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An Analysis of the Changing Modus Operandi of Terrorist Attacks in Europe

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THE ANALYSIS OF TERRORIST MODUS OPERANDI IN EUROPE 2001-2018

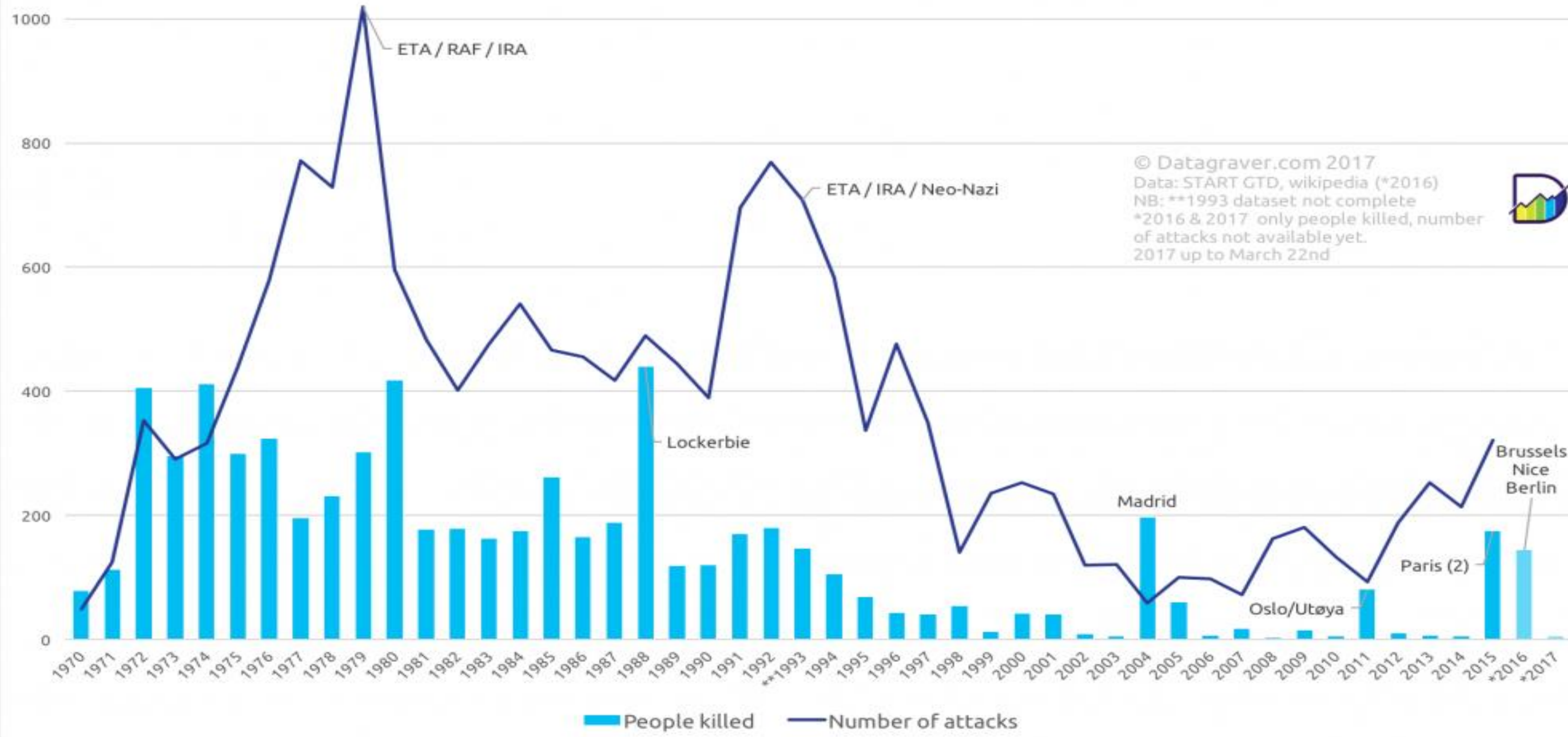
OVERVIEW

There is a sharp increase in both the number of incidents and the deaths caused by different types of attacks in Europe recently. The assailants claimed these attacks either on behalf of Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) or as "lone wolves" with no direct affiliation to the ISIL. However, there has been some change in the way some of the attacks were carried out. Also, there was a shift in their target selection. Security experts and authorities have indicated significant factors contributing to this development. This research examines the appearing alarming trend in the change of terrorist modus operandi in Europe.

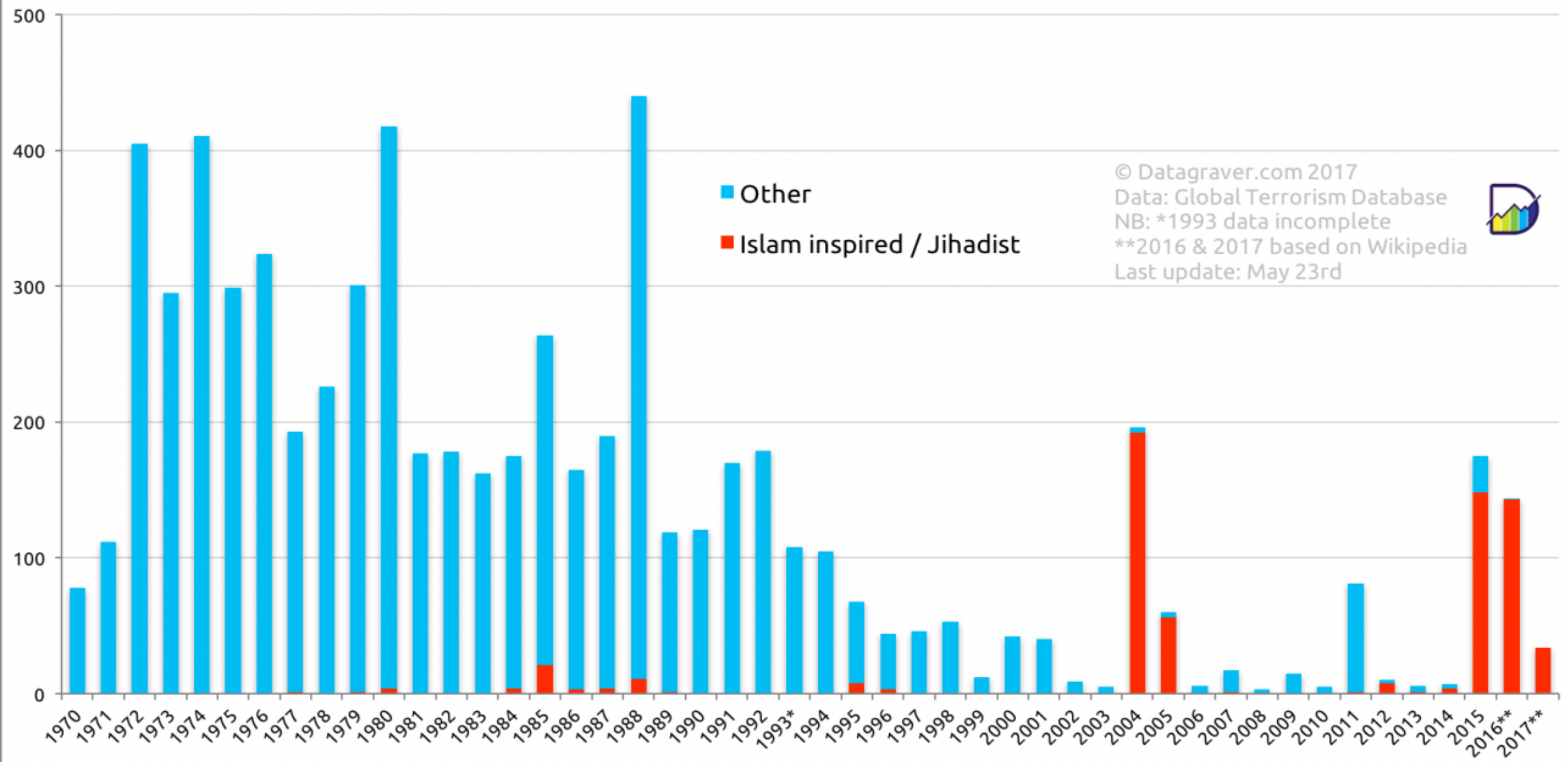
METHODOLOGY

Using **media content analysis** as a data collection method, majority of the incidents were collected from open source news sources. This study collected data related to religious and political terrorism in Europe including the events in Eastern Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey. An extensive database of a total of **400 attacks** that have happened between 2001 and 2018 was compiled for analysis on an excel spreadsheet. The information was retrieved from various open sources such as newspapers, websites and some other available databases. The following variables were created: *the date of the attack, the location of the attack, a summary of the attack, the target of the attack, the number of injuries and casualties, the status of the attack, the perpetrator, and the type of attack.*

Terrorism in Western Europe 1970-2017*



People killed by terrorist attacks in Western Europe 1970-2017*



Homeland Security

National Protection and Programs Directorate
OFFICE OF CYBER AND INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS
September 2017

(U//FOUO) Foreign Terrorist Organization-Inspired Vehicle-Ramming Attacks Present Persistent Threats to Commercial Facilities Sector

(U) OVERVIEW:
(U//FOUO) OCIA assesses the increase in the number of vehicle-ramming attacks since January 2016 indicates Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) messaging efforts are probably resonating with violent extremists and will most likely continue in the near term. FTO-inspired violent extremists will probably continue to plan and engage in vehicle-ramming attacks against Western-based mass gathering and public venues since this tactic often requires minimal training, expertise, and preoperational planning. Since January 2016, eight FTO-inspired vehicle-ramming attacks have occurred in Western countries. OCIA identified three common characteristics among these attacks: targeting of public venues or mass gatherings; use of secondary weapons; and lack of observable indicators immediately before the attack. The Commercial Facilities Sector is at the greatest risk of attack from FTO-inspired vehicle-ramming operations because of the recurring presence of mass gatherings at these locations, the potential for adverse economic impacts, and the media attention these types of attacks regularly receive.

(U) FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION MESSAGING AND ATTACKS:
(U) The contents below are UNCLASSIFIED.

FALL 2010
Inspire, 2nd issue, featured a two-page article instructing operatives to weld steel blades to pickup trucks for targeting pedestrians at crowded locations. This vehicle was dubbed "the ultimate mowing machine."

SEP 2014
Now deceased ISIS spokesperson, Muhammad al-Adnan, called for supporters in the West to conduct attacks using any means possible, including vehicles.

JUL 2016
July 14, 2016: Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel drove a large, rented refrigeration truck into pedestrians gathered on a promenade to watch a fireworks display at the Bastille Day celebration in Nice, France. Eighty-six people died in the attack and hundreds were wounded.

NOV 2016
November 28, 2016: Abdul Ali Arkan used his personal vehicle to strike pedestrians on a sidewalk at Ohio State University, injuring 11 people.

DEC 2016
December 19, 2016: Aislinn Arkan used a 25-ton commercial truck and drove it into pedestrians at a Christmas market in Berlin, Germany, killing 12 people and wounding 48.

MAR 2017
March 22, 2017: Khalid Masood used a rental car to target pedestrians who were walking on the Westminster Bridge in London, England, killing 4 people and injuring 40. After abandoning the vehicle, Masood proceeded to the Parliament building where he used a knife to stab and kill a British police officer.

APR 2017
April 7, 2017: Rakhmat Akhmedov used a stolen 30-ton commercial truck to target pedestrians in a busy shopping area in Stockholm, Sweden, killing 4 people and injuring 15. According to multiple media outlets, Swedish law enforcement officials discovered undetonated explosives in the truck.

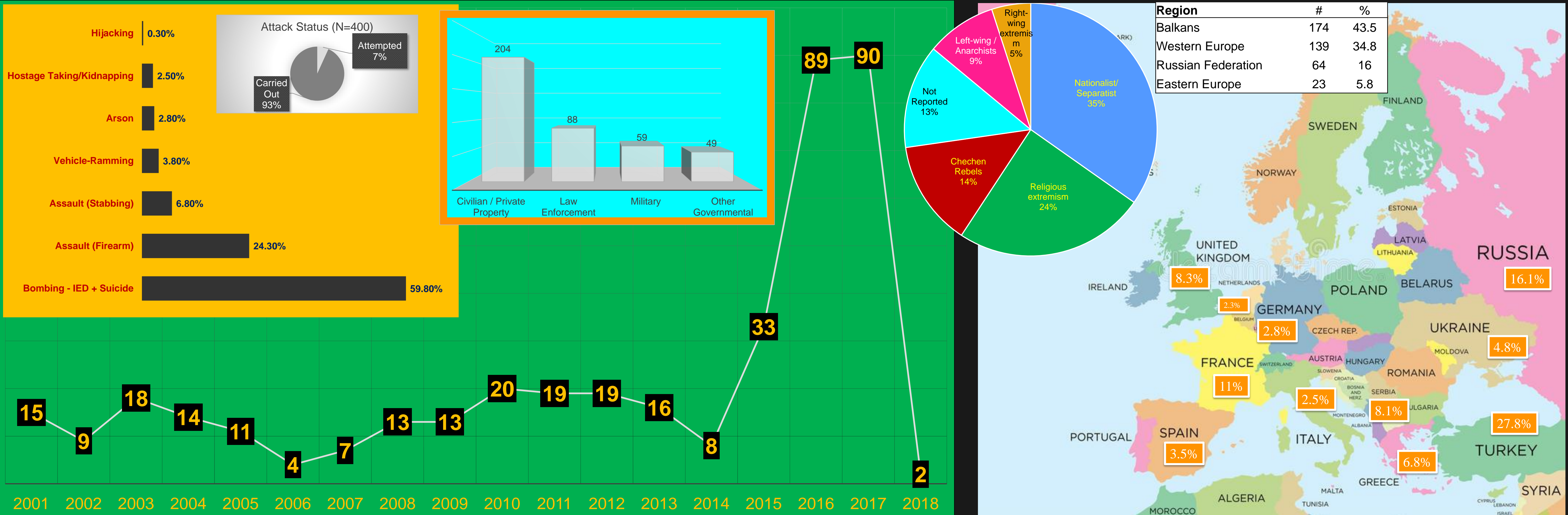
MAY 2017
Rumiyah, 9th issue, provided a graphic of vehicle-ramming attacks using trucks. It provided guidance on vehicle and target selection and the recommended methods for vehicle acquisition.

JUN 2017
June 3, 2017: Khuram Butt, Rachid Redouani, and Youssef Zaghloul rammed into pedestrians on the London Bridge. The assailants followed the vehicle attack by targeting shoppers at the nearby Borough Market in London, England, with knives.

AUG 2017
August 17, 2017: Assailants used a white van to drive into pedestrians at a popular shopping area in Barcelona, Spain, killing 14 and wounding 100.

AUG 2017
August 18, 2017: Assailants drove a car through a police roadblock along a beach in Cambrils, Spain, striking pedestrians and a police officer. After flipping the vehicle, police engaged and killed all five of the vehicle's occupants.

Region * Attack_Type * Ideology Crosstabulation		Attack_Type										Total
		Arson	Assault (Firearm)	Assault (Stabbing)	Bombing - IED	Bombing (Suicide)	Hijacking	Hostage Taking/Kidnapping	Vehicle-Ramming			
Ideology	Region											
	Russian Federation		13		15	23		3				54
Cherchen Rebels	Total		13		15	23		3				54
Left-wing / Anarchists	Region											
	Balkans	1	5		15	3						24
	Western Europe	1	3		8	0						12
	Total	2	8		23	3						36
Nationalist/ Separatist	Region											
	Balkans	0	30		56	4		2				92
	Eastern Europe	0	4		13	0		0				17
	Western Europe	1	7		22	0		0				30
	Total	1	41		91	4		2				134
Not Reported	Region											
	Balkans	0	4		27	0						31
	Eastern Europe	0	0		1	0						1
	Russian Federation	0	2		6	2						10
	Western Europe	2	1		7	0						11
	Total	2	7		41	2						53
Religious extremism	Region											
	Balkans	0	4	2	8	10	0	1				25
	Eastern Europe	0	0	3	0	0	0	0				3
	Western Europe	1	21	18	9	4	1	4				70
	Total	1	25	23	17	14	1	5				98
Right-wing extremism	Region											
	Balkans	1	0	0	1							2
	Eastern Europe	0	1	0	1							2
	Western Europe	4	2	4	4							14
	Total	5	3	4	6							20
Total	Region											
	Balkans	2	43	2	107	17	0	3				174
	Eastern Europe	0	5	3	15	0	0	0				23
	Russian Federation	0	15	0	21	25	0	3				64
	Western Europe	9	34	22	50	4	1	4				135
	Total	11	97	27	193	46	1	10				400



FINDINGS

- ❑ The findings reveal that terrorists' modus operandi -techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTP)- has been influenced by the international events and conflicts.
- ❑ **Bombings** and **Armed Assaults** are still the most frequent Modus Operandi in Europe.
- ❑ There has been a sharp shift from more conventional forms of methods of attack to guided simple killing methods: From bombing and Firearm Assault to Vehicle-Ramming and Knife Attacks.
- ❑ **Nationalist / Separatist extremism** is frequently seen in the Balkan and Eastern Europe; whereas the **Religious Terrorism** with more Jihadist inspired motives are more prevalent in the Western part of Europe in recent years.