Salah Abdeslam was shot and arrested in a police raid on March 18, 2016. The 26-year-old French national had fled Paris by car hours after the November 13, 2015, attacks in which 130 people died. His brother Brahim blew himself up and died in a bar in Brussels/Voltaire during the assaults.

There is a significant probability that his arrest and the possibility of co-operating with law enforcement authorities, especially sharing information about other terrorist cells, was a trigger to act without delay for the terrorists who remained at large.

On the morning of March 22, three co-ordinated bombings occurred in Belgium: two at the main airport, Zaventem, close to Brussels, and one at the capital’s Maalbeek underground station.

The first explosion at ZSI/Brussels at check-in row 11; the second explosion occurred nine seconds later at check-in row 2. A third undetonated bomb was discovered later. It is not entirely clear what prevented its detonation, whether malfunction or another cause.

The Belgian prosecutor’s office released CCTV footage of the three men identified as the main suspects in the Zaventem attack. The first two, dressed in black, were pushing suitcases on luggage trolleys. They were followed by a third man in a white jacket and a hat.

The man in black were both wearing one glove on their left hands which, security experts believe, could have helped them to hide detonators. It is clear now that the third man also had a bomb in his lugage, although he was not wearing a glove. This might suggest that the scale of readiness of the third device or its constructive characteristics were somehow different from the two others.

Explosives tore the departure hall apart. Many people lost their lives or were wounded. The Belgian capital quickly became aware of this event and emergency services began to arrive at the scene. But the attacks were not over.

Another explosion took place just an hour later at an underground carriage at the Maalbeek metro station. Targeted at one of the stations around Sherman square in the Heart of the European quarter, which is thronged by European Commission personnel during rush hour, this second attack was even more discriminate.

No one knew whether to expect more attacks, or whether a Martial or Paris scenario could follow. Abruptly, life in Brussels was put on hold, with offices, public places, transport stations, hotels, schools and other public places closing down. It took the capital a few days to reconcile with the reality and to start functioning again. Thirty-two people died and more than 300 were injured in these attacks.

The identities of all the perpetrators are now known. The attack at Zaventem was carried out by Ibrahim El Bakraoui (29), Najim Laachraoui (34) and Mohamed Abrini (31), who helped the terrorists but stayed alive. He was arrested in Amsterdam in April 8 and, after being confronted with the evidence (photographs, etc.) he admitted being the ‘man in the hat’ seen on the airport security camera.

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Though no credible proof has been identified so far, it is possible that a pattern is emerging – the latest attacks saw multiple suicide bombers and, potentially, one or more collaborators who act in a distinctly different way, possibly serving as sympathizers, and potential participants or ‘finishers’ for when something goes wrong. This is especially striking, as the terrorist attacks in Brussels are thought to have been hastily conceived in the aftermath of Abdeslam’s arrest.

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2010 for opening fire on police officers with a Kalashnikov during a robbery. Needless to say, he did not serve all that time and was paroled in 2014 under the condition that he did not leave the country.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informed Dutch police about the two brothers. The Dutch interior minister said the information had been shared at a meeting between Belgian and Dutch authorities on March 17, but the Belgian federal police denied this.

The Belgian Parliament even accused the interior minister and two other ministers of repeated dysfunctions and their ministries of deep structural problems.

The rapidly moving investigation has uncovered links to the Paris attacks of last November and triggered arrests across Belgium, Germany and France, suggesting the bombs were the work of a large international network.

During a raid conducted in Schaerbeek, a district in the wider Brussels-Capital region, authorities found 15kg of triacetone triperoxide (TATP) explosives, 15 litres of acetone, 30 litres of hydrogen peroxide, detonators, a suitcase full of nails and screws, and materials meant for the construction of explosive devices, along with an Islamic State flag. It seems that TATP, which was also used in the Paris attacks in November, has become the Islamic State’s explosive of choice in Europe.

Investigators found a computer containing the will of Ibrahim El Bakraoui in a bin in the same road, in which he stated that he was in a rush, not knowing what to do, being searched for everywhere; not feeling safe and, “if this goes on,” risking “ending up in a cell”.

Attacks in Brussels raised once again a very disturbing question about jihadists in one family or in a circle of friends. Six of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 were brothers. The Boston marathon bombings were carried out by two Chechens – the Tsarnaev brothers. The Kouachi brothers attacked Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015. A married couple shot people in San Bernardino, USA. Salah and Brahim Abdeslam participated in terrorist attacks in Paris. Now the Bakraoui brothers terrorised Brussels. Some of these mentioned terrorists knew each other during childhood or were close friends.

This phenomenon is not new in terrorism or organised crime group structures. It is especially typical for groups that are bound by ethnicity, tribe or clan’s origin or religion. From the perspective of the terrorist group, engaging family members can help sustain both the commitment of participants as well as increase the likelihood of strong operational security. With sibling suicide bombers, each sibling ensures that the other is unlikely to change their mind at the last minute. It is also clear that brother will not inform on another because of family or friendship. These situations are not without a zero probability of police infiltration. IS, as we see, can succeed in recruiting entire families.

Just two days after the Brussels’ bombings a security guard who worked at a Belgian nuclear medical research facility was murdered at his home.

The killing came after a string of security scares and breaches around Belgium’s nuclear infrastructure and the discovery last November that an Islamic State cell in Brussels had kept a top Belgian nuclear scientist under video surveillance. Last November 10 hours of surveillance footage of a top Belgian nuclear scientist was discovered in a house belonging to a known jihadi, but the existence of the footage was only acknowledged by Belgian authorities on February 18 after it was leaked to a Belgian paper. The film is believed by security forces to have been taken by the Bakraouis. It is understood that a hidden camera was removed from bushes outside the official’s house.

After the news broke, Jan Jambon, the Belgian interior minister, rejected a proposal to deploy troops saying that: “Nothing indicates a specific threat to nuclear power plants,” but two weeks later, on March 4, he changed his mind and deployed 140 soldiers to guard five nuclear facilities.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time Belgian nuclear plants have been on the counter-terrorist radar. In 2013, an engineer from Doel 4, a power plant’s nuclear reactor, was fired because of concerns he had been radicalised after he refused to shake his superior’s hand. The employee was later identified as the brother-in-law of Azzedine Kbir Bounekeoub, a jihadist involved with Sharia4Belgium, who left Belgium to join IS in 2012 and had frequently called on IS supporters to launch terror attacks in that country.

In another disturbing incident, a turbine at the same Doel 4 reactor was sabotaged in 2014 when someone deliberately turned security cameras the other way and then emptied 65,000 litres of oil used to lubricate the turbine.

Meanwhile, Germany’s military counter-intelligence service, the Militärischer Abschirmdienst (MAD), reported that 65 active soldiers are under investigation for suspected Islamist tendencies. Since 2007, 22 soldiers designated as Islamists have been discharged or left the military. Moreover, 29 former soldiers have left for Syria and Iraq to join Islamist terrorist organisations.

“We perceive a risk that the Bundeswehr may be used as a training ground for potentially violent Islamists,” said MAD leader Christof Gramm. German intelligence believes that the Islamic State is actively recruiting operatives with a military background.

Moreover, Germany’s Ministry of Defence expressed concern that no background checks are required for soldiers in unclassified positions.