

Beat: Miscellaneous

Suicide bomber kills 15 at train station in southwest Russia

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USPA News - Fifteen people were killed Sunday and dozens more were injured when a suicide bomber blew themselves up at a train station in southwestern Russia, authorities said, adding to security fears ahead of the upcoming Winter Olympics in the country. The attack happened just before 1 p.m. local time on Sunday when at least one suicide bomber entered the main railway station in Volgograd, a city about 920 kilometers (571 miles) southeast of Moscow.

Video from a security camera across the street showed how the explosion ripped through the entrance of the station. Emergency services in the region said sixteen people were killed, including a police officer and the suicide bomber, while 37 others were injured, among them a 9-year-old girl. At least two of the victims remained in `extremely serious` conditions on early Monday, Russian Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova said, indicating the death toll could rise. The attacker was initially identified by police as a woman from the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, but authorities later issued conflicting statements and indicated the suicide bomber may have been a man. The Interfax news agency, meanwhile, cited a source as saying the attack was carried out by both a man and a woman. Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for Russia's Investigative Committee, said the attacker became nervous when he or she saw a police officer near a metal detector. "It appears the number of victims could have been much higher if it had not been for the so-called `barrage system` that prevented the suicide bomber from passing the metal detector to the waiting room, where there were passengers," he said. Markin, who said investigators also discovered an unexploded Soviet-era F1 hand grenade at the scene, estimated that the force of the explosion was equivalent to at least 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of TNT. "Currently, investigators are working at the site to examine the scene," he added. Sunday's bombing came just over two months after a woman with explosives strapped to her body entered a bus in Volgograd and blew herself up, killing seven people and injuring 32 others. The attacker was identified as a 30-year-old woman from Dagestan, where militants regularly carry out attacks against security forces, police, and civilians, more than a decade after a separatist war ended in Chechnya. Islamist militants in the region have been fighting Russian security forces for years, looking to establish an independent state in the North Caucasus, but attacks in other parts of the country are rare. Around 50 percent of all terrorist-related violence in Russia in 2010 happened in the mainly-Muslim region. Chechen Islamist rebel leader Dokka Umarov urged his fighters earlier this year to do everything possible to derail the upcoming Sochi Olympics, but it is unclear whether his group was behind the two attacks in Volgograd. The Winter Olympics are scheduled to take place from 7 to 23 February in Sochi, a city on the Black Sea coast of Russia. Umarov previously claimed responsibility for ordering the suicide bombing that killed 37 people and injured approximately 200 more at Moscow's Domodedovo airport in January 2011. It followed a twin suicide bombing on the Moscow subway in March 2010, killing 40 people and injuring 120 others.

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