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France investigating whether truck attacker acted alone

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French authorities were trying to determine on Friday whether a Tunisian who killed at least 84 people by plowing a truck into Bastille Day crowds had acted alone or with accomplices, but said the attack bore the hallmarks of Islamist militants.

Thursday night's attack in the Riviera city of Nice plunged France again into grief and fear just eight months after gunmen killed 130 people in Paris. Those attacks, and one in Brussels four months ago, have shocked Western Europe, already anxious over security challenges from mass immigration, open borders and pockets of Islamist radicalism.

The truck zigzagged along the city's seafront Promenade des Anglais as a fireworks display marking the French national day ended on Thursday night. It careered into families and friends listening to an orchestra or strolling above the Mediterranean beach toward the century-old Hotel Negresco.

At least 10 children were among the dead. Of the scores of injured, 25 were on life support, authorities said on Friday.

Bystander Franck Sidoli said he had seen people go down before the truck finally stopped just five meters away from him.

"A woman was there, she lost her son. Her son was on the ground, bleeding," he told Reuters at the scene.

The driver, 31-year-old Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, shot dead by officers at the scene, was known to police for petty crimes but was not on a watch list of suspected militants. He had one criminal conviction for road rage, sentenced to probation three months ago for throwing a wooden pallet at another driver.

The investigation "will try to determine whether he benefited from accomplices," Paris prosecutor Francois Molins said. "It will also try to find out whether Mohamed Laouaiej Bouhlel had ties to Islamist terrorist organizations."

"Although yesterday's attack has not been claimed, this sort of thing fits in perfectly with calls for murder from such terrorist organizations," he added.

Bouhlel's ex-wife was in police custody, Molins said. Police found one pistol and various fake weapons in his truck.

DRIED BLOOD, SMASHED STROLLERS

Dawn broke on Friday with pavements smeared with dried blood. Smashed children's strollers, an uneaten baguette and other debris were strewn about the promenade. Small areas were screened off and what appeared to be bodies covered in blankets were visible through the gaps.

The truck was still where it had come to rest, its windscreen riddled with bullets.

"I saw this enormous white truck go past at top speed," said Suzy Wargniez, a local woman aged 65 who had watched from a cafe on the promenade. "It was shooting, shooting."