



## Editor's Note

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# SMALL INCIDENTS WITH BIG IMPLICATIONS

The 2026 Winter Olympics are being held in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy with the games running from February 6 to February 22. In the lead up to the games saboteurs caused damage to rail infrastructure near the city of Bologna on Saturday morning, February 7, disrupting train journeys on the first full day of the Games, according to the Italian Transport Ministry.

There were three incidents at three different locations. Police said a cabin housing a track switch was set on fire in the early hours of the morning near the city of Pesaro. Several hours later, electrical cables used to detect train speeds were found cut in Bologna, while an explosive device was discovered by a track at a third location.

"These actions of unprecedented seriousness do not in any way tarnish Italy's image in the world, an image that the Games will make even more compelling and positive," said the ministry, which is headed by Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini. Deputy Prime Minister Salvini said authorities would identify and prosecute those responsible. "We will do everything to shut down the hideouts of these criminals, to hunt down and track these delinquents wherever they are hiding, to put them in prison and to counter those who defend them," he said in a post on X. "Long live the Olympics, a symbol of an Italy that builds, that inspires emotion, that does not give up."

Anarchist groups aiming to disrupt the "nationalistic" event and challenge security, are suspected of the actions. The authorities in Italy are conducting anti-terrorism investigations and increasing surveillance to prevent further or more dangerous attacks on this critical infrastructure.

After the attacks, an anarchist group did claim responsibility for three acts of sabotage targeting railway lines in Italy, the Italian media reported. A message was published on a blog called "Sottobosko. noblogs," with a headline "Fire to the Olympics," and said that three railway lines had been sabotaged and blocked.

Rail networks are highlighted as difficult to fully secure, making them a prime

target for decentralized, "low-tech" attacks such as these. Rail is designed for public convenience at stations and trains are accessible to large crowds, making them attractive targets for terrorism or disruptions. Modernization has introduced interconnected, IT-based signaling and control systems that are vulnerable to hacking and sabotage.

Protecting critical infrastructure like rail systems requires large capital investment to maintain and secure. These factors mean that protecting rail is a constant balancing act between maintaining open, efficient operations and securing a massive, exposed and crucial transportation network.

According to a paper called "The Challenge of Protecting Transit and Passenger Rail: Understanding How Security Works Against Terrorism," written by Brian Michael Jenkins at the Mineta Transportation Institute, "It is not easy to increase security without causing inconvenience, unreasonably slowing travel times, adding significant costs and creating vulnerable queues of people waiting to pass through security checkpoints. This has compelled rail operators to explore other options: enlisting passengers and staff in alerting authorities to suspicious objects or behavior, random passenger screening, designing new stations to facilitate surveillance and reduce potential casualties from explosions or fire and ensuring rapid intervention." But is that enough?!

As we closed the issue, an unusual event occurred in the U. S. In an unprecedented move, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued a temporary flight restriction that halted all flights into and out of El Paso International Airport and surrounding airspace through Friday, February 20. The order, effective from 11:30 p.m. MST on Tuesday, February 10, covered commercial, cargo and general aviation operations and also extended into nearby areas.

The FAA's notice classified the region as restricted airspace for "special security reasons," but the agency did not provide any public explanation of what those reasons were. Airlines including Southwest,

American, United and Delta have canceled or suspended service in compliance with the FAA's order and travelers are being urged to contact carriers for the latest flight status.

The restriction applied to an area within a 10 nautical mile radius around the airport from the surface up to nearly 18,000 feet, and pilots were barred from operating in the area unless specifically authorized. The notice warned that aircraft violating the ban could be intercepted or detained, and in rare circumstances, force could be used if an aircraft is deemed an imminent threat.

But almost as soon as news outlets began to report about the restricted airspace, the FAA made a dramatic turnaround and rescinded the temporary closure of the airspace. This was just hours after announcing the ban.

Next, FAA Administrator Sean Duffy posted this on X: "The FAA and DOW acted swiftly to address a cartel drone incursion. The threat has been neutralized, and there is no danger to commercial travel in the region. The restrictions have been lifted and normal flights are resuming."

Then in another wild swing, news outlets began reporting that the grounding of aircraft at El Paso International Airport that day was in response to the U.S. military testing technology that can be used to take down drones, according to multiple sources with knowledge of the matter, adding it had nothing to do with a cartel drone incursion.

Some lawmakers told the defense department that the order was due to a counter-drone exercise that was not coordinated with the FAA. El Paso Mayor Renard Johnson said the temporary flight restriction was not necessary and "should have never happened. This unnecessary decision caused chaos and confusion in the El Paso community," he said at a news conference. "You cannot restrict airspace over a major city without coordinating with the city, the airport, the hospitals, the community leadership. That failure to communicate is unacceptable." Check out our story on counter-drone and drone detection technology starting on page 12. 



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