

WHAT WE KNOW ON BOSTON ATTACKS: A FIRST ASSESSMENT

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1) The facts

- Around 02:50 PM (06:50 PM GMT), Monday, a loud explosion was heard on the north side of Boylston street, near the finish line of the Boston Marathon.
- Approximately 15 seconds later a second explosion was heard.
- Three people were killed on the scene and at least 144 others wounded. The Boston Globe reported in the evening that at least 6 of the people injured were in bad or critical condition.
- A fire broke out one hour later at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. Police announced that all the members of the personnel and all the visitors were “safe”. Despite the preliminary reports, it is unclear if it was caused by an incendiary device and if it is related to the bombings.
- It seems that another explosive device was detonated by the Boston Police Department.
- The attacks occurred in an area cleared of vehicles, the perpetrators were forced to rely on devices smaller than a car-bomb.
- In the evening, the center of Boston was heavily patrolled by police forces and the Massachusetts National Guard.
- Counter terrorist officers of the police Departments and FBI were deployed in Boston, New York and Washington D.C.
- Tight security will be imposed in Boston and other U.S. cities today.
- Authorities declared a “no-fly zone” over the areas where the explosions took place.

- Security measures were also increased in some European cities, as Paris, in the hours following the blasts. Security plans for the New York and Paris Marathons are reviewed and the security increased.

2) First Analysis

- At 05:00 AM, GMT, the attacks were not yet claimed.
- It is too early to suggest a hypothesis on the responsible of the attacks, nevertheless, **the use of several devices and the simultaneous blasts is a “trademark” of al-Qaeda** and the Islamists groups.
- **The choice of Boston as a target could yet indicate that the attacks are linked to a local concern and a local group. If this is the case, it would likely be a far-right group or a radical anti-government group.**
- If the attacks come from an Islamists organization, **Boston could have been targeted because it was easier than an attack against more symbolic cities, as Washington or New York.**
- It could also indicate that the attacks were organized by a local cell motivated by the Jihadist ideology.
- **Of course the Marathon itself, which gathered 26,000 runners and tens of thousands spectators, was a “likely target” for any terrorist organization, either global or local.**
- In any case, the sophistication of the attacks – at least two bombs at two different places, in a highly secured event – **seems to indicate that this was the work of a group, event a small one and not of a “lone wolf”.**
- The forensic and intelligence reports will very probably lead to some conclusions on “who is responsible” in the coming 24 hours.
- Initial Reports quoted by the New York Times say that the devices “**appeared to be made with black powder and balls bearings**” but that it is “unsure how the two that exploded had been set off”.
- It was said that **investigators were speaking to a Saudi man who was in the U.S. under a student visa** and was injured in the blasts but that “**no one was in custody**”.

End.