

A stunned Europe steps up security following Paris carnage

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Rome: Soldiers and paramilitary troops toting semi-automatic rifles patrolled outside the Colosseum and inside St. Peter's Square, as Italy joined the rest of Europe in beefing up security a day after terrorist attacks killed 129 people in Paris

U.K. officials shut down a terminal of Britain's No. 2 airport for hours after a man was spotted discarding what looked like a firearm.

Europe has been mostly free of land-based border checks for decades, but the attacks prompted authorities in countries from Belgium to Hungary to re-impose spot inspections of vehicles. Some local authorities vowed to do the work if their national governments don't.

In southern Germany, Bavarian finance minister Markus Soeder insisted the country needs to know who is entering and railed against cherished European borderless travel, citing the Paris attacks and the continent's migration crisis.

"The days of unchecked immigration and illegal entry can't continue," Soeder told the Welt am Sonntag weekly newspaper. "Paris changes everything."

And if Germany can't secure its borders, he said, "then Bavaria can take on this task."

Soeder, a member of the conservative sister party of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, made the comments as Bavarian officials confirmed that firearms, explosives and hand grenades were found when undercover police stopped a man near the German-Austrian border on Nov. 5.

Authorities declined to confirm reports the man appeared to be en route to Paris, but said there were "reasonable grounds" to assume that there may be a link to the Paris attacks. Following a request from France, Germany ramped up border controls, focusing on road, rail and air traffic from France to Germany, said German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere.

British officials called in explosive specialists and evacuated the North Terminal at Gatwick Airport after a French man got rid of an item authorities said appeared to be a firearm. The man was arrested on suspicion of firearms offenses, though authorities were not sure whether the weapon was useable.

"Given the events in Paris on Friday evening, there is heightened awareness around any such incident and it is best that we treat the matter in all seriousness," Detective Superintendent Nick May said

London was among cities that put in place high-visibility patrols at key locations to reassure citizens, with Metropolitan Police Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe stressing that the "scale of the attacks and the range of weaponry used by the terrorists are a serious cause for concern."

Britain and Spain did not raise their terror threat levels, but Italy hiked its own to the second highest possible, allowing for rapid deployment of special forces if necessary.

In Rome, tourists visiting historic sites ended up seeing heavily armed troops including 700 soldiers sent to beef up security. Italy's Sky TG24 television said police checked sewer manholes on a road leading to the Vatican to ensure no

explosives had been planted.

Nordic nations like Denmark sent officers with semi-automatic weapons to patrol outside foreign embassies where usually no police are posted. And Swedish officials pledged to increase security at Saturday night's European Championship soccer playoff game between Sweden and Denmark in Stockholm.

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Finnish police said they were increasing surveillance in airports and harbors, while Romania announced that French institutions in the country had canceled cultural events and a French cinema closed until Dec. 18.

Hungary's ruling Fidesz party postponed a Sunday congress to elect new leadership, and Prime Minister Viktor Orban said police would carry extra firepower while stepping up patrols at airports and the country's nuclear power plant.

Many nations declined to announce what steps they were taking since doing so would only tip off would-be attackers.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told reporters in The Hague on Saturday that his administration will take "visible and invisible" measures to increase security, including stiffer border controls.

"Violence and extremism will never triumph over freedom and humanity," he pledged.

- AP