

Renewed fears of deadly low-tech Islamic State-inspired terror attacks



Police stand over the attacker after the Marseilles stabbings. Picture: AFP

Jacquelin Magnay, *The Australian*, 12:00AM October 3, 2017

Twin terror attacks across the Atlantic have rekindled fears of a fresh wave of low-tech but deadly Islamic State-inspired “soldiers”. Two young women were killed, one with her throat slit, at Marseilles train station in France, and a policeman and pedestrians were targeted in a stabbing and truck attack in Edmonton, Canada, at the weekend.

Last week Islamic State released a new recording, supposedly of leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi — whom the Russians believed dead — exhorting followers to strike at the West.

The Marseilles attack comes just months after an acid attack on four American tourists at the same busy train station.

On Sunday a man armed with a meat cleaver yelled “Allahu Akbar” and launched himself at the women, 20-year-old cousins. He tried to behead one, left the scene and then returned to fatally stab the second in the stomach. The man, who had been known to police and with a string of aliases, then attacked a policeman and was shot by officers, part of Operation Sentinelle, a 7000-strong military force that helps guard French transport hubs.

President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday he would replace the state of emergency situation with a permanent security law. Debate in the lower house would begin tomorrow, he said.

France has been in a state of emergency since the 2015 Charlie Hebdo atrocity and has suffered a string of deadly attacks at popular places like the Bataclan in Paris, and the Nice promenade. More than 240 people have been killed by terrorists in the past two years.

Islamic State, through its Amaq newsagency, said the Marseilles attacker was a soldier of Islamic State and an ISIS flag was found in an empty vehicle nearby.

In Canada, five people were injured by a Somali asylum-seeker Abdulahi Hasan Sharif, 30, who mowed down a police officer outside the barricades of the Edmonton Commonwealth Stadium where a gridiron game was being played. He then jumped from the car and repeatedly stabbed the officer on the ground before fleeing. Several hours later, he tried to ram people in downtown Edmonton in a hire truck, injuring four pedestrians before flipping the vehicle on its side.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the incident was a terrorist attack and urged Canadians to be vigilant and not be cowed “by those who seek to divide us”.