Police capture man who held 15 hostage in Belgian supermarket

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The armed attacker, who took people hostage in a supermarket in the Forest suburb of Brussels, has given himself up to the police, authorities have confirmed.

Eyewitnesses told local channel VRT that the hostage-taking unfolded at about 7 p.m. local time, in a Carrefour chain store, after what they claimed was a robbery attempt gone wrong. Those who managed to leave the supermarket said the suspect was armed with a knife, and forced shoppers to lie down on the floor.

> BELGIQUE : Prise d'otages en cours dans un supermarché de Forest, à Bruxelles. 15 personnes sont retenues en otage par un individu armé. pic.twitter.com/qkqt5kuQ4N
> — Infos Françaises (@InfosFrancaises) October 18, 2016

The area was quickly sealed off, and a special team, supported by a helicopter, was sent to disarm the suspect.

Within minutes, the man, who appeared to have issued no demands, was apprehended.

> Prime foto della presa di ostaggi in un Carrefour di #Forest, in Belgio pic.twitter.com/GWnQpwjjjN
> — Giacomo Segantini (@JackSegantini) October 18, 2016

While there has been no suggestion that the hostage-taking was a terrorist attack, police and residents in the Belgian capital have been on high alert over potential incidents in public places, following a deadly airport and train station bombing in the city in March this year.

At dawn on Tuesday, security forces raided 15 houses across the country, taking four men into custody, who now face charges of abetting radical Islamist organizations.