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ANALYSIS

What the New Orleans terrorist attack means for Trump

The president-elect's in-tray will be dominated by Islamist jihadist groups and the increasingly volatile situation in Syria

NEW

Josie Ensor, US Correspondent

Wednesday January 01 2025, 8.00pm GMT, The Times



Donald Trump will be inaugurated in just over two weeks
CHENEY ORR/REUTERS

In the hours after the New Orleans attack, as the circumstances became clearer, the appointed deputy assistant to the president-elect posted a pointed message on social media.

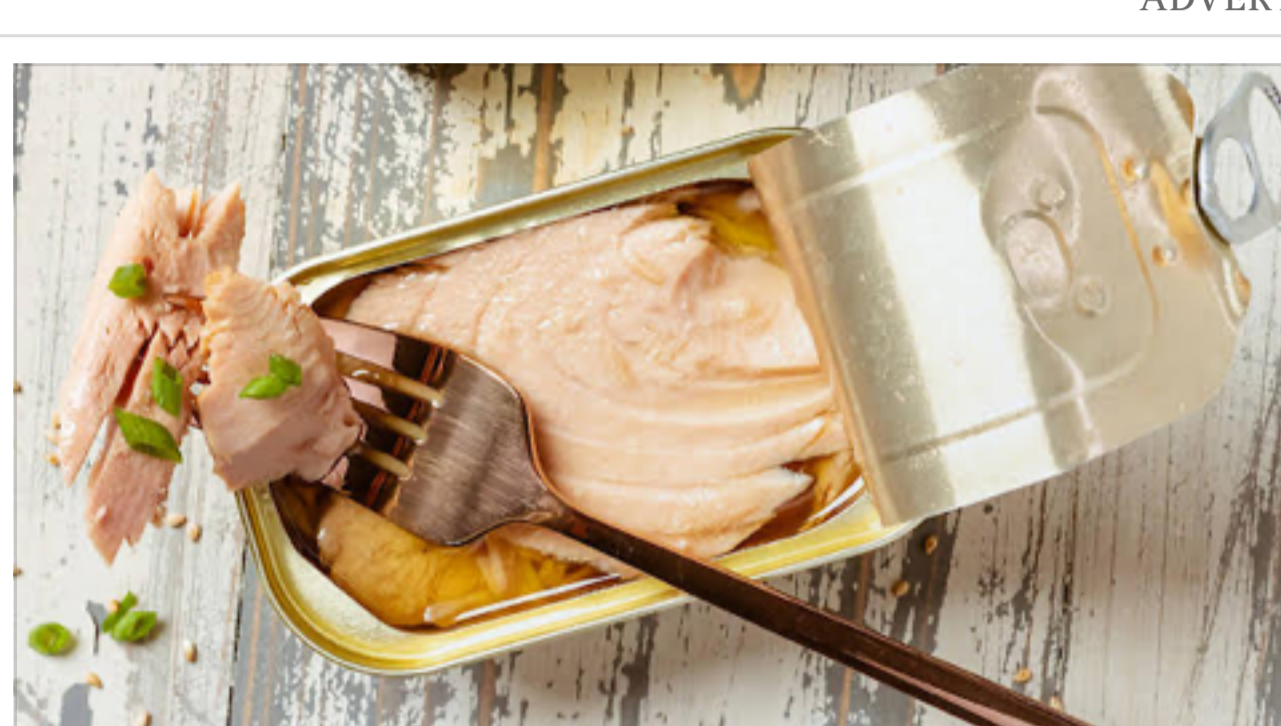
"You are on the front line of the war against terror," Sebastian Gorka, the British-American tasked by Donald Trump to lead counterterrorism efforts, told Americans.

It was not the expected New Year's message from an incoming administration that has so far largely focused on issues such as America's millions of illegal immigrants and tackling the threat from an increasingly dominant China.

• [New Orleans attack live: Attacker identified as Shamsud Din Jabbar](#)

Indeed, the terror threat landscape had until Wednesday looked far different than it did back in 2017, when [Trump](#) first took office. When he took over from Barack Obama, Islamic State was at its apex, controlling large areas of territory across Syria and Iraq and staging external operations in the West.

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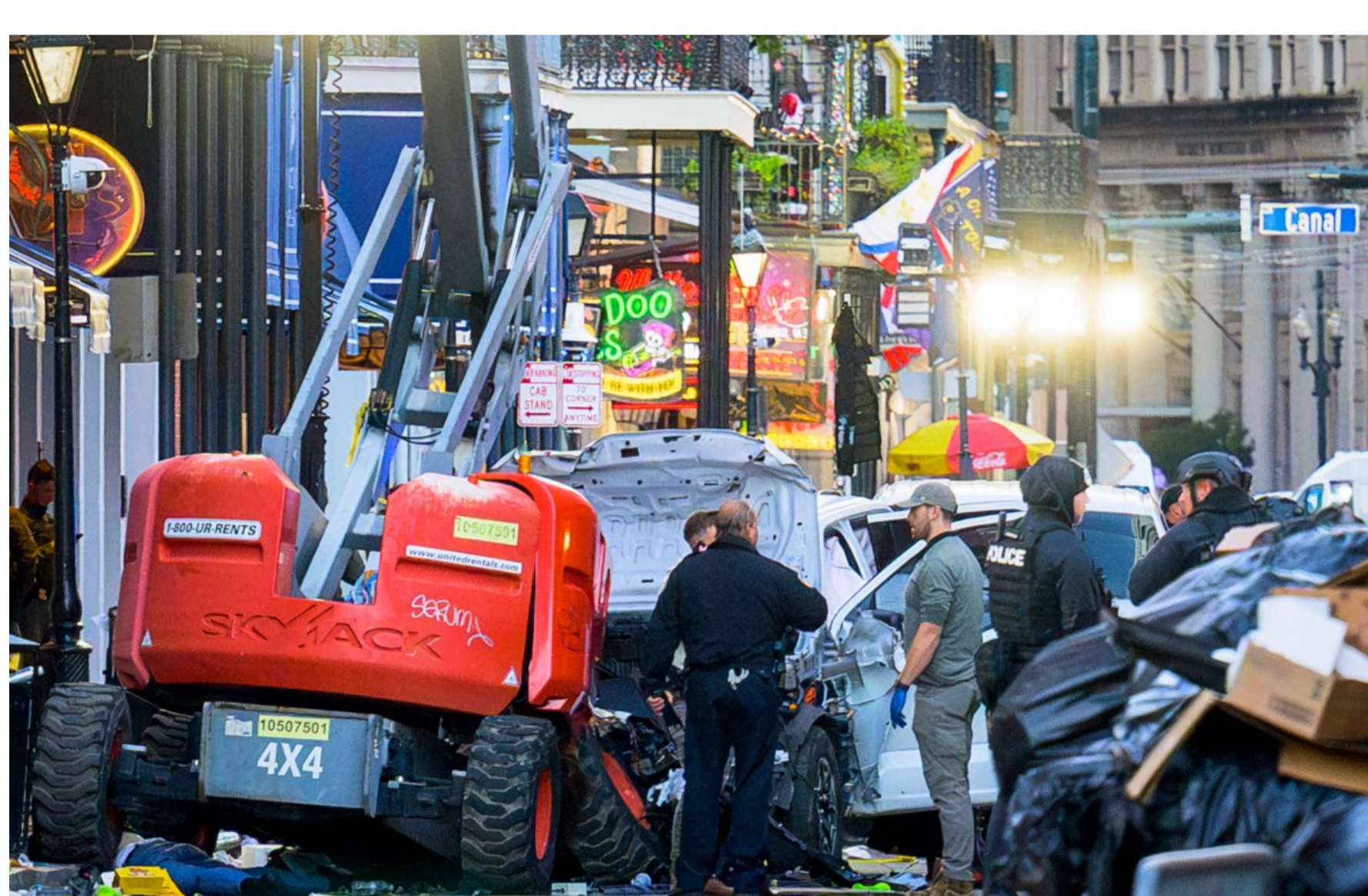


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At least ten people were killed when a truck drove into crowds in New Orleans
MATTHEW HINTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After its near-total defeat in 2019, the group has done little to trouble [President Biden](#) during his presidency. The terrorist attacks that hit the US and Europe with alarming regularity from 2014 until 2019 had largely stopped by the time he entered the White House.

But geopolitics have shifted in recent weeks and months, and whether Trump likes it or not, Islamist terrorism will be at the top of his in-tray.

Complicating matters for Trump, whose inauguration is in just over two weeks, will be the increasingly volatile situation in northeastern Syria, where Kurdish-led groups are [detaining thousands of Islamic State fighters](#) and their families captured on the battlefields.

• [Could Assad's downfall trigger Islamic State's comeback?](#)

Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, said last month that his "single biggest concern" was the return of the jihadist group. "Isis loves vacuums," he said. "What we see in [Syria](#) right now are areas that are basically ungoverned because of the fall of the Assad regime."

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AGE: 45-50	16:8	AGE: 51-55	12:12
BREAKFAST: 1. Oatmeal topped with sliced bananas, cinnamon, and a drizzle of honey. 2. Veggie omelette with spinach, tomatoes, and mushrooms.	SNACK: 1. Greek yogurt with sliced strawberries and a drizzle of honey. 2. Apple slices with almond butter.	BREAKFAST: 1. Scrambled eggs with spinach and mushrooms. 2. Toast with a slice of avocado and a drizzle of olive oil.	SNACK: 1. Greek yogurt with sliced strawberries and a drizzle of honey. 2. Apple slices with almond butter.
LUNCH: 1. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard. 2. Sweet potato and black bean bowl with avocado, salsa, and lime crema.	DINNER: 1. Grilled salmon with roasted vegetables and a drizzle of olive oil. 2. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.	LUNCH: 1. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard. 2. Sweet potato and black bean bowl with avocado, salsa, and lime crema.	DINNER: 1. Grilled salmon with roasted vegetables and a drizzle of olive oil. 2. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.

AGE: 56-60 **14:10**

BREAKFAST:
1. Oatmeal topped with sliced bananas, cinnamon, and a drizzle of honey.
2. Veggie omelette with spinach, tomatoes, and mushrooms.

SNACK:
1. Greek yogurt with sliced strawberries, cinnamon, and a drizzle of honey.
2. Trail mix with a mix of nuts, dried fruits, and dark chocolate.

LUNCH:
1. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.
2. Sweet potato and black bean bowl with avocado, salsa, and lime crema.

DINNER:
1. Grilled salmon with roasted vegetables and a drizzle of olive oil.
2. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.

AGE: 61-65 **12:12**

BREAKFAST:
1. Oatmeal topped with sliced bananas, cinnamon, and a drizzle of honey.
2. Veggie omelette with spinach, tomatoes, and mushrooms.

SNACK:
1. Greek yogurt with sliced strawberries and a drizzle of honey.
2. Apple slices with almond butter.

LUNCH:
1. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.
2. Sweet potato and black bean bowl with avocado, salsa, and lime crema.

DINNER:
1. Grilled salmon with roasted vegetables and a drizzle of olive oil.
2. Turkey and cheddar sandwich on whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.

Since [Bashar al-Assad's](#) fall, Trump has said that the US will do best to stay out of Syria, where several thousand American troops are stationed.



A heavy police presence remained in New Orleans
MATTHEW HINTON/AP

The US military is also scheduled to begin drawing down from Iraq, where 2,500 troops remain to combat Isis. As part of an agreement between Iraq and the US, the remaining troops will withdraw in two phases over the next two years, departing fully in 2026.

Terrorism experts have already said that any move to withdraw partially or completely from both countries – where jihadists have been slowly and patiently rebuilding without fanfare – would negatively affect the fight against Islamic State.

Trump has also promised a massive government overhaul that may seek to reduce the size and influence of the FBI, a decision that would almost certainly cripple counter-terrorism efforts.

"Trump has signalled a potentially lessened emphasis on counter-terrorism, relying on an 'over-the-horizon' approach to targeting terrorist groups and their leaders," Colin Clarke, an associate fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, wrote. "The Trump administration will need to come into the White House on day one or risk getting punched in the face."

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