York Times* said the attacker had previously been on the radar of federal authorities, Mr. Miller said Saipov had "never" previously been the "subject" of either a New York police intelligence or an FBI inquiry.

New York would remain resilient, Mayor Bill de Blasio insisted. "This was an attack on the United States of America and an attack on New York City," he said. "(W)ewill not be thrown off by anything."

While officials say preliminary evidence suggests Saipov acted alone and was not part of a wider plot, Mr. Cuomo has drastically stepped up security at airports, tunnels and Penn Station, which he called the busiest rail hub in the hemisphere.

Five of the dead were Argentines, visiting for a school reunion. A Belgian woman was also killed. Of the 12 injured, nine remain in hospital – four critical but stable and the others serious, said fire department chief Daniel Nigro. Injuries include a bilateral amputation, and serious head, neck and back trauma, he said. One Argentine, a German and three Belgians, were among the injured.

U.S. pursuing diplomacy with N. Korea

Negotiator Joseph Yun in contact with Pyongyang's UN mission, says official

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

The United States is quietly pursuing direct diplomacy with North Korea, a senior State Department official said on Tuesday, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's public assertion that such talks are a waste of time.

Using the so-called "New York channel," Joseph Yun, U.S. negotiator with North Korea, has been in contact with diplomats at Pyongyang's United Nations mission, the official said, at a time when an exchange of bellicose insults between Mr. Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has fuelled fears of military conflict.

While U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Oct. 17 said he would continue "diplomatic efforts... until the first bomb drops", the official's comments were the clearest sign the United States was directly discussing issues beyond the release of American prisoners, despite Mr. Trump having dismissed direct talks as pointless.

There is no sign, however, that the behind-the-scenes communications have improved a relationship vexed by North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, the death of U.S. university student Otto Warmbier days after his release by Pyongyang in June and the detention of three other Americans.

Quiet engagement

Word of quiet engagement with Pyongyang comes despite Mr. Trump's comments, North Korea's weapons advances and suggestions by some U.S. and South Korean officials that Mr. Yun's interactions with North Koreans had been reined in. "It has not been limited at all, both (in) frequency and substance," said the senior State Department official.

Among the points that Mr. Yun has made to his North Korean interlocutors is to "stop testing" nuclear bombs and missiles, the official said. At the start of Mr. Trump's presidency, Mr. Yun's instructions were limited to seeking the release of U.S. prisoners.

"It is (now) a broader mandate than that," said the State Department official, declining, however, to address whether authority had been given to discuss North Korea's nuclear and missile programme.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China welcomed any dialogue between the United States and North Korea.

The New York channel is one of the few conduits the United States has for communicating with North Korea. The last high-level contact between Mr. Yun and the North Koreans was when he travelled to North Korea in June to secure the release of Warmbier.

The official said that "the preferred endpoint is not a war but some kind of diplomatic settlement" and suggestions that Washington is setting up a binary choice for Pyongyang to capitulate diplomatically or military action were "misleading".

Diplomacy, the official said, "has a lot more room to go"

Hamas cedes control over Gaza crossings to Palestinian Authority

Move marks implementation of reconciliation deal

REUTERS
GAZA

Hamas began ceding control of the Gaza Strip's border crossings with Israel and Egypt to U.S.-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday under an agreement brokered by Cairo to end a decade of internal schism.

The move marked the most concrete implementation of the Oct. 11 reconciliation deal that Palestinians hope will ease economic restrictions on Gaza and enable more fruitful negotiations on their goal of setting up an independent state. Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Al-Hamdallah said in a statement that taking charge of the crossings would help Mr. Abbas's Palestinian Authority (PA) fulfil its duty "to improve the living conditions of our people".

Israel and the United States have reservations about the intra-Palestinian pact, however, given refusals by Hamas – which has fought three wars with Israel since seizing control of Gaza in 2007 from forces loyal to Mr. Abbas – to relinquish its rockets and other arms.

Witnesses said PA employees moved into Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings on the Israeli border and Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border, as Hamas counterparts packed up equipment and departed on trucks.

"We have handed over the crossings with honesty and responsibility, without bargaining and unconditionally," Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said in a video address. PA Ministers have begun gradually to assume their duties in Gaza in past weeks and on Tuesday took over the revenue accounts of the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings, officials said.

The Palestinian Authority will begin operating the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings immediately, officials said, while in Rafah the operation will await further security arrangements such as deploying a force from Mr. Abbas' s presidential guards and Cairo completing innovations on its side of the facility.

ELSEWHERE

FARC leader to contest presidential polls

BOGOTÁ

Colombia's FARC — a political party formed from a former rebel group following a historic peace deal — said on Wednesday it was fielding its leader Rodrigo Londono 'Timochenko' as a candidate in next year's presidential elections. The first round of voting is scheduled for May 2018. AFP

Indian requests court not to treat him as spy

PESHAWAR

Jailed Indian national Hamid Nehal Ansari on Wednesday filed a petition in Peshawar High Court, pleading that he should not be treated as a spy as he was not involved in "anti-state activities". Ansari, a Mumbai resident, was arrested in 2012 for illegally entering Pakistan from Afghanistan reportedly to meet a girl he had befriended online. PTI

Utah nurse in arrest row to receive $5,00,000

SALT LAKE CITY

Alex Wubbels, a Utah nurse who was arrested for refusing to let a police officer draw blood from an unconscious patient, settled on Tuesday with Salt Lake City and the university that runs the hospital for $500,000. AP

Japan killing spree lasted two months

TOKYO

A Japanese man arrested after police found nine dismembered corpses rotting in his house has confessed to killing all his young victims over a two-month spree after contacting them via Twitter, media reports said Wednesday. Takahiro Shiraishi, 27, also confessed he "assaulted" all of his eight women victims, the Fuji TV network said, using a euphemism for sexual attacks. AFP

CIA releases seized Osama files

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The CIA on Wednesday released a vast archive of documents and video seized in the 2011 U.S. raid on a Pakistani compound that killed Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. It has put online 4,70,000 additional files seized in May 2011 when U.S. Navy SEALs burst into the Abbottabad compound.

According to Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, scholars from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies who were allowed to study the trove before it was made public, it provides new insights.

The inclusion of Hamza Bin Laden's wedding video, for example, gives the world public the first image of Osama's favourite son as an adult – an image apparently shot in Iran.

Catalan leader won't return to testify: lawyer

But he could answer from Belgium

REUTERS
MADRID

A lawyer for dismissed Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont, due to appear in a Spanish court this week to answer charges relating to Catalonia's push for independence, said he would not return to testify but could answer questions from Belgium. If Mr. Puigdemont fails to appear before the court, an arrest warrant could be issued that would in turn prevent him from standing in the snap regional election called by the Spanish government for Dec. 21.

On Monday, Spain's state prosecutor accused Mr. Puigdemont of rebellion and sedition for organising an independence referendum held on Oct. 1 in defiance of the Madrid government. Mr. Puigdemont travelled to Belgium at the weekend with other members of the dismissed Catalan administration and hired a lawyer.

"(He) is not going to Madrid and I suggest that they question him here in Belgium. It is possible," Mr. Puigdemont's lawyer Paul Bekaert told AP, adding there were provisions in the law that allowed his questioning outside of Spain.

Catalan President Carles Puigdemont. • AP

Putin in Tehran for talks on Syria

Meets with President Rouhani, Khamenei; nuclear deal another area of focus

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Iran's leadership on Wednesday in Tehran as the two Damascus allies push a Syria peace plan and the Kremlin offers its backing for a landmark nuclear deal facing U.S. opposition.

Mr. Putin – on his first visit to Tehran since 2015 – held talks with President Hassan Rouhani, before he was due to meet supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Mr. Putin will also take part in a three-way summit with Mr. Rouhani and the leader of ex-Soviet Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev aimed at bolstering economic ties between their energy-rich nations.

Moscow said Syria will be a focus of Mr. Putin's visit, which comes after Russia, Iran and Turkey pledged after negotiations in Kazakhstan on Tuesday to bring the Syrian regime and its opponents together for a "congress" to push peace efforts.

Russia and Iran, key military supporters of President Bashar al-Assad, and Turkey, which backs Syrian rebels, have organised a series of peace talks in the Kazakh capital Astana this year, agreeing on the establishment of "de-escalation" zones.

Wednesday's talks were also to focus on the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which saw sanctions lifted in exchange for limits on Tehran's atomic programme and which is under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump.

Tehran signed the deal with six countries including Russia and the United States, but Mr. Trump last month refused to certify it, drawing criticism from Moscow which slammed the U.S. President's "aggressive and threatening rhetoric" against Iran. Ahead of Mr. Putin's arrival, Iran's official IRNA news agency reported that Russia's chief of staff Valery Gerasimov flew into Tehran for talks with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Bagheri to discuss "Syria... and the fight against terrorism."

The military might of Moscow and Tehran in Syria has helped prop up Mr. Assad's forces and turn the protracted conflict in his favour with a string of key battlefield victories.

Allies in war and peace: Russian President Vladimir Putin with Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Wednesday. • AP