
Terrorism – Studies, Analyses, Prevention, 2024, no. 5: 233–272

 CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

<https://doi.org/10.4467/27204383TER.24.009.19397>

Articles

Twenty years since the Madrid attacks. Spain's anti-terrorist security issues

KRZYSZTOF IZAK

Independent author



<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9815-6035>

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the causes, chronological course and effects of the attack carried out on 11 March 2004 in Madrid, taking into account differences and contradictions in reports about these events. The author analyses the actions taken by the Spanish authorities to ensure anti-terrorist security in the country, including the creation of structures to fight Islamic terrorism and Muslim extremism. He also discusses the problems and challenges faced by Spanish services fighting political violence and illegal migration of people from high-risk countries, which affect the state of state security.

Keywords

Al-Qaeda, Muslim extremism, ETA, immigrants, secret services, terrorism, attacks

Spain is among the countries that have been fighting terrorism the longest. Separatist terrorist group Basque Homeland and Liberty (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, ETA) has carried out terrorist attacks continuously for more than 50 years. In 2011, Basque nationalists announced an end to armed activity. Two years later, there was the self-dissolution of Batasuna, the political wing of ETA, and in 2018, of ETA itself. Since the beginning of the organisation in 1960, between 830 and 857 people have been killed, according to various press publications and books, including military personnel, officers of the Civil Guard (Guardia Civil), police officers, politicians, judges and random people. In addition, ETA carried out 84 kidnappings.

In the first decade of the 21st century Spain struggled with two different faces of terrorism: nationalist-separatist and Islamist. After the attacks of 11 September 2001 Spain took part in the operation against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Spain was also an initiator and signatory of the so-called the Letter of the Eight signed on 30 January 2003 by the Prime Ministers of Spain, Poland, Portugal, Italy, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Denmark and the President of the Czech Republic. The letter was an expression of solidarity with the United States in the common fight to defend democracy against the regime of Saddam Hussein. This letter demonstrated the division that had arisen in Europe on the issue of the Iraqi question. The Spanish government has consistently supported the intervention in Iraq. This was because Hussein's regime was not complying with UN resolutions and did not show the slightest willingness to cooperate with the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who were supposed to check that arms stocks had been dismantled and work on weapons of mass destruction had stopped¹.

The state of the terrorist threat in Spain in the run-up to the attack

Prior to the Madrid attack, Spanish authorities had been monitoring the local Al-Qaeda network and terrorist cells connected with extremist organisations in Algeria and Morocco. Their creation in Spain in the 1990s was helped by the construction of a network of mosques financed by Saudi

¹ Later, the USA and other countries reported that no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq and that reports of Iraq possessing them were false, propagated to create a casus belli.

Arabia and charitable organisations under its influence. Mosques were often staffed by imams and preachers adhering to the most radical Salafi doctrine of Islam, prohibiting the integration of Muslims into Western society and promoting the concept of jihad as armed struggle against 'infidels'.

In the 1990s, Syrian Imad Eddin Barakat alias Abu Dahdah, one of the founders of Al-Qaeda in the country and its alleged leader, was active in Spain. From the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas airport, he sent jihadi volunteers to fight in Bosnia, Chechnya and Afghanistan. He provided wounded fighters with treatment in Spanish hospitals. In the first half of the 1990s, another Syrian – considered one of Osama bin Laden's closest associates – Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, aka Abu Musab al-Suri, also lived in Spain. After marrying a Spanish woman who had converted to Islam, he was granted citizenship of that country².

The network of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Mukatila fi al-Maghrib) and the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Musallah) were also active in Spain. It is worth knowing that five of the terrorists who directed aircraft to targets in the USA on 11 September 2001 were in Spain, working out the details of the attack with Al-Qaeda liaison officer Ramzi bin ash-Shibah.

In October 2001, Bin Laden on Al-Jazeera television spoke of Spain as the Arab Andalusia: *Let the whole world know that we shall never accept that the tragedy of Andalusia would be repeated*³. During Operation "Dactyl" ('Dátil') conducted in November 2001 and in April and July 2002, the police smashed the Spanish Al-Qaeda network, in which the so-called Syrian group played a significant role. Abu Dahdah and ten members of the group, mostly Syrians, were detained at the time. Dozens of people were also arrested at the time, 25 of whom stood trial in Madrid in 2003⁴. At the same

² Abu Musab al-Suri is regarded as the most eloquent ideologue of the modern jihad and a sophisticated strategist. His work entitled *Dawa al-mukawama al-islamiyya al-alamijja* (Eng. A call for Islamic global resistance) published in cyberspace in 2004 and, running to 1,604 pages, was the most quoted on Islamist websites. In 2005, Al-Suri was arrested in Pakistan and handed over to Syria, where he was wanted for extremist activities in the 1980s. His current whereabouts are unknown. See: S. Grześkowiak, *Poczet islamskich ideologów i ekstremistów* (Eng. Islamic ideologues and extremists), Warszawa 2023, pp. 307–318.

³ *What's Osama Talking About?*, Slate, 8 X 2001, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2001/10/what-s-osama-talking-about.html> [accessed: 8 X 2001].

⁴ R. Gunaratna, *Spain: An Al Qaeda Hub?*, "UNISCI Discussion Papers" 2004, no. 5, <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/767/76712467002.pdf>, pp. 1–8 [accessed: 22 II 2014]; Fernando

time, both Spanish citizens and facilities belonging to Spain were targeted in terrorist attacks in Iraq, Algeria and Morocco.

In May 2003, the United States Army Forces Command entrusted Poland with the organisation and subsequent command of the Multinational Division Central-South - MND C-S in Iraq. The MND C-S officially began operations on 3 September 2003. In its first phase⁵, it consisted of three multinational brigades: a Polish brigade of 2,400 soldiers in the provinces of Babylon and Karbala; a Ukrainian brigade of 1,800 soldiers responsible for the province of Wasit; and a Spanish brigade of 1,300 soldiers assigned to the provinces of Al-Qadisiyah and An-Najaf for security control⁶. José Maria Aznar of the right-wing People's Party (Partido Popular, PP) saw the intervention in Iraq as part of the war on terrorism and considered it the greatest threat in the modern world. He claimed that it was NATO's task to develop appropriate political and military instruments to combat it. This position reflected his personal attitude to terrorism, also expressed many times before in the context of the ETA threats⁷.

The majority of the population and the opposition Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE) led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero were opposed to sending Spanish forces to Iraq. In 2003, mass protests were organised against the departure of soldiers to Iraq. In October of the same year, Bin Laden accused the U.S. of pursuing imperial interests. He also threatened Italy, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain that if they did not withdraw their troops from Iraq, appropriate retaliatory measures would be taken against them⁸.

At the end of November 2003, seven members of the task force of the Spanish National Intelligence Centre (Centro Nacional de

Reinares, experto en terrorismo internacional, advierte: "Al Qaeda está hoy más extendida de lo que ha estado nunca", Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, <https://www.uimp.es/actualidad-uimp/fernando-reinare-experto-terrorismo-internacional.html> [accessed: 21 VI 2021].

⁵ More about MND C-S later in the article – editor's note.

⁶ M. Brylew, *Irak 2006–2012. Stabilizacja czy konflikt?* (Eng. Iraq 2006–2012. Stabilisation or conflict?), Toruń 2013, p. 50.

⁷ P. Domejko-Kozera, *Polityka bezpieczeństwa w Hiszpanii w latach 1992–2004* (Eng. Security policy in Spain 1992–2004), Warszawa 2006, p. 46.

⁸ A. Wejksznier, *Ewolucja terroryzmu motywowanego ideologią religijną na przykładzie salafickiego ruchu globalnego dżihadu* (Eng. The evolution of terrorism motivated by religious ideology as exemplified by the Salafist global jihad movement), Poznań 2010, p. 338.

Inteligencia, CNI) were killed in an ambush and one was wounded. The incident occurred on a busy highway, 30 km south of Baghdad⁹. In early December 2003, the Institute of the Islamic Centre for Jihad Media (Markaz al-Islam al-Jihadi Media Institute) controlled by the Al-Qaeda Organisation in the Arabian Peninsula (Tanzim Al-Qaeda fi Jazirat al-Arab) published a four-page *Message to the Spanish People* and a forty-seven-page analysis of the situation in Iraq and the role of the Mujahidin fighting in the name of Islam¹⁰. The document devotes one chapter to a detailed discussion of the political, economic and social realities of the UK, Poland and Spain, which supported the U.S. in the Iraq war. Leaving aside the extensive threads relating to Iraq and the U.S., the section on Spain, to which six pages are devoted, can be considered particularly interesting. The author or authors put forward the thesis that the authorities of this country could be forced to withdraw troops from Iraq by carrying out several painful attacks. Such an action would have an impact on the elections. Indeed, it could be predicted that the government would not hold out following two or three strikes, and under public pressure would withdraw some forces. It was projected that a certain victory would then be won by the Socialist party, which opposed sending troops to Iraq, and that it would be this party which would lead to the Spanish contingent leaving there. Such a decision by Madrid, coupled with a similar one by Rome, would create social and political pressure in the UK. As a result, Prime Minister Tony Blair would have lost power. There is no doubt that the author or authors of the documents were well aware of the political situation in Europe, including Poland as a loyal ally of the United States¹¹.

On 24 December 2003, a bomb attack was foiled at the Chamartin train station in the north of Madrid. On the Intercity train from Irún in the Basque Country to Madrid, ETA terrorists intended to place two suitcases containing explosives weighing a total of around 50 kg. The police prevented a tragedy - one bomb was managed to be intercepted as the terrorist Garikoitz Arruarte Santacruz, who was carrying a suitcase with 25 kg of explosives, was arrested

⁹ *Siedmiu hiszpańskich agentów zginęło w Iraku* (Eng. Seven Spanish agents killed in Iraq), Wirtualna Polska, 29 XI 2003, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/siedmiu-hiszpańskich-agentow-zginelo-w-iraku-6036492925121665a> [accessed: 30 XI 2003].

¹⁰ H.A. Fernández, *Does al-Qaeda have a global strategy?*, Elcano Royal Institute, 4 V 2004, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/does-al-qaeda-have-a-global-strategy/> [accessed: 6 V 2004].

¹¹ Ibid.

in San Sebastián. The second bomb was found in the luggage compartment of a train, stopped at Burgos train station, and - after the passengers had been evacuated - detonated. It was placed on the train in San Sebastián by Gorka Loran, who was subsequently arrested. The bombs were thought to have exploded in Chamartín during the afternoon rush hour. According to experts, the times set on the detonators suggested that ETA did not so much want to carry out a massacre as to cause panic and chaos. All passengers and railway workers would have managed to evacuate, as ETA had a habit of warning of bombings. A recording of such a warning was found by the police in the hideout of the arrested terrorists¹². On 26 December 2003, a bomb was found on the tracks of the Zaragoza-Caspe-Barcelona line, which was due to explode on 31 December 2003.

On 29 February 2004, Civil Guard officers arrested young ETA terrorists Gorka Vidal Álvaro and Irkus Badillo Borde, who were carrying 536 kg of explosives in a van. Also in the van was a map of Madrid, with a marked district including the NII Shopping Park, the airport and a section of Alcalá de Henares. The target of the next attack was to be the Avenida de América metro station in Madrid. One of the terrorists admitted that ETA was planning to carry out an assassination attempt on the King during the Christmas break¹³. The secret services also expected a major attack in Madrid before the 14 March elections, as a show of strength from the Basque separatists at a time of crisis within the organisation. In order to prevent terrorists from carrying out their plans, all state security services have been put on alert¹⁴.

Preparations for a terrorist attack in Madrid

According to Spanish police, the initiator of the attack was Rabei Osman Ahmed aka Muhammad Al-Masri (Muhammad the Egyptian), a former Egyptian army officer and explosives specialist. In the 1990s

¹² *ETA pretendía volar la estación de Chamartín con un "tren bomba" y provocar una masacre*, ABC España, 26 XII 2003, https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-pretendia-volar-estacion-chamartin-tren-bomba-y-provocar-masacre-200312260300-228547_noticia.html [accessed: 26 XII 2003].

¹³ *Actividad Terrorista de ETA 2004*, Ministerio del Interior, <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2005/jan/mirbal2004acteta.pdf> [accessed: 12 III 2005].

¹⁴ Ibid.

he was in Afghanistan, where he made contact with Al-Qaeda. In 1999, he reached Germany illegally. He was then arrested on a train while travelling to France because he was travelling without documents. In doing so, he gave a false identity - he asserted that he was Palestinian. After his stay in prison, he was sent to the Lebach refugee camp, where he was granted a one-year residence permit. During this time he became an active preacher, preaching hatred of Jews. Just before the attacks of 11 September 2001, he appeared in Spain. In Madrid, he was contacted by a Tunisian national, Serhan Abdelmajid Fakheth (Sirhan bin Abdelmadjid Fakhit) aka El Tunecino (the Tunisian), who had come to Spain in 1996 as part of a scholarship programme. He undertook doctoral studies in economics, but did not complete them. Instead, he preached increasingly radical views until he became a religious fanatic. He became radicalised under the influence of Imam Munir Mahmoud Al-Masari of the M-30 mosque in Madrid. It was to the credit of the Tunisian that the Al-Qaeda cell was rebuilt in the Spanish capital. It was mainly made up of Moroccans, who had hitherto posed no threat and remained at large after Operation "Dactyl". The Syrian, Algerian and Tunisian nationals arrested at the time were experienced fighters with a war past in Bosnia, Chechnya and Afghanistan. Fakheth befriended Algerian Ahmed Brahim, the alleged treasurer of Al-Qaeda in Spain, and after his arrest - in connection with the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on 7 August 1998 - with Brahim's family. The Tunisian is believed to have maintained contacts with other extremist groups operating in Spain, not directly connected to his cell, but operating within international jihadist structures¹⁵. His acquaintance with Al-Masri, who frequently changed identities and documents in Spain, contributed to Fakheth becoming the organiser and coordinator of the Madrid train attack. Even before this event, Al-Masri had left Spain. He went to Italy, where he was employed as a bricklayer and was planning a major attack in Europe and recruiting Islamic volunteers to fight against NATO forces in Iraq. After Al-Masri fled Spain, Fakheth took over his logistical base and contacts. He turned to Amer Azizi aka Osman al-Andalusi, considered to be Abu Dahdah's right-hand man, for help in carrying out the attack. After his arrest, Azizi took over the leadership of Al-Qaeda's Spanish cell. In 2001 after the attack in the U.S., he hid from Madrid police for a week.

¹⁵ F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge. The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings*, New York 2016, pp. 56–59.

Upon his return to the Spanish capital, he quickly sold his car and fled the country. In November 2001, during the dismantling of a Spanish Al-Qaeda cell, police found documents in Azizi's home indicating his contacts with the organisation, his recruitment of young Muslims for training in Afghanistan and his links to some of the 11 September 2001 attackers, to whom he and Abu Dahdah had organised a meeting in Tarragona. He also maintained contacts with the organisers of the attacks in Casablanca on the night of 16-17 May 2003¹⁶. Azizi was also the liaison between Al-Qaeda and the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and this circumstance the Tunisian tried to exploit. A meeting between the two extremists took place in Turkey in late 2002 and early 2003. Fakheth asked Azizi to assign him fighters willing to die as martyrs to carry out a terrorist operation. Azizi refused because such people had been arrested. Instead, he allowed him to act on behalf of Al-Qaeda. He also recommended a Moroccan, Jamal Zougam, who could help organise a functioning terrorist group¹⁷.

According to the conception of Fernando Reinares, a Spanish terrorism expert, Azizi was the instigator of the Madrid attack. His name appears in 149 of the 271 volumes of court files relating to the events of 11 March 2004¹⁸. The decision to attack Spain was reportedly made in Karachi, in southern Pakistan. The plan was approved in February 2002 at an Al-Qaeda meeting in Turkey, which Azizi also attended. In 2005, he was killed in a U.S. air strike in North Waziristan within West Pakistan¹⁹. Reinares primarily challenged the thesis promoted by left-wing circles

¹⁶ In May 2003, a group of 14 terrorists belonging to the Salafi Jihad organisation (As-Salafijja al-Jihadiyya) attacked two restaurants in Casablanca, Farah hotel, Belgian consulate, Jewish centre and cemetery. Thirty-one people were killed and around 100 injured. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów islamistycznych* (Eng. Lexicon of Islamist organisations and movements), Warszawa 2014, p. 117.

¹⁷ F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge...*, pp. 118–120; Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca* (Eng. Madrid 11 March), Warszawa 2005, pp. 116–117.

¹⁸ *Madrid bombings "probably al Qaeda"*, Stuff, 21 I 2010, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/vl-push/world/3226277/Madrid-bombings-probably-al-Qaeda> [accessed: 21 I 2010].

¹⁹ A. Hernández, *11M: quién fue el autor intelectual y otras claves que plantea el documental de Netflix sobre el mayor atentado yihadista en Europa*, BBC, 11 III 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-60693476> [accessed: 11 III 2022]; W. Maclean, *New evidence of Qaeda tie to Madrid blast: expert*, Reuters, 13 I 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-security-spain-qaeda-idCATRE60B52020100112> [accessed: 13 I 2010]; A. Martín Plaza, *Los atentados del 11M que sacudieron España*, RTVE, 11 III 2014, <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20140311/atentados-del-11m-sacudieron-espana/893543.shtml> [accessed: 11 III 2014].

linking the Madrid attack to the war in Iraq. According to his conception, the Madrid attack was supposed to be Al-Qaeda's revenge for the police's dismantling of its Spanish network in 2001-2002. The attack, however, had nothing to do with the presence of Spanish soldiers in Iraq, as they had started their mission in 2003. Their presence only then became the perfect pretext for carrying out the attack²⁰. Al-Masri admitted to the early preparation of a series of attacks in Madrid in a telephone conversation with his "protégé" Palestinian²¹. It was overheard by Italian police in May 2004. In it, Al-Masri stated, among other things, that it had taken him two and a half years to prepare for the attack. Although he was not in Madrid at the crucial moment, he maintained contact with the attackers²². Also among the organisers of the attack was a Moroccan, Hasan al-Haski, believed to be the leader of a cell of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group in Spain, where he had appeared after an extended stay in Belgium²³.

Taking Azizi's advice, Fakhret made contact with Zougam. He was, along with compatriots Muhammad Chaoui and Muhammad Bakkali, co-owner of the Nuevo Siglo (New Century) mobile phone shop in Madrid's Lavapiés district. Zougam had been known to the police since 2001, when they were cracking down on the Al-Qaeda network in Spain. He was arrested and later released from prison - despite his known links with the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, with many of Abu Dahdah's men, with Azizi and Muhammad al-Fizazi, one of Morocco's most radical preachers. Another person helping Fakhret recruit volunteers for the terrorist cell and most likely funding the preparations for the attack was Moroccan Jamal Ahmidan, nicknamed 'Chinaman' or 'Mowgli' - a wealthy clothing shop owner and drug trafficker who became the Tunisian's deputy. Another figure in the group of assassins was Moroccan Rafa Zuhier, an associate of the 'Chinaman' in the drug trafficking. He also maintained contacts with individuals with access to explosives. He established these relationships while in prison, where he was serving a sentence for armed robbery. There he met the Spaniard Antonio Toro Castro, a drug and explosives

²⁰ F. Reinares, *The Evidence of Al-Qa'ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack*, "CTC Sentinel" 2012, vol. 5, no. 3, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-evidence-of-al-qaidas-role-in-the-2004-madrid-attack/> [accessed: 18 IV 2012].

²¹ Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, pp. 114-115.

²² *Llega a España "El Egipcio" para ser juzgado por el 11-M*, 20 minutos, 17 XI 2006, <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/173755/0/egipcion/11-m/italia/> [accessed: 17 XI 2006].

²³ F. Reinares, *The Evidence of Al-Qa'ida's Role...*, pp. 51-52.

trafficker whose brother-in-law Jose Emilio Suárez Trashorras was a miner in Avilés (a town in Asturias in the north-west of Spain). After leaving prison, Zuhier continued to maintain his acquaintance with Castro and his associates. He put them in contact with Moroccan drug traffickers. Close relations between Muslims and Spaniards were such that the former were even invited to Trashorras' wedding to Castro's sister, which took place in February 2004. At that time, negotiations were already taking place for the purchase by the Moroccans of some 200 kg of the dynamite-based explosive goma-2 eco, used in the Spanish construction and mining industries. It was also, in addition to titadine produced in France, used by the ETA. The purchase of explosives by the Spaniards for 6,000 euros and 25 kg of hashish was justified by its use both in Morocco and to blow up safes during robberies in Madrid. The material came from the "Conchita" kaolin mine owned by Caolines de Merilles, where Trashorras had previously worked. The Goma-2 eco was taken out of the plant by Emilio Llano Álvarez, a supervisor at the "Conchita" mine²⁴.

The explosive was first sent in small quantities in the luggage compartment of airline coaches travelling between Asturias and Madrid. The goods were sent by a 16-year-old boy, who was called 'Gitano' ('Gypsy')²⁵. For the largest part of the goma, the Moroccans personally came to Avilés, where they collected it directly from Trashorras. He also prepared nails and bolts to reinforce the deadly power of the explosive. From Avilés to Madrid, the Moroccans returned in two cars: their own Volkswagen Golf, in the boot of which they carried the goma-2 eco, and a Toyota borrowed from the Spaniards. It was driven by a 'Chinaman' who drove first and was supposed to warn against police patrols. He had already been stopped and fined three times before for various offences. The explosive was brought safely to a rural house in Morata de Tajuña, near Chinchón, a suburb of Madrid. It was a low-traffic area and the building was completely enclosed by a covering fence. The property had previously served as a shelter for illegal immigrants who sympathised with Muslim extremists. It belonged to a Syrian man arrested in 2001 on suspicion of belonging to Al-Qaeda. The first tenant was a Moroccan arrested in 2003 in connection with the Casablanca attack, and the second was a 'Chinaman'. A month before the attack,

²⁴ Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, p. 126.

²⁵ Due to the boy's young age, his name was not made public.

the village house had begun a flurry of bomb-making activity based on explosives brought from Avilés. Aluminium detonators and mobile phones were used as igniters. The phones were delivered to the Nuevo Siglo shop by two Indians: Vinay Kohly and Suresh Kumar. Zougam then took mobile phones to a house in the village, where they were converted into timed detonators. This was probably done by the aforementioned Chaoui and Bekkali. The bombs were constructed by the Moroccan Abderrahman Zbakin known as 'The Chemist'. Zugam, 'Chinaman' and Trashorras were also frequent visitors. Osman al-Ghanut, a young Moroccan working as a bricklayer and helping to prepare the explosives, was in the house at all times. A total of 13 bombs were constructed and placed in backpacks and bags. The ready-made explosives were transported in a stolen Renault Kangoo van and a Škoda passenger car to a house in Madrid's Alcalá district, inhabited by North African immigrants, and to a flat in the Leganés neighbourhood, rented three days before the attack. It was located on the first floor of the building and had an area of almost 100 m². On 10 March, the terrorists involved in placing the bombs on the trains carried out a ritual cleansing at a hairdressing establishment owned by Moroccan Abdeluaid Berrak, a friend of Abu Dahdah. In total, more than 40 people were involved in the preparations for the attack²⁶.

Course of the attack

On the morning of Thursday 11 March 2004, seven terrorists - Tunisian Fakheth and Moroccans - Ahmidan, Abd an-Nabi Kundja, Allakema Lamari, Muhammad Ulad Akcha, his brother Rachid Oulad Akcha and Asri Rifat Anuar arrived in Renault Kangoo and Škoda cars in Alcalá de Henares, a town about 30 km east of Madrid, to land bombs in the carriages of the Cercanías light rail. There are ten main lines of these trains in and around Madrid itself. The trains, with the exception of one line, stop or terminate at Atocha station, the central hub railway station in the Spanish capital. There are three Cercanías lines in Alcalá de Henares. One runs

²⁶ F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge...*, pp. 71–74; Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, pp. 127–129.

from Guadalajara and the other two start here. During the morning rush hour, crowded trains towards Madrid leave here every five minutes²⁷.

The van was parked near the station. Luis Garrudo, a caretaker living nearby, noticed that three people had got out of it. They were filmed by surveillance cameras along with four others as they entered and exited trains standing on the platforms. The perpetrators had placed explosive devices on four trains. The trains full of passengers left Alcalá de Henares for Madrid between 7.01 a.m. and 7.14 a.m.²⁸

Atocha railway station, train no. 21431

The train stopped at platform 2. Many passengers left the train and people who wanted to travel towards Alcobendas, 13 km north of Madrid, started to board it. At 7.37 a.m. (according to other sources at 7.39 a.m.)²⁹ the first bomb exploded and two more exploded four seconds apart. The explosions occurred in carriages 4, 5 and 6³⁰, as a result of which 29 passengers were killed and 115 injured. The force of the explosion was somewhat reduced as a result of the open doors of the train, but the explosion of the bombs placed in the baskets on the right caused the shockwave to spread across the platform, where there were many passengers. Chaos reigned among them. Their goal was to get out of the wreckage of the train. People were bumping into each other trying to run to the escalators, which was not easy given that at that hour Atocha station resembled a Tokyo underground station. As the bombs exploded, a second train was approaching Atocha station³¹.

²⁷ Compiled on the basis of residual information. See: Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, pp. 56–57, 74, 129, 207–208, 212–214.

²⁸ A. Martín Plaza, *Los atentados del 11M que sacudieron España...; Atentados Terroristas del Día 11 del Marzo de 2004 de Madrid*, Juzgado Central de Instrucción Nº 6 Audiencia Nacional Madrid, <https://e00-elmundo.uecdn.es/documentos/2006/04/11/auto11m/01.pdf>, p. 1 [accessed: 11 IV 2006]; Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, pp. 55–56.

²⁹ Publications give different times for the explosion of the first bomb on the train at Atocha station, e.g. 7.37, 7.38 or 7.39 a.m. There are also discrepancies in the timing of the explosions on the other trains, all of which were supposed to have occurred between three and five minutes apart, and not as indicated in the graphics (Figure 1, Figure 2). See: *The Terror Attacks in Madrid...*, pp. 28–30 [accessed: 11 III 2008]; F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge...*, p. xxiii.

³⁰ F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge...*, p. xxiii.

³¹ *The Terror Attacks in Madrid...*, p. 27.

Atocha railway station, Téllez street, train no. 17305

The train that was due to travel from Atocha to Chamartin station was slightly late. The train slowed down to stop at the level of Téllez Street, which runs parallel to the track, about 800 m from Atocha³². Here it was to await the departure of train 17393. At 7.39 a.m. four bombs exploded in carriages: 1, 4, 5 and 6³³. The force of the explosion was so great that many of the 65 dead were thrown outside. Had it not been for the train delay, the casualties could have been many more. 165 people were injured. According to witnesses to the incident, the most surprising thing was the silence and calmness with which the injured passengers, some in very serious condition, disembarked from the destroyed railway cars, helping each other, still without the support of the medical services. The report of the explosion at Atocha station was received by the ambulance service immediately after the explosion. Eight minutes later, the first ambulance arrived. Most of them were sent to Atocha station³⁴.

El Pozo del Tío Raimundo station, train no. 21435

An overcrowded double-decker train from Guadalajara via Alcalá de Henares arrived at the station (Figure 1). It was disembarked by students and schoolchildren and boarded by workers, including many parents who had left their children at nearby kindergartens at that hour. At 7.38 a.m. (7.40 a.m.) the train set off for Alcobendas station, three stops away. It had not yet passed the platform when massive explosions occurred in two railway cars 4 and 5, killing 67 people and injuring 56 - mainly those on the platform. The attack at El Pozo station was the third in a row, which meant that it would take longer to mobilise and direct services. The first call was made at 7.47 a.m. and an ambulance arrived 15 minutes later. Within 1 hour and 10 minutes, all the injured were transported to hospitals³⁵.

³² See: *Atentados Terroristas del Día 11 del Marzo de 2004 de Madrid...*; F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge...*, p. xxiii; Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, p. 57, 205.

³³ See: F. Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge...*, p. xxiii.

³⁴ *The Terror Attacks in Madrid...*, p. 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

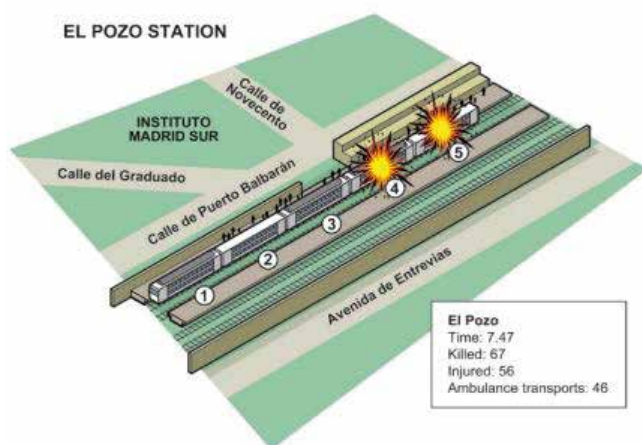


Figure 1. Train no. 21435 at El Pozo del Tío Raimundo station.

Source: *The Terror Attacks in Madrid, Spain, 2004, Kamedo-report 90*, Socialstyrelsen 2007, https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2007-12336_200712336.pdf, p. 30 [accessed: 11 III 2008].

Santa Eugenia station, train no. 21713

At 7.40 a.m. (7.42 a.m.), the last of a series of explosions occurred (Figure 2)³⁶. It happened just as the train was starting from the station. The explosion of material placed in a travel bag caused enormous havoc, as the result of which 17 people were killed and 52 injured. Human remains were scattered within a 50-metre radius. The station buildings were severely damaged³⁷.

³⁶ The explosion on the train at Santa Eugenia station is listed in *The Terror Attacks in Madrid, Spain, 2004, Kamedo-report 90* as second in order, while it occurred at the same time as explosion on the train at El Pozo station or as the last one.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

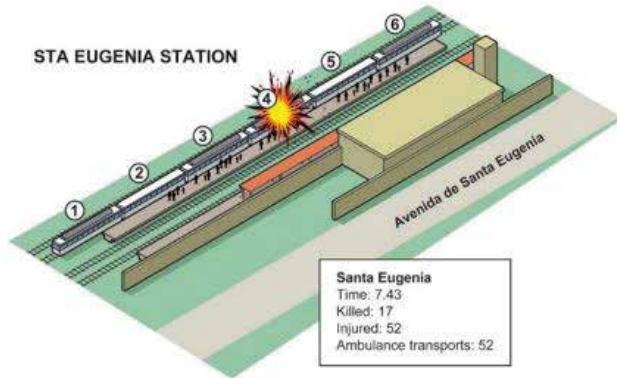


Figure 2. Train no. 21713 at Santa Eugenia station.

Source: *The Terror Attacks in Madrid, Spain, 2004, Kamedo-report 90*, Socialstyrelsen 2007, https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2007-12336_200712336.pdf, p. 29 [accessed: 11 III 2008].

Immediately after the Madrid attack, all forces were mobilised. Field hospitals were set up at the sites of the disaster, medical services appealed for blood donations as supplies were running out at a fast rate. Crowds of people lined up in front of mobile blood donation points. In parallel with the rescue operation, an investigation and anti-terrorist operation code-named 'Cage' ('Jaula') was launched to prevent terrorists from escaping the city. The capital was gripped by traffic paralysis. By 10 a.m. almost all the injured had been taken to around 20 hospitals. More than 300 people were taken to the Gregorio Marañón Hospital, which had never been so busy before. An emergency plan for major disasters had also never been practised, and the situation on the morning of 11 March 2004 even resembled war³⁸. Police delayed publishing the names of those killed. The tragic death toll has finally been made public. More than 6,000 people were travelling on the four trains. The attack left 192 people dead and more than 1,400 injured³⁹. Among the victims from 16 countries were four Poles: two women, a man and his seven-month-old daughter, who died in hospital

³⁸ Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, p. 64.

³⁹ The last injured person died in 2014 after being in a coma for ten years. The total number of fatalities was therefore 193 people. See: B. Cedeira, *La víctima que entró en coma el 11M hasta morir 10 años después*, *El Español*, 11 III 2017, https://www.elespanol.com/reportajes/20170310/199730525_0.html [accessed: 11 III 2017].

the day after the attack⁴⁰. The statistics of the wounded were then updated and the final number was 1858⁴¹. It was the second deadliest terrorist attack in Europe after the 21 December 1988 attack on a Pan American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 259 passengers and crew members and 11 residents of that town.

The police investigation discovered that there were more backpacks put on the trains. Of the thirteen, ten bombs exploded. One was found on a train at Atocha station and another in a train at El Pozo del Tío Raimundo station. Both were detonated by sappers from the Regional Operations and Reconnaissance Brigade (Técnico Especialista en Desactivación de Artefactos Explosivos, TEDAX). A third explosive charge was discovered among the luggage carried off the train in El Pozo when a mobile phone rang in one of the backpacks. Specialists defused this bomb. It consisted of a goma-2 eco explosive, screws and nails to increase the explosive force, two detonators and the aforementioned prepaid phone with an alarm programmed for the time when the explosion was supposed to take place. It did not happen because of a defect in the detonator. It was established that the card came from a shop owned by Zugam. The disclosed connections identified a number of terrorists⁴². On the day of the attack, residents of Alcalá de Henares informed the police about a suspicious van parked near the station. It was towed to a police car park. Officers found in it, among other things, seven detonators, remnants of explosive material and a cassette tape with a recorded recitation of a passage from the Koran, a blanket, a scarf and gloves, etc.⁴³

Moments after the attacks, politicians of the ruling party accused the Basque organisation ETA, which allegedly wanted to influence the elections, of carrying them out. Prime Minister Aznar said: *ETA is behind these attacks*⁴⁴. He was echoed by Interior Minister Ángel Acebes,

⁴⁰ Zmarła czwórka Polaków rannych w Madrycie (Eng. Four Poles injured in Madrid died), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 III 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091214225052/http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,1961962.html> [accessed: 12 III 2004].

⁴¹ *Zamachy w Madrycie – odwet za Irak* (Eng. Madrid attacks - retaliation for Iraq), *Polskie Radio*, 11 III 2014, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/106/246/Artykul/1071933%2CZamachy-w-Madrycie---odwet-za-Irak> [accessed: 11 III 2014].

⁴² A. Martín Plaza, *Los atentados del 11M que sacudieron España...*

⁴³ *Atentados Terroristas del Día 11 del Marzo de 2004 de Madrid...*, pp. 147–149.

⁴⁴ M. Catalán, *Prensa, verdad y terrorismo: la lección política del 14-M*, “El Argonauta Español” 2005, no. 2. <https://doi.org/10.4000/argonauta.1191> [accessed: 26 VIII 2023].

who stated: *There is no doubt that ETA is responsible*. In a TV speech at 2.30 p.m., Aznar strongly accused ETA of carrying out the attack. He also announced the holding of a demonstration against Basque separatists the following day. Other PP politicians also pointed without any doubt to ETA as the perpetrator of the attack. The same signals initially came from the secret services, although ETA rejected these accusations⁴⁵. In the evening, the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigade sent an email to the Arabic-language daily Al-Quds al-Arabi ('Arab Jerusalem'), published in London, in which it admitted to having carried out the attacks⁴⁶. At the same time, the police found a videotape at the location indicated by this brigade. It recorded Al-Qaeda's representative in Europe, Abu Dujan al-Afghani, confessing on behalf of the organisation to the attacks carried out exactly two and a half years after 9/11, in response to Spain's collaboration with the 'criminal Bush'. This was supposed to be retaliation for the evils perpetrated in the world by the West, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan⁴⁷.

On Saturday 13 March, the three co-owners of the Nuevo Siglo phone shop, from which the cellphones converted into incendiaries came, were arrested. Intelligence agents also managed to locate the terrorists' hideout in a rented flat in the Leganés district. This was helped by mobile phone cards and a pre-paid card found on 2 April in a bag of explosives placed on the tracks of the high-speed railway (Alta Velocidad Española, AVE). The following day, police officers and officers of the Special Operations Group (Grupo Especial de Operaciones, GEO) proceeded to lay siege to the building where the terrorists' headquarters were located. The start of the operation and the conflicting information about how it was going to be carried out caused much controversy. At around 6 p.m., one of the terrorists went outside to throw rubbish away. He saw the police officers, after which

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ The organisation is named after Muhammad Atef aka Abu Hafs al-Masri, one of Bin Laden's closest associates and an activist of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (Al-Jihad al-Islami al-Misri). The brigade made itself known again on 17 March 2004, declaring a ceasefire in Spain if the new government fulfilled its promise and withdrew troops from Iraq. By the way, it called Aznar the 'tail of the United States', which had been 'consigned to the dustbin of history'. The same organisation took responsibility for the attacks in Istanbul in November 2003 and London in July 2005. It also published dozens of proclamations, statements and communiqués. However, it turned out that the brigade existed only in the virtual sphere. See: K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów islamistycznych...*, p. 413.

⁴⁷ Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, p. 82.

he warned his colleagues and fled⁴⁸. According to another version of events, he fled without warning his comrades, who themselves saw the policemen nearby⁴⁹. The terrorists then opened fire through the window, raising shouts in Spanish in praise of Allah. After the residents were evacuated, it was decided that a group of GEO officers would blast the door to the flat and throw tear gas inside. When the anti-terrorists were in the stairwell next to the flat, a naked man stood at the front door. At this point, a massive explosion occurred, killing one officer and injuring 15 others, several seriously. A large part of the building's facade was destroyed. The force of the explosion of the explosives stored in the flat was so great that it was impossible to count the number of massacred bodies of the terrorists who committed collective suicide. It was first reported that four of them had died. Only after three days was it established that there were seven⁵⁰. They were the same terrorists who had planted bombs on the trains at Alcalá de Henares station.

Political impact of the events of 11 March 2004

The Madrid attacks took place three days before the general elections. In the event that ETA had actually carried out the attack, the electorate would certainly have supported the party of Aznar, who pursued a policy of dealing tough with Basque terrorists and rejected any possibility of negotiating with them. With Aznar having already declared that he would not seek re-election as prime minister, the PP therefore chose Mariano Rajoy as its leader in the election campaign. However, if the attack in Madrid had been carried out by Islamic extremists, the situation could have changed dramatically, as 80% of the public was against sending Spanish soldiers to Iraq. Surely PSOE politicians would have used this fact to discredit

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

⁴⁹ *Los terroristas del 11-M se inmolan y matan a un geo al volar su «piso franco» en Leganés*, ABC España, 4 IV 2004, https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-terroristas-inmolan-y-matan-volar-piso-franco-leganes-200404040300-962802830594_noticia.html [accessed: 4 IV 2004].

⁵⁰ Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, p. 82; R. Becares, O. Cernuda, *Cuatro terroristas islámicos se inmolan en un piso de Leganés y matan a un agente de policía*, elmundo.es, 4 IV 2004, <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/04/03/enespecial/1081016920.html> [accessed: 4 IV 2004]; *La policía eleva a siete los terroristas muertos en Leganés*, Cadenaser, 7 IV 2004, https://cadenaser.com/ser/2004/04/07/espana/1081295423_850215.html [accessed: 7 IV 2004].

the current government. For this reason, Aznar and Acebes kept accusing ETA of carrying out the attack, even though the facts revealed in the hours that followed contradicted this. The analysis of the material evidence examined by forensic experts forced at least restraint in the statements made by politicians from people's party. Meanwhile, on 11 March, at around 9.30 p.m., Zapatero telephoned the editor-in-chief of the daily 'El Mundo' and informed him that, in view of the new evidence, he was convinced of Al-Qaeda's guilt and, moreover, according to him, the government also had this knowledge. While the opposition disputed the words of members of the right-wing government the following day, ETA representatives spoke out. An anonymous caller telephoned the editorial board of the extreme nationalist daily 'Gara', declaring that the Basque organisation bore no responsibility for Thursday's attacks. A dozen minutes later, Acebes, on behalf of the government, announced that he did not believe in the authenticity of this information. On Friday evening, some 11 million Spaniards, including some 2.3 million in Madrid alone, took part in demonstrations against ETA's violence, and as an expression of remembrance for the victims and support for their families. This show of unity was disrupted when the police investigation began to focus on Al-Qaeda. On Saturday 13 March, when the first arrests of Islamic radicals connected to the attack took place, the government spokesman and interior minister continued to blame ETA. Faced with the contradiction of emerging new evidence with statements by government representatives, the opposition decided to act despite the electoral silence in force. The pre-election ban on agitation was broken by the shouts of the crowd that gathered at the PP headquarters in Madrid. Residents demanded to know the truth before taking part in the elections. Anti-government protests also erupted in Barcelona and other major Spanish cities. That same evening and night there was a battle of words between the PP and the PSOE, which accused the government of lying during an ongoing investigation⁵¹.

On 14 March, the Left won with 11 million votes, while the PP won 9.7 million. Participation in the general election was 77.26%, one

⁵¹ J. Cieszko, *Tragedia w Madrycie, 11–14 marca 2004 roku* (Eng. Tragedy in Madrid, 11–14 March 2004), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 51–54; J.L. Gonzalez Esteban, *Kronika 11 marca: terroryzm i polityczna zmiana w Hiszpanii* (Eng. Chronicle 11 March: terrorism and political change in Spain), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory...*, pp. 67–70.

of the highest in Spain⁵². The following day, after announcing the Socialists' victory, Zapatero announced that he intended to invite the other political parties to a dialogue on the fight against terrorism. He also announced a return to an alliance with France and Germany, i.e. pursuing a pro-European policy instead of the pro-American policy of the previous government. He announced that his first step would be to withdraw troops from Iraq. He called the war against the Hussein regime a mistake because no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. In addition, it had emerged that secret service reports had been manipulated in the U.S. and Britain to lend credence to the need to intervene. Spain's new Prime Minister also said that his victory in the vote is a signal of change for other countries with elections coming up soon, including the United States, where President George W. Bush will face Massachusetts Senator John Kerry in November. If voters do not accept the war in Iraq and its occupation, they can protest at the polls and at the ballot box, thus changing the direction of policy. The final decision to withdraw the Spanish contingent was taken on 19 April 2004⁵³.

In May 2004, 1,300 Spanish soldiers left Iraq⁵⁴. Soldiers from the Dominican Republic and Honduras also returned to the country. In the summer of 2004, MND C-S of 9,000 soldiers commanded by Poles was reduced to about 7,000. Although their presence in Iraq did not have any significant military importance, the end of the mission was perceived as a gesture of a political nature, a consequence of the reorientation of Spain's position, in which the new government clearly distanced itself from the tactics of the war on terror preached by the USA⁵⁵. The international media reported at the time that the Spanish had failed. The Polish Ministry of Defence hoped that the Spaniards would take command in the zone. Poland's Prime Minister at the time, Leszek Miller, appealed to the Spanish for loyalty to the international anti-terrorist coalition, but to no avail⁵⁶.

⁵² J. Cieszko, *Tragedia w Madrycie...*, pp. 56–57.

⁵³ A. Martin Plaza, *Los atentados del 11M que sacudieron España...*; J. Cieszko, *Tragedia w Madrycie...*, pp. 54–55.

⁵⁴ M. Brylew, *Irak 2006–2012...*, p. 50.

⁵⁵ The Spanish contingent, on the other hand, remained in Afghanistan. Indeed, Zapatero expressed his belief that the two interventions were fundamentally different in their rationale and legality.

⁵⁶ *Po pięciu latach koniec polskiej misji w Iraku* (Eng. After five years, the end of the Polish mission in Iraq), money.pl, 29 X 2008, https://www.money.pl/archiwum/wiadomosci_agencyjne/pap/

The stance of the new Spanish government was severely criticised by Washington and other capitals. The Bush administration did not hide its anger at Zapatero, comparing the current situation with the signing of the Munich Agreement in 1938. At that time, to calm the situation, France and the United Kingdom agreed to annex part of Czechoslovakia's territory to Germany. Spain has now acted in a similar way, withdrawing its military contingent from Iraq in an attempt to 'calm' the terrorists. There were malicious comments in the Polish media that the elections in Spain had been won by Al-Qaida⁵⁷. The events of 11 March and their consequences have had an impact on both general international relations and bilateral relations between Spain and the United States. The change of government in Spain was not welcomed by the Bush administration. During a visit to EU countries, the then chairwoman of the U.S. National Security Council, Condoleezza Rice, ignored Madrid. She did not stay there, recognising that she would hear nothing in Madrid that she could not hear in Paris. The attacks in the Spanish capital were used by President Bush during the 2004 election campaign. He used them to justify the need to continue his military policy in Iraq and to maintain the restrictions on the civil liberties of the U.S. population. He further pointed out that terrorism was indeed the greatest threat to the world and that pursuing this policy was therefore a priority in his foreign policy⁵⁸. Another consequence of the Madrid events of international significance was the adoption of a declaration on combating terrorism by the European Council in March 2004. Two months later, the post of EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator was created.

artykul/po;pieciu;latach;koniec;polskiej;misji;w;iraku,188,0,381372.html [accessed: 29 X 2008]. In autumn 2014, the Spanish Ministry of Defence decided to send 300 soldiers to Iraq. This time they supported the international coalition in the fight against the Islamic State. They trained the Iraqi military in carrying out special operations and in detecting and defusing mines. The Spaniards did not take an active part in the fighting, but had to resist attacks. See: *Hiszpański parlament zgodził się na wysłanie żołnierzy do Iraku* (Eng. Spanish parliament agrees to send troops to Iraq), Wirtualna Polska, 22 X 2014, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/hiszpanski-parlament-zgodzil-sie-na-wyslanie-zolnierzy-do-iraku-6027730872366209a> [accessed: 22 X 2014].

⁵⁷ B. Łódzki, *Reakcja polskich mediów masowych na atak terrorystyczny w Madrycie 11 marca 2004 r.* (Eng. Reaction of the Polish mass media to the terrorist attack in Madrid on 11 March 2004), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, p. 126.

⁵⁸ T. Płudowski, *Reakcje prasy amerykańskiej na madrycki atak terrorystyczny z 11 marca 2004* (Eng. U.S. press reactions to the Madrid terrorist attack of 11 March 2004), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 156–157.

Conviction of the perpetrators of the Madrid attack

On 14 March 2005 Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the Madrid attack. A speaker presenting himself as the spokesman for Al-Qaeda in Europe declared that the attacks were revenge for (...) *Spain's collaboration with the criminal Bush and his allies*⁵⁹. This information did not provoke much of a public reaction, as the investigation showed that Bin Laden's organisation was responsible for the attack anyway. The political and social debate surrounding the events in Madrid resurfaced in 2007 following the controversial sentences handed down to the organisers and helpers of the terrorist attack. There were 21 people, most of them Moroccans, directly involved in preparation and realisation of the attack. The trial lasted from 15 February to 2 July 2007. Fifteen Moroccans, nine Spaniards, two Syrians, an Algerian, a Lebanese and an Egyptian stood trial. The verdict was read out on 31 October 2007 - 21 of the 29 accused of involvement in the attacks, none of whom pleaded guilty, were sentenced to more than 40,000 years in prison. Eight were acquitted by the court. The same case also names 28 defendants, seven of whom were acquitted. Among them was Al-Masri, considered by some authors to be the instigator of the Madrid attacks. In 2004, he was detained in Milan after police overheard his conversation in which he admitted to planning the Madrid attack. Muhammad the Egyptian was also acquitted, which was twistedly explained by the fact that he was already serving a 10-year prison sentence (reduced to eight) in Italy for belonging to a terrorist organisation. Another organiser of the attack, Al-Haski, who was also the head of the Spanish cell of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, was sentenced to 15 years in prison instead of the more than 40,000 the prosecutor had demanded. The heaviest sentences were handed down to Zugam and Al-Ghanut: 30 years for each of the 191 killed, 20 years for each of the 1,858 wounded (attempted murder) and 12 years for membership of a terrorist organisation. Also among those sentenced was Trashorras, who was charged with complicity in the events by selling explosives to Islamic terrorists. His sentence is 34,715 years in prison. However, under the Spanish legal system, none of the convicts will serve more than 40 years in prison. The remaining defendants received sentences ranging from 3 to 23 years

⁵⁹ A. Mroczek, *Zamach w Madrycie 11 III 2004 – minuta po minucie* (Eng. Madrid attack 11 III 2004 - minute by minute), terroryzm.com, 25 IX 2005, <http://www.terroryzm.com/zamach-w-madrycie-11-iii-2004-minuta-po-minucie/> [accessed: 25 IX 2005].

in prison. The public prosecutor's office and associations of the victims' relatives appealed the sentences to the Supreme Court, which upheld most of them in a ruling on 17 July 2008. The public, and above all the families of the victims of the attacks, received the verdicts, especially the lowest and acquittal ones, with incredulity, indignation and anger⁶⁰. Spaniards found it difficult to accept that the massacre was committed by Muslims who lived in Madrid, worked here and were often friends with the local community. Politicians of the ruling PSOE were unlikely to comment on the verdict. Instead, they continued to accuse the previous right-wing government of trying to hide the truth about the real perpetrators of the attack and blame it on ETA, lest Spaniards think that the attack was retaliation for sending Spanish troops to Iraq⁶¹.

Anti-terrorist security problems in Spain

With the results of the ongoing investigation, questions and doubts were raised not only about the perpetrators of the attack, but also about the state of anti-terrorist security in Spain. An attack motivated by jihadist ideology took place in a country that fought against Basque separatist terrorism between 1960 and 2011. On the one hand, praise was expressed for the efficiency and professionalism of the emergency medical services and experts in forensic science and medicine. On the other hand, the investigation revealed a number of errors and omissions related to the surveillance of the most radicalised individuals and the handling of informants by the police and the Civil Guard. As many as five informants of these services were among the group of people linked to the attack. The police rejected, for example, the information provided by one of them that it was not ETA that carried out the attack, because it went against

⁶⁰ M. Tryc-Ostrowska, *Kontrowersyjny wyrok za zamachy w Madrycie* (Eng. Controversial sentence for Madrid attacks), "Rzeczpospolita", 2 XI 2007.

⁶¹ C. Taracha, *Wybory w cieniu zamachu. Kilka uwag na temat wydarzeń z marca 2004 roku w Madrycie* (Eng. Elections in the shadow of an attack. Some comments on the events of March 2004 in Madrid), in: *Terroryzm wczoraj i dziś. Wybrane problemy* (Eng. Terrorism yesterday and today. Selected issues), P. de la Fuente, W. Gizicki, C. Taracha (eds.), Lublin 2015, p. 80; *El final del principio en la investigación del 11-M*, elmundo.es, 1 XI 2007, <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2007/11/01/espana/1193885319.html> [accessed: 1 XI 2007]; M. Tryc-Ostrowska, *Kontrowersyjny wyrok...*

the political line⁶². Also, the trial left many questions and doubts about both the authorship of the attack as well as its perpetrators and originators. Not surprisingly, this hot topic became the subject of scholarly and journalistic consideration. Various interpretations and speculations about the events of 11 March 2004 have reached the public. The author of the official conception accepted by Spain's ruling political establishment and much of the public is Reinales. Also accepted was the opinion of Luis del Pino, who saw traces of the presence of the secret services in the attacks, without identifying them specifically⁶³.

In order to increase effectiveness in the fight against domestic and international terrorism, two months after the attacks, Spain's National Counter Terrorism Coordination Centre (Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista, CNCA) was created. In Poland, its counterpart is the Counter-Terrorism Centre of the Internal Security Agency. It was made up of top officers from the National Police Corps (Cuerpo Nacional de Policía, CNP), the Citizen Guard, the CNI and prisons. The National Counter Terrorism Coordination Centre fell under the Secretary of State for Security at the Ministry of the Interior (MIA). The CNCA's departments dealing with Islamic terrorism and Muslim radicalism included many specialists. It was an institution of an analytical nature. The primary objective of the CNCA was to receive, process and evaluate available strategic information on all types of terrorism that posed a threat to Spain, without taking operational action, which was the responsibility of the State Security Forces and Bodies (Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad del Estado, FCSE). The FCSE comprised intelligence, the police, the Civil Guard and the Catalan police Mossos d'Esquadra. The new counter-terrorism institution constantly updated its assessment of the terrorist threat, sought to maintain the initiative in the fight against terrorists, choose the best scenarios for possible intervention and plan the response. Legislative changes were introduced. Modification and expansion of the terrorist prevention system was initiated, including the improvement of the rapid reaction force and the use of the military. EU intelligence cooperation with the U.S. and Muslim countries strengthened⁶⁴.

⁶² Z. Jakubowska, *Madryt 11 marca...*, pp. 173–175.

⁶³ C. Taracha, *Wybory w cieniu zamachu...*, pp. 81–85.

⁶⁴ Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista CNCA, La Pagina de ASR, <https://intelpage.info/centro-nacional-de-coordinacion-antiterrorista.html> [accessed: 12 XII 2015].

The rise of the Al-Qaeda organisation in the Islamic Maghreb Countries (Tanzim Al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Maghrib al-Islami) in 2007 saw an increase in the terrorist threat in Spain. The organisation's online media organ 'Al-Andalus' proclaimed, among other things, that its aim was to recruit supporters under the banner of fighting for a caliphate in the Iberian Peninsula. Statements and propaganda material posted on the portal contributed to the radicalisation of Spanish Muslims. Bin Laden's deputy in Al-Qaeda, Ayman az-Zawahiri, called for (...) *the recapture of Al-Andalus, which is the duty of our people in general and of you* (the Maghreb countries – author's note) *in particular. This objective can only be achieved by ridding the Islamic Maghreb of the sons of France and Spain*⁶⁵. Spain also held a special place in the ideology of the Islamic State, by which it was seen as a natural part of the caliphate now occupied by the 'infidels'. To minimise the growing threat, the number of officers dealing with Muslim extremism was increased. More Arabic language translators have been employed at the CNCA. There were 11 of them in April 2004⁶⁶ and 86 in November 2007. There have been many operations during which local radicals and immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East have been arrested. They arrived in Spain and were prosecuted for terrorism in their home countries. In addition, a number of terrorist cells with international links were broken up, including the cell preparing the attack on the Supreme Court in Madrid (October 2004). There was a real threat emanating from the activity of radicals in prisons, who sought to recruit Muslims there to carry out terrorist activities after leaving prison. The police operation code-named 'NOVA' was intended to counter these tendencies. After the Madrid attacks, much Muslim extremist activity was concentrated in Catalonia. By 2009, 14 anti-terrorist operations had been carried out there, most of them in and around Barcelona, including 'Tiger' ('Tigris'), 'Jackal' ('Chacal') or 'Chameleon' ('Camaleon')⁶⁷. In its 10 years of activity, the CNCA carried out more than 50 operations in Spain against international terrorist structures and loose cells without wider organisational links. During this time, more than 500 people were arrested, but only 14% of them were convicted,

⁶⁵ K. Izak, *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów islamistycznych...*, p. 469.

⁶⁶ S. Kosmyńska, *Święta wojna w Al-Andalus. Przeobrażenia aktywności dżihadystycznych komórek terrorystycznych w Hiszpanii w latach 1995–2012* (Eng. *The Holy War in Al-Andalus. The transformation of jihadist terrorist cell activity in Spain between 1995 and 2012*), Łódź 2015, p. 304.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 259, 262.

the rest were released for lack of evidence⁶⁸. The authorities did, however, allow Islamic radicals to hold meetings attended by several thousand people each. At least 10 Salafist congresses were held in Spain in 2010, attended by between 2,000 and 3,000 people. Two years earlier, only one such congress had been held⁶⁹. The policy of multiculturalism, tolerating and even supporting the activities of religious minorities, promoted by the authorities, who downplayed the funding of organisations, mosques and Muslim centres from abroad, clashed with the actions of the secret services, which had increasing problems with the surveillance of radical circles.

Following ETA's announcement in 2011 that it had ceased its armed activities, the special services focused on countering Islamic terrorism and countering Muslim extremism, which correlated in time with the creation of a new jihadist battle front in Iraq and Syria. As the threat from terrorists linked to the Islamic State increased in mid-October 2014 the CNCA was merged with the Intelligence Centre against Organised Crime (Centro de Inteligencia contra el Crimen Organizado, CICO) to form the Intelligence Centre against Terrorism and Organised Crime (Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado, CITCO). The aim of the merger was to optimise efforts and make better use of the economic resources of both agencies in the face of growing threats and links between extremists, terrorist organisations and organised crime. In addition to the already mentioned activities carried out by the CNCA, CITCO's tasks include providing the FCSE with relevant information and forecasts, coordinating their activities, drawing up annual reports on organised crime, terrorism and radicalism in Spain and periodically assessing the threat in these areas. It is the responsibility of the CITCO to compile and distribute statistics related to the above matters, as well as to liaise with the relevant institutions in Brussels and similar bodies in EU member states. A special team has been created to monitor online activities. It was on the web that 80% of jihadists were recruited to take part in the fighting in Iraq and Syria. It has also embarked on a programme of deradicalisation of communities of young Muslims⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 310.

⁶⁹ J. Loredo, *Marzenie o Al Andalus* (Eng. The dream of Al-Andalus), "Nasz Dziennik", 19 XI 2011.

⁷⁰ *Interior cesa al jefe del CITCO y nombra a un comisario al frente del Gabinete de Estudios y Coordinación*, elDiario.es, 7 VII 2018, https://www.eldiario.es/politica/interior-citco-gabinete-estudios-coordinacion_1_2035094.html [accessed: 7 VII 2018].

The aim of the Spanish services was to intervene at the earliest possible stage to prevent attacks. In the case of Islamist terrorists, this was successful for 13 years (with varying degrees of success in the case of ETA, which last carried out an attack in 2009). A 2016 report by the Spanish Interior Ministry noted that the number of messages sent by jihadists calling on so-called 'lone wolves' to carry out attacks on Spain and to 'liberate' cities such as Toledo, Córdoba and Seville had doubled compared to previous years⁷¹. It became obvious that the jihadists would seek to carry out further attacks. Catalonia was a realistic target. As early as October 2007, the CIA handed over a report to the authorities in Madrid, which showed that the autonomous region of Catalonia had turned into an operational and recruitment base for terrorists. There were even alarming claims that Catalonia had become the new centre of global jihad⁷². It should not be forgotten that the Islamic State's call for all terrorist activities in Europe found fertile ground in Spain, where the influx of illegal immigrants from Africa had increased and local Muslims were becoming heavily radicalised. When in 2016 the EU concluded an agreement with Turkey on the return of illegal migrants, migrant routes from Libya and Tunisia to Italy and from Morocco through the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain became important. Nevertheless, the Spanish service has been recognised as one of the most effective in Europe when it comes to detecting terrorists, and Spanish counter-terrorism experts have become known as the best in the world. In recognition of their merits, a meeting of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee was held in Madrid in July 2015⁷³. This image was not spoilt by the attack in Barcelona two years later.

On 17 and 18 August 2017 Catalonia became the target of attacks by jihadists from Ripoll. At the time, 16 people were killed and 128 injured⁷⁴.

⁷¹ J. Badcock, *The Long Shadow of al-Andalus. Spain is on the periphery of Europe, but central to modern jihad*, Foreign Policy, 21 VIII 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/21/the-long-shadow-of-al-andalus-spain-islamic-state-terrorism-al-qaeda/> [accessed: 21 VIII 2017].

⁷² K. Haahr, *The Growth of Militant Islamist Micro-Diaspora Communities*, "CTC Sentinel" 2008, vol. 1, no. 4, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss4-Art6.pdf> [accessed: 18 IV 2008].

⁷³ *Madryt: posiedzenie Komitetu Antyterrorystycznego ONZ* (Eng. Madrid: meeting of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee), Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 27 VII 2015, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/885271,madryt-posiedzenie-komitetu-antyterrorystycznego-onz.html> [accessed: 27 VII 2015].

⁷⁴ *Hiszpania: Rozpoczął się proces dżihadysty zatrzymanego w Warszawie* (Eng. Spain: Trial of jihadist detained in Warsaw begins), Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 11 VI 2018,

In addition, seven terrorists were killed by the police during or shortly after the attacks and three were brought to justice. The terrorists attacked in Barcelona and Cambrils using cars and knives. They intended the attack to take a very different course. The change of plans was prompted by an explosion at the terrorists' base in Alcanar, which killed the radical imam Abdelbaki (Abdel Baki) As-Satty, the initiator of the attack, and the terrorist preparing the explosive⁷⁵. One of the terrorists was wounded. The investigation revealed that the original plan of the bombers was to place 200 kg of an explosive made from triacetone triperoxide (TATP), also known as the mother of Satan, in the van, laden with gas cylinders to increase the force of the explosion. The target was probably the Sagrada Família. Many opinions expressed the thesis that the attack could have been thwarted if it had not been for the arrogance of the Catalan authorities, who disregarded warnings and sabotaged cooperation with the state's security forces by refusing to provide Madrid with vital information about the jihadists⁷⁶. They have also refused to erect concrete barriers at the entrance to the La Rambla promenade to prevent cars from entering it. This is where the speeding car killed the most people. The safety of Barcelona's residents and tourists has been subordinated to local politicians, who have committed numerous omissions in the name of Catalonia's policy of independence from Spain, one element of which

<https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/1132741,proces-dzihadysty-zatrzymanego-w-warszawie.html> [accessed: 11 VI 2018].

⁷⁵ Abdelbaki As-Satty was a Moroccan national. In 2014, a court ordered his expulsion from Spain, shortly after he had finished serving his sentence for drug trafficking. Despite this decision, As-Satty remained in Spain; moreover, in 2015, a higher court ordered his expulsion to be revoked. He was therefore able to stay in Spain legally. He settled in the Catalan town of Ripoll, where he preached radical sermons, taught and recruited to fight on the side of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria at a local mosque until June 2017. He himself was recruited while in prison, where he met Rashid Aglif, serving a sentence for complicity in the Madrid attacks of 11 March 2004. This shows the shortcomings of the preventive work of the penitentiary service, above all the insufficient control of the relationships that convicts established in prisons. The system was sealed in autumn 2018. See: J. Dziedzina, *Imam kazał zabijać* (Eng. Imam ordered to kill), *gość.pl*, 7 IX 2017, <https://www.gosc.pl/doc/4166327.Imam-kazal-zabijac> [accessed: 7 IX 2017].

⁷⁶ *Zamachy terrorystyczne w Hiszpanii. Można było im zapobiec* (Eng. Terrorist attacks in Spain. They could have been prevented), *Magazyn TVN24*, <https://archiwum.tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/114/tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/willa-na-uboczu-matka-szatana-i-plan-a-zamach-na-niespotykana-skale,114,2082.html> [accessed: 22 VIII 2017].

was to rally Muslim sympathies ahead of the secession referendum on 1 October 2017⁷⁷.

A week after the events in Catalonia, the Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack and warned of more attacks. In a publicised video, Muhammad Jasin Ahram Pérez, a Spanish citizen who travelled to Syria in 2014, threatened: *Spanish Christians, do not forget the Muslim blood that was shed and the Spanish Inquisition. We will avenge the massacres you have carried out and those you are carrying out now against the Islamic State. Al-Andalus will once again be what it was, the land of the caliphate*⁷⁸. Faced with new challenges, Spain's then Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría gave the CNI an additional €20 million for counter-terrorism activities and the hiring of 600 new agents. Legal reforms were introduced in the justice system that made it easier to bring suspects to justice. Until now, they could be detained, questioned and, if insufficient evidence was found of the suspects' guilt, they had to be released⁷⁹. Following the Barcelona terrorist attack, the Spanish services supported by the CNI conducted an eighteen-month covert operation codenamed 'Alexandra'. It culminated in the arrest of 17 people in January 2019. Among them were five Algerian, Libyan and Iraqi nationals. They were accused of belonging to the Islamic State. In addition, operations 'Minerva' and 'Neptune' were carried out to track the travel routes of terrorists returning from the combat zones in Iraq and Syria after the fall of the Islamic State. They usually arrived in Spain mixed in with groups of African migrants, crossing the Strait of Gibraltar in boats. It also emerged that the prisoner deradicalisation programme introduced in 2014 was ineffective. Two years after its introduction, the number of Muslim radicals in Spanish prisons was almost 100, double the number before the programme began. In October 2018, it was revealed that a total of 25 people in 17 prisons housing Islamic extremists were involved in the radicalisation process, including some convicted of the Madrid attack in March 2004, including

⁷⁷ K. Izak, *Sieć ekstremistów religijnych i politycznych. Sojusznicy i wrogowie* (Eng. A network of religious and political extremists. Allies and enemies), "The Internal Security Review" 2019, no. 21, p. 107; *Zamachy terrorystyczne w Hiszpanii...*

⁷⁸ J. Martín-Arroyo, *El Cordobés, the Spanish face of Islamic State*, El País, 25 VIII 2017, https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2017/08/25/inenglish/1503659430_853709.html [accessed: 25 VIII 2017].

⁷⁹ T. Skowronek, *Hiszpania walczy ze światowym terroryzmem* (Eng. Spain fights global terrorism), "Przegląd" 2019, no. 46, p. 29.

Al-Haski. Of this group, as many as 21 were in solitary confinement. Despite this, they carried out their propaganda activities by means of letters handed over to other prisoners on their way out, and with the participation of their family members. In February 2018, the Spanish government launched a new programme to counter the radicalisation of prisoners. As part of its implementation, all officers in prison were required to observe the behaviour of inmates who profess Islam on a daily basis, as well as those deemed susceptible to radicalisation. There were a total of 140 jihadists in 28 prisons in October 2018, some of whom are already at large⁸⁰.

The year 2018 was critical for Spanish services due to the unprecedented number of irregular migrants who arrived from Morocco, crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. More than 57,500 migrants out of a total of more than 64,000 arrived through this route at the time, more than a fourfold increase compared to 2017⁸¹. For the most part, they did not have any identity documents in order to hinder possible extradition. The phenomenon of illegal migration to Spain is accompanied by the trafficking of false documents and identity theft. Spain is at the forefront of EU countries in this practice⁸². This crime enables immigrants to legalise their stay with a false identity, which poses an additional challenge for the secret services. Among others, Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary, known as the Islamic State rapper, who has posted numerous threats against Western countries on social media, has reached Spain via this route⁸³.

Moroccan authorities are using the migratory pressure on Spain's borders for political and economic purposes, making further demands and demanding concessions from Madrid. On 22 May 2021, Rabat authorities

⁸⁰ A. Kłos, *Fikcja walki z radykalizmem* (Eng. The fiction of the fight against radicalism), "Gazeta Polska Codziennie", 13 X 2018; "El Mundo": *zamachowcy z Madrytu radykalizowali młodych muzułmanów w więzieniach* (Eng. 'El Mundo': Madrid bombers radicalised young Muslims in prison), TVN24, 11 X 2018, <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/zamachowcy-z-madrytu-radykalizowali-młodych-muzułmanow-w-wiezieniach-ra875396-2384538> [accessed: 11 X 2018].

⁸¹ K. Izak, *Hiszpania i Francja walczą z nielegalną imigracją i fałszerstwami dokumentów* (Eng. Spain and France fight illegal immigration and document forgery), "Człowiek i Dokumenty" 2021, no. 62, p. 68.

⁸² Ibid., p. 69.

⁸³ K. Izak, *Oryginalne paszporty w rękach terrorystów i oszustów* (Eng. Original passports in the hands of terrorists and fraudsters), "Człowiek i Dokumenty" 2019, no. 54, p. 51; J. Wójcik, "Raper ISIS" wrócił do Europy po azyl (Eng. "ISIS rapper" returned to Europe for asylum), euroislam.pl, 20 V 2020, <https://euroislam.pl/rapper-isis-do-europy-powrocil-jako-szukajacy-azylu/> [accessed: 20 V 2020].

called on Spain to launch an investigation into the arrival of seventy-three-year-old Brahim Ghali, leader of the Polisario Front, for medical treatment in the country. Madrid's decision to admit Ghali without informing Rabat strained relations between the two countries and caused Moroccan border guards to loosen their border protection. This has encouraged migrants camped at the border to cross it. Within 35 hours, more than 8,000 migrants, including more than 2,000 minors, had arrived in Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in Morocco⁸⁴.

Between 2020 and 2027, the EU will pay Rabat €3.5 billion to stop its own citizens from crossing Morocco's land and sea borders with Spain. It follows that the agreement does not cover migrants from other African countries who continue to push across the Spanish border⁸⁵. Their destination is also the Canary Islands. In 2020, 23,000 migrants arrived here, ten times more than the previous year. This direction is also being exploited by Rabat, loosening control of the coast. The aim is to get Spain to recognise Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara and gain the greatest access to the underwater deposits of tellurite, a rare semi-metal ore found off the coast of the Canary Islands⁸⁶.

Another factor negatively affecting security in Spain is the situation in Catalonia, where separatist aspirations continue unabated. In October, violent demonstrations are held there to mark the anniversary of the 2017 independence referendum. In 2019, the anniversary demonstration in Barcelona turned into violent riots and a general strike in Catalonia, infringing the politics of the region and Spain as a whole as never before. It should be noted that the Catalan authorities, home to 1/4 of Spain's total Muslim population, have their own migration policy.

Between 2019 and 2023, Spanish services managed to foil several major attacks, including during a Catholic procession in Seville in April 2019. Several terrorist incidents were also reported, including in January 2023. A Moroccan man attacked people in two churches in Algeciras. One

⁸⁴ K. Izak, *Migranci jako element nacisku w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Dokumenty dowodem przestępczej działalności państw* (Eng. Migrants as an element of pressure in international relations. Documents evidence of criminal activities of states), "Człowiek i Dokumenty" 2021, no. 63, p. 59.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ G. Lindenberg, *Czy Maroko gra z Hiszpanią imigrantami?* (Eng. Is Morocco playing migrants with Spain?), euroislam.pl, 14 II 2021, <https://euroislam.pl/czy-maroko-gra-z-hiszpania-imigrantami/> [accessed: 14 II 2021].

person was killed and four were injured. The perpetrator was arrested as he entered a third church. In contrast, 11 people were injured in Madrid in August 2023, following an attack by unidentified assailants armed with knives. Spain currently has a terrorist threat level four on a five-step scale. Madrid has not changed its threat level since 2015 after the terrorist attacks in Paris⁸⁷.

Summary

Twenty years after the terrorist attack in Madrid, Spain is struggling with illegal immigration of people from Africa, nationalist movements and Islamic extremism and terrorism. The author does not find a clear answer to the question of whether the country has become more secure since 2004. One might think so, given the closure of the terrorist activities of the Basque separatists of ETA and the self-dissolution of that organisation, as well as after the successes of the Spanish services in eliminating further terrorist cells and arresting extremists. Behind these achievements of the counter-terrorism services, however, there are large numbers of arrests, which cannot give cause for optimism, as they have remained high for years with periodic downward trends. This indicates that, despite efforts, the level of radicalisation of Muslims is not decreasing, which poses a threat to the country's security. The reason for this is illegal migration from Morocco and Algeria and other Muslim countries. For the Arabs, Spain is a unique country in Europe, as it represents in their minds a mythologised Al-Andalus, *dar of al-islam* (the land of Islam) of their ancestors. After the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 in the USA, and in the face of exponentially increasing migration from Muslim countries, the topic of Islam in Spain became the subject of debate, press articles and academic studies. In 2001, there were 324 000 foreigners of the Islamic faith living in Spain⁸⁸. The statistics were complemented by a large group of converts to Islam, especially in Andalusia, estimated at 20,000-25,000 members, and illegal Muslim immigrants, who made the estimated number of followers

⁸⁷ La Policía Nacional advierte: «estamos en nivel 4 de alerta terrorista». Estas son las claves, Hipertextual, 30 V 2023, <https://hipertextual.com/2023/05/la-policia-nacional-advierte-estamos-en-nivel-4-de-alerta-terrorista-estas-son-las-claves> [accessed: 30 V 2023].

⁸⁸ R. Stryjewski, *Muzułmanie w Hiszpanii* (Eng. Muslims in Spain), in: *Muzułmanie w Europie* (Eng. Muslims in Europe), A. Parzymies (ed.), Warszawa 2005, p. 466.

of Islam in Spain around 600,000⁸⁹. There are now 2,350,000 of them living there, including more than 640,000 in Catalonia, which is four times as many as 20 years earlier⁹⁰.

Young people arriving in Spain from Muslim countries bring their own ideas and values, and these in recent years have been oriented towards increased religiosity and a desire for more and more religious participation in political life⁹¹. From there it is only a step to claims and struggles for concessions and privileges. Depending on who is in power in Madrid - the Socialists or the right-wing Popular Party - the state's migration policy is tightening or loosening. The same applies to the attitude towards the separatist aspirations of Catalonia and Basque and the strengthening of the country's territorial unity. Between 2021 and 2023, the Madrid authorities have succeeded in quietening down the problems with Catalonia, which has translated into an easing of the political dispute and a reduction of interest in the region's authorities in Barcelona. This has not been the case for the secret services, which, unable to count on the cooperation of the Catalan police Mossos d'Esquadra, have had to engage their own forces and resources to the surveillance of the Muslim communities there, which enjoy a high degree of autonomy thanks to the Barcelona authorities.

Spanish secret services fighting religious terrorism and political extremism therefore have no easy task. In the near future, they will face even more serious challenges from the rapidly growing number of Muslims, including radicals and conservative Islamists closed to integration with the Christian majority. Indeed, this growing number translates into their social demands and political aspirations. In 2018, Muslims announced the formation of their own parties along the lines of Morocco's Justice and Development Party (Hizb al-Adala wa at-Tanmijja), Justice and Charity Movement (Al-Adl wa al-Ihsan) and Tunisia's Renaissance Party (Hizb an-Nahda), all derived from the Muslim Brotherhood movement

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ R. Fernández, *Número total de musulmanes por comunidad autónoma de España en 2022*, Statista, 11 IV 2023, <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/552893/musulmanes-en-espana-por-comunidad-autonoma/> [accessed: 11 IV 2023].

⁹¹ J. Wójcik, *Czy polityczny islam wraca na Bliski Wschód?* (Eng. Is political Islam making a comeback in the Middle East?), euroislam.pl, 22 VIII 2023, <https://euroislam.pl/czy-polityczny-islam-wraca-na-bliski-wschod/> [accessed: 22 VIII 2023].

(Al-Ichwan al-Muslimin)⁹². It is to be hoped that an increase in the forces and resources devoted to the activities of the Spanish secret services and good cooperation with their counterparts in Morocco, regardless of the political turmoil between Madrid and Rabat, will make it possible to effectively counter threats to Spain's anti-terrorist security.

Bibliography

Brylew M., *Irak 2006–2012. Stabilizacja czy konflikt?* (Eng. Iraq 2006–2012. Stabilisation or conflict?), Toruń 2013.

Cieszek J., *Tragedia w Madrycie, 11–14 marca 2004 roku* (Eng. Tragedy in Madrid, 11–14 March 2004), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 39–60.

Domejko-Kozera P., *Polityka bezpieczeństwa w Hiszpanii w latach 1992–2004* (Eng. Security policy in Spain 1992–2004), Warszawa 2006.

Gonzalez Esteban J.L., *Kronika 11 marca: terroryzm i polityczna zmiana w Hiszpanii* (Eng. Chronicle 11 March: terrorism and political change in Spain), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 61–72.

Grześkowiak S., *Poczet islamskich ideologów i ekstremistów* (Eng. Islamic ideologues and extremists), Warszawa 2023.

Izak K., *Hiszpania i Francja walczą z nielegalną imigracją i fałszerstwami dokumentów* (Eng. Spain and France fight illegal immigration and document forgery), "Człowiek i Dokumenty" 2021, no. 62, pp. 67–75.

Izak K., *Leksykon organizacji i ruchów islamistycznych* (Eng. Lexicon of Islamist organisations and movements), Warszawa 2014.

Izak K., *Migranci jako element nacisku w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Dokumenty dowodem przestępczej działalności państw* (Eng. Migrants as an element of pressure in international relations. Documents evidence of criminal activities of states), "Człowiek i Dokumenty" 2021, no. 63, pp. 56–65.

⁹² K. Izak, *Sieć ekstremistów...*, p. 108.

Izak K., *Oryginalne paszporty w rękach terrorystów i oszustów* (Eng. Original passports in the hands of terrorists and fraudsters), "Człowiek i Dokumenty" 2019, no. 54, pp. 44–55.

Izak K., *Sieć ekstremistów religijnych i politycznych. Sojusznicy i wrogowie* (Eng. A network of religious and political extremists. Allies and enemies), "Internal Security Review" 2019, no. 21, pp. 96–134.

Jakubowska Z., *Madryt 11 marca* (Eng. Madrid 11 March), Warszawa 2005.

Kłos A., *Fikcja walki z radykalizmem* (Eng. The fiction of the fight against radicalism), "Gazeta Polska Codziennie", 13 X 2018.

Kosmynka S., *Święta wojna w Al-Andalus. Przeobrażenia aktywności dżihadystycznych komórek terrorystycznych w Hiszpanii w latach 1995–2012* (Eng. The Holy War in Al-Andalus. The transformation of jihadist terrorist cell activity in Spain between 1995 and 2012), Łódź 2015.

Loredo J., *Marzenie o Al Andalus* (Eng. The dream of Al-Andalus), "Nasz Dziennik", 19 XI 2011.

Łódzki B., *Reakcja polskich mediów masowych na atak terrorystyczny w Madrycie 11 marca 2004 r.* (Eng. Reaction of the Polish mass media to the terrorist attack in Madrid on 11 March 2004), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 123–137.

Pludowski T., *Reakcje prasy amerykańskiej na madrycki atak terrorystyczny z 11 marca 2004 r.* (Eng. U.S. press reactions to the Madrid terrorist attack of 11 March 2004), in: *Hiszpania: Media masowe i wybory w obliczu terroryzmu* (Eng. Spain: Mass media and elections in the face of terrorism), B. Dobek-Ostrowska, M. Kuś (eds.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 140–159.

Reinares F., *Al-Qaeda's Revenge. The 2004 Madrid Train Bombing*, New York 2016.

Skowronek T., *Hiszpania walczy ze światowym terroryzmem* (Eng. Spain fights global terrorism), "Przegląd" 2019, no. 46, pp. 28–30.

Stryjewski R., *Muzułmanie w Hiszpanii* (Eng. Muslims in Spain), in: *Muzułmanie w Europie* (Eng. Muslims in Europe), A. Parzymies (ed.), Warszawa 2005, pp. 453–493.

Taracha C., *Wybory w cieniu zamachu. Kilka uwag na temat wydarzeń z marca 2004 roku w Madrycie* (Eng. Elections in the shadow of an attack. Some comments on the events of March 2004 in Madrid), in: *Terroryzm wczoraj i dziś. Wybrane problemy* (Eng. Terrorism yesterday and today. Selected issues), P. de la Fuente, W. Gizicki, C. Taracha (eds.), Lublin 2015, pp. 77–85.

Tryc-Ostrowska M., *Kontrowersyjny wyrok za zamachy w Madrycie* (Eng. Controversial sentence for Madrid attacks), "Rzeczpospolita", 2 XI 2007.

Wejksznier A., *Ewolucja terroryzmu motywowanego ideologią religijną na przykładzie salafickiego ruchu globalnego dżihadu* (Eng. The evolution of terrorism motivated by religious ideology as exemplified by the Salafist global jihad movement), Poznań 2010.

Internet sources

Actividad Terrorista de ETA 2004, Ministerio del Interior, <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2005/jan/mirbal2004acteta.pdf> [accessed: 12 III 2005].

Atentados Terroristas del Dia 11 del Marzo de 2004 de Madrid, Juzgado Central de Instruccion N° 6 Audiencia Nacional Madrid, <https://e00-elmundo.uecdn.es/documentos/2006/04/11/auto11m/01.pdf> [accessed: 11 IV 2006].

Badcock J., *The Long Shadow of al-Andalus. Spain is on the periphery of Europe, but central to modern jihad*, Foreign Policy, 21 VIII 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/21/the-long-shadow-of-al-andalus-spain-islamic-state-terrorism-al-qaeda/> [accessed: 21 VIII 2017].

Becares R., Cernuda O., *Cuatro terroristas islámicos se inmolan en un piso de Leganés y matan a un agente de policía*, elmundo.es, 4 IV 2004, <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/04/03/enespecial/1081016920.html> [accessed: 4 IV 2004].

Catalán M., *Prensa, verdad y terrorismo: la lección política del 14-M*, "El Argonauta Español" 2005, no. 2. <https://doi.org/10.4000/argonauta.1191> [accessed: 26 VIII 2023].

Cedeira B., *La víctima que entró en coma el 11M hasta morir 10 años después*, El Español, 11 III 2017, https://www.elespanol.com/reportajes/20170310/199730525_0.html [accessed: 11 III 2017].

Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista CNCA, La Pagina de ASR, <https://intelpage.info/centro-nacional-de-coordinacion-antiterrorista.html> [accessed: 12 XII 2015].

Dziedzina J., *Imam kazał zabijać* (Eng. Imam ordered to kill), gość.pl, 7 IX 2017, <https://www.gosc.pl/doc/4166327.Imam-kazal-zabijac> [accessed: 7 IX 2017].

El final del principio en la investigación del 11-M, elmundo.es, 1 XI 2007, <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2007/11/01/espana/1193885319.html> [accessed: 1 XI 2007].

„El Mundo”: *zamachowcy z Madrytu radykalizowali młodych muzułmanów w więzieniach* (Eng. ‘El Mundo’: Madrid bombers radicalised young Muslims in prison), TVN24, 11 X 2018, <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/zamachowcy-z-madrytu-radykalizowali-mlodych-musulmanow-w-wiezieniach-ra875396-2384538> [accessed: 11 X 2018].

ETA pretendía volar la estación de Chamartín con un „tren bomba” y provocar una masacre, ABC España, 26 XII 2003, https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-pretendia-volar-estacion-chamartin-tren-bomba-y-provocar-masacre-200312260300-228547_noticia.html [accessed: 26 XII 2003].

Fernández H.A., *Does al-Qaeda have a global strategy?*, Elcano Royal Institute, 4 V 2004, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/does-al-qaeda-have-a-global-strategy/> [accessed: 6 V 2004].

Fernández R., *Número total de musulmanes por comunidad autónoma de España en 2022*, Statista, 11 IV 2023, <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/552893/musulmanes-en-espana-por-comunidad-autonoma/> [accessed: 11 IV 2023].

Fernando Reinares, *experto en terrorismo internacional, advierte: “Al Qaeda está hoy más extendida de lo que ha estado nunca”*, Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, <https://www.uimp.es/actualidad-uimp/fernando-reinare-experto-terrorismo-internacional.html> [accessed: 21 VI 2021].

Gunaratna R., *Spain: An Al Qaeda Hub?*, “UNISCI Discussion Papers” 2004, no. 5, <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/767/76712467002.pdf> [accessed: 22 II 2014].

Haahr K., *The Growth of Militant Islamist Micro-Diaspora Communities*, “CTC Sentinel” 2008, vol. 1, no. 4, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-growth-of-militant-islamist-micro-diaspora-communities-observations-from-spain/> [accessed: 18 IV 2008].

Hernández A., *11M: quién fue el autor intelectual y otras claves que plantea el documental de Netflix sobre el mayor atentado yihadista en Europa*, BBC, 11 III 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-60693476> [accessed: 11 III 2022].

Hiszpania: Rozpoczął się proces dżihadysty zatrzymanego w Warszawie (Eng. Spain: Trial of jihadist detained in Warsaw begins), Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 11 VI 2018, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/1132741,proces-dzihadysty-zatrzymanego-w-warszawie.html> [accessed: 11 VI 2018].

Hiszpański parlament zgodził się na wysłanie żołnierzy do Iraku (Eng. Spanish parliament agrees to send troops to Iraq), Wirtualna Polska, 22 X 2014, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/hiszpanski-parlament-zgodzil-sie-na-wyslanie-zolnierzy-do-iraku-6027730872366209a> [accessed: 22 X 2014].

Interior cesa al jefe del CITCO y nombra a un comisario al frente del Gabinete de Estudios y Coordinación, elDiario.es, 7 VII 2018, https://www.eldiario.es/politica/interior-citco-gabinete-estudios-coordinacion_1_2035094.html [accessed: 7 VII 2018].

La policía eleva a siete los terroristas muertos en Leganés, Cadenaser, 7 IV 2004, https://cadenaser.com/ser/2004/04/07/espana/1081295423_850215.html [accessed: 7 IV 2004].

La Policía Nacional advierte: «estamos en nivel 4 de alerta terrorista». Estas son las claves, Hipertextual, 30 V 2023, <https://hipertextual.com/2023/05/la-policia-nacional-advierte-estamos-en-nivel-4-de-alerta-terrorista-estas-son-las-claves> [accessed: 30 V 2023].

Lindenberg G., *Czy Maroko gra z Hiszpanią imigrantami?* (Eng. Is Morocco playing migrants with Spain?), euroislam.pl, 14 II 2021, <https://euroislam.pl/czy-maroko-gra-z-hiszpania-imigrantami/> [accessed: 14 II 2021].

Llega a España “El Egipto” para ser juzgado por el 11-M, 20 minutos, 17 XI 2006, <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/173755/0/egipcion/11-m/italia/> [accessed: 17 XI 2006].

Los terroristas del 11-M se inmolan y matan a un geo al volar su «piso franco» en Leganés, ABC España, 4 IV 2004, https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-terroristas-inmolan-y-matan-volar-piso-franco-leganes-200404040300-962802830594_noticia.html [accessed: 4 IV 2004].

Maclean W., *New evidence of Qaeda tie to Madrid blast: expert*, Reuters, 13 I 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-security-spain-qaeda-id-CATRE60B52020100112> [accessed: 13 I 2010].

Madrid bombings ‘probably al Qaeda’, Stuff, 21 I 2010, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/vl-push/world/3226277/Madrid-bombingsprobably-al-Qaeda> [accessed: 21 I 2010].

Madryt: posiedzenie Komitetu Antyterrorystycznego ONZ (Eng. Madrid: meeting of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee), Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 27 VII 2015, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/885271,madryt-posiedzenie-komitetu-antyterrorystycznego-onz.html> [accessed: 27 VII 2015].

Martin-Arroyo J., *El Córdoba, the Spanish face of Islamic State*, El País, 25 VIII 2017, https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2017/08/25/inenglish/1503659430_853709.html [accessed: 25 VIII 2017].

Martin Plaza A., *Los atentados del 11M que sacudieron España*, RTVE, 11 III 2014, <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20140311/atentados-del-11m-sacudieron-espana/893543.shtml> [accessed: 11 III 2014].

Mroczek A., *Zamach w Madrycie 11 III 2004 – minuta po minucie* (Eng. Madrid attack 11 III 2004 - minute by minute), terroryzm.com, 25 IX 2005, <http://www.terroryzm.com/zamach-w-madrycie-11-iii-2004-minuta-po-minucie/> [accessed: 25 IX 2005].

Po pięciu latach koniec polskiej misji w Iraku (Eng. After five years, the end of the Polish mission in Iraq), money.pl, 29 X 2008, https://www.money.pl/archiwum/wiadomosci_agencyjne/pap/artykul/po;pieciu;latach;koniec;polskiej;misji;w;iraku,188,0,381372.html [accessed: 29 X 2008].

Reinares F., *The Evidence of Al-Qa`ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack*, "CTC Sentinel" 2012, vol. 5, no. 3, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-evidence-of-al-qaidas-role-in-the-2004-madrid-attack/> [accessed: 18 IV 2012].

Siedmiu hiszpańskich agentów zginęło w Iraku (Eng. Seven Spanish agents killed in Iraq), Wirtualna Polska, 29 XI 2003, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/siedmiu-hiszpańskich-agentow-zginelo-w-iraku-6036492925121665a> [accessed: 30 XI 2003].

The Terror Attacks in Madrid, Spain, 2004, Kamedo-report 90, Socialstyrelsen 2007, https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/artikelkatalog/ovrigt/2007-123-36_200712336.pdf [accessed: 11 III 2008].

What's Osama Talking About?, Slate, 8 X 2001, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2001/10/what-s-osama-talking-about.html> [accessed: 8 X 2001].

Wójcik J., *Czy polityczny islam wraca na Bliski Wschód?* (Eng. Is political Islam making a comeback in the Middle East?), euroislam.pl, 22 VIII 2023, <https://euroislam.pl/czy-polityczny-islam-wraca-na-bliski-wschod/> [accessed: 22 VIII 2023].

Wójcik J., *„Raper ISIS” wrócił do Europy po azyl* (Eng. “ISIS rapper” returned to Europe for asylum), euroislam.pl, 20 V 2020, <https://euroislam.pl/rapper-isis-do-euro-powrocil-jako-szukajacy-azylu/> [accessed: 20 V 2020].

Zamachy terrorystyczne w Hiszpanii. Można było im zapobiec (Eng. Terrorist attacks in Spain. They could have been prevented), Magazyn TVN24, <https://archiwum.tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/114/tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/willa-na-uboczu-matka-szatana-i-plan-a-zamach-na-niespotykana-skale%2C114%2C2082.html> [accessed: 22 VIII 2017].

Zamachy w Madrycie – odwet za Irak (Eng. Madrid attacks - retaliation for Iraq), Polskie Radio, 11 III 2014, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/106/246/Artykul/1071933%-2CZamachy-w-Madrycie---odwet-za-Irak> [accessed: 11 III 2014].

Zmarła czwórka Polaków rannych w Madrycie (Eng. Four Poles injured in Madrid died), Gazeta Wyborcza, 12 III 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091214225052/http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,1961962.html> [accessed: 12 III 2004].

Krzysztof Izak

Retired Internal Security Agency officer.

Contact: lizior3@wp.pl