

Suspected Terrorism: Car Hits Pedestrians Outside UK Parliament

A man deliberately drove a car into pedestrians and cyclists on Tuesday before ramming it into barriers outside Britain's parliament in what appeared to be the second terrorism attack on the building in just under 18 months, police said.

Three people were injured in the incident. The driver, a man in his 20s, was arrested by armed officers at the scene moments later. He was not co-operating with detectives, Britain's counter-terrorism police chief said.

"Given that this appears to be a deliberate act, the method, and this being an iconic site, we are treating it as a terrorist incident," London Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu told reporters.

In March 2017, Khalid Masood, 52, killed four people on nearby Westminster Bridge and stabbed to death an unarmed police officer in the grounds of parliament before being shot dead.

It was the first of five attacks on Britain last year which police blamed on terrorism, three of which involved vehicles being used as a weapon.

Basu said the suspect in Tuesday's incident was in custody but was not co-operating with detectives. Although he had not been formally identified, the man was not believed to be known to security forces, Basu added.

The BBC, citing unnamed sources, said the man was from the Birmingham area of central England and, while not known to the MI5 domestic spy agency or Britain's counter-terrorism network, was known to police.

“At this early stage of the investigation, no other suspects at the scene have been identified or reported to police,” Basu said. “There is no intelligence of further danger to Londoners or the rest of the UK in connection with this incident.”

Police said a silver Ford Fiesta was driven through a group of cyclists and pedestrians during the morning rush hour before hitting a barrier in front of the Houses of Parliament at 0637 GMT.

Camera footage showed the vehicle taking a wrong turn before veering across the road and into a security lane leading to parliament before smashing into the protective barrier as two police officers jumped to safety.

The man was detained on suspicion of terrorism offenses and no weapons had been found, Basu said.

Two people were taken to hospital and one woman was still receiving treatment for serious but not life-threatening injuries.

Armed officers swarmed the scene and sealed off a large area around the parliament building in central London, usually bustling with tourists and government workers.

“IT LOOKED PLANNED”

“I saw the cyclists, injured cyclists. I don’t know if he’s hit these people or if they’ve just dived to escape,” witness Jason Williams told reporters. “It didn’t swerve, there was not another car going behind him. It looked like it was planned.”

Images shot by a Euronews journalist showed police pointing their guns at the vehicle shortly after the crash. Footage on social media showed a handcuffed man being led away by heavily armed police.

British Prime Minister Theresa May, who like other lawmakers

is on holiday during parliament's summer recess, said her thoughts were with the people injured. Government security officials were due to hold a meeting of their emergency committee at 1300 GMT to discuss the incident.

"All Londoners, like me, utterly condemn all acts of terrorism on our city," London's Mayor Sadiq Khan said on Twitter.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who has previously spoken out about security issues in London, said on Twitter: "These animals are crazy and must be dealt with through toughness and strength."

Cordons around parliament began to be lifted about six hours after the incident and Westminster Underground station, close to parliament, was reopened to the public. However, streets immediately surrounding the scene remained closed off.

Nigel Evans, a lawmaker from May's Conservative Party, said the incident had shown security measures at parliament were effective but might still need to be reviewed.

"I'm sure that (debate about) pedestrianization of Parliament Square and which vehicles should be able to access so closely in parliament will be reignited," he told BBC TV.

Britain is on its second-highest threat level of "severe," meaning an attack is considered highly likely and the authorities say a dozen Islamist plots had been foiled since Masood's attack in Westminster last year.

Last week, a Muslim convert admitted plotting to kill more than 100 people by driving a truck into pedestrians on London's Oxford Street, the capital's major shopping thoroughfare.

In October last year, 11 people were injured when a car collided with pedestrians near London's Natural History Museum, raising fears of an attack, but police later said the

incident was a road traffic accident. {eoa}

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