



Directorate of  
Intelligence

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## Terrorism Review

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## Terrorism Comes to Luxembourg

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Luxembourg is the most recent European victim of terrorism. Since April 1985, unknown persons have carried out 14 bombings against domestic targets. The attacks have caused only minor injuries and no fatalities, but in several cases substantial property damage resulted. So far, US or NATO interests have not been targeted, but future attacks cannot be ruled out. Government officials are increasingly under pressure to put a stop to the bombings, but their efforts will be hampered by the inexperience of the security forces in counterterrorism operations.

### Terrorism Emerges

The first indication of nascent terrorism in Luxembourg was a series of thefts of explosives from quarries that took place in early February 1985. In several separate incidents, thieves stole almost 400 kilograms of explosives, detonators, detonator cord, and related material. Luxembourg officials assumed the thefts were the work of foreign terrorists, with the newly emerged Communist Combatant Cells in Belgium the prime suspects, but it now appears that indigenous elements were responsible. The string of bombings began two months after the thefts (see accompanying chronology). The stolen explosives apparently were not used in the initial attacks, but they have turned up in the most recent bombings.

The first two bombings were against pylons supporting powerlines and were thought to be part of an extortion campaign directed against the state-owned electric company. An unknown group—the "Fighting Ecological Movement"—claimed responsibility for the attacks, but the Luxembourg authorities do not consider the claims to be legitimate.

Since this modest beginning, however, the bombers have struck a variety of targets, including the telephone network, a newspaper, a gas generating

### Chronology of Bombings in Luxembourg, 1985

Date	Target
27 April	Electrical pylons
7 May	Electrical pylons
27 May	Gendarmerie building
28 May	Electrical pylons
23 June	Natural gas line
5 July	Telephone cables
27 July	Newspaper office
28 August	Police post
28 August	Department of Bridges and Highways garage
30 September	Swimming pool complex
19 October	Palace of Justice
9 November	Ground control approach equipment, Findel airport
30 November	High-voltage powerline
2 December	Roadway near EEC Building

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plant, gendarmerie and police posts, a swimming pool complex, and the airport. Whereas the initial attacks generally were carried out during nights with full moons and against unprotected targets, the most recent bombings have been against occupied targets during daylight hours. The attack on 2 December near the European Common Market building—while a meeting of European chiefs of state was in progress—suggests that the bombers are growing bolder and are capable of striking even in the face of maximum security measures. [ ]

#### Who Are These Guys?

Luxembourg officials believe the perpetrators are indigenous terrorists, with no links to international movements or other European terrorist groups, but they are by no means certain that all the bombings were conducted by the same persons. One view is that the bombers are disgruntled civil servants who hold deep-seated grudges against the government. Some have speculated that the culprits are rightists, whose purpose is to harass and embarrass the government. This view is based on the lack of claims in these bombings, coupled with a theory that leftists typically issue political statements or communiques attempting to justify their use of violence, while rightists tend to remain silent. Also brought forward as circumstantial evidence for the rightists' case is the choice of targets: it is argued that, if the terrorists were leftists, they would have attacked NATO targets or established contact with their ideological counterparts in Belgium, France, or West Germany. [ ]

The terrorists—whoever they are or whatever political persuasion they represent—probably have extensive training in explosives gained from either service in the military or the police forces, because their devices have been constructed in a professional manner and most of them have gone off as planned. Moreover, the bombers show a high degree of sophistication in placing the devices in the precise positions where the maximum damage could be caused or the blast effects controlled. In the attack on the swimming pool, for example, the bomb could have collapsed the entire prestressed roof had it not been purposely lowered by cable to reduce the blast effect. In placing this bomb, the perpetrator also demonstrated athletic skills and climbing ability. At the same time, the terrorists

#### Luxembourg Counterterrorism Organization

*The Brigade Mobile (BM) of the National Gendarmerie, formed in November 1979, responds to terrorist incidents in Luxembourg. It is also trained for VIP protection. Personnel are selected from the National Gendarmerie. Normally, the brigade receives orders from the head of the Gendarmerie, but authority to conduct counterterrorist operations comes from a Security Committee, whose members include the commander of the Gendarmerie, the ministers of interior and justice, the directors of intelligence and customs, and the commanding officer of the Army. The brigade has received training in neighboring countries such as West Germany but has yet to be tested in a major terrorist incident.* [ ]

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appear to have been consciously attempting to avoid serious injury to the public. [ ]

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#### Counterterrorist Response

The government's previous complacent approach to terrorism has given way to serious efforts to improve its counterterrorist capabilities. Approximately 100 military personnel—20 percent of the country's total military strength—were deployed for several months last summer to reinforce the Gendarmerie throughout the country. Other recent steps include regrouping the Gendarmerie and the police under a new unified command, recruiting additional personnel, beefing up controls at the airport and access roads, and offering substantial monetary rewards for information. [ ]

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Responsibility for counterterrorism rests primarily with the Luxembourg Intelligence Service (SRI), a small group of only 29 officers, and the Gendarmerie, which has about 500 officers. Given its small size and lack of prior experience in dealing with terrorism, Luxembourg often calls upon neighboring countries, particularly West Germany and Belgium, for technical expertise in investigating bombings and to support local security forces when major events such as December's European Community summit meeting

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take place. It is a member of both the Club of Berne and the EC's Trevi Group, which are multilateral mechanisms for exchanging information on terrorists and fostering cooperation in countering them. [REDACTED]

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Luxembourg's counterterrorist efforts have yet to achieve any positive results, and it still faces such problems as friction among the various security forces, inadequate personnel resources, and essentially open borders. Visas are required for entry from most North African countries, but there are few controls between EC countries, and Benelux visas are sufficient for entry into Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The police and Gendarmerie have resisted previous efforts to create a unified command and often fail to share information. Any consolidation of the two forces now is bound to be difficult to implement. Both groups, however, took part in recent demonstrations by security personnel calling for more resources to be devoted to the fight against terrorism.

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#### Outlook

Luxembourg—until recently one of Europe's most tranquil states—is now coming to grips with a persistent domestic terrorism. With little training or experience to start with, its security services have been unable to cope with the bombing epidemic. Unless the counterterrorist forces achieve some success in their efforts, we would expect the bombings to continue. So far there are no indications that the terrorists are interested in attacking US or NATO interests, although there are many US businesses in the country and the upcoming Reforger military exercises could provide them with attractive targets.

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