

One dead, 17 wounded after bombing in Russian train station

MOSCOW (AP) — A bomb exploded Monday at a train station in southern Russia, killing one person and wounding 17. Authorities blamed Chechen fighters, who claimed responsibility for a similar attack last week.

The explosion, which happened shortly before 7 p.m., heavily damaged the train depot in Pyatigorsk, Viktor

Khoruzhii, deputy regional premier, told the Interfax news agency.

Earlier reports from the Federal Security Service and the Ministry for Emergency Situations said two people died in the blast.

Russian news agencies, citing officials at the scene, later revised the casualty toll, saying four of the 17 wounded were injured seriously.

Two suspects were detained on suspicion of planting the bomb, Zdanovich said. The RTR and NTV networks said the suspects were two women of Chechen nationality.

"There are signs of possible involvement of Chechen terrorists," Alexander Zdanovich, a spokesman for Russia's Federal Security Service, told the Interfax news agency.

President Boris Yeltsin, who is vacationing 150 miles away in Sochi on the Black Sea, immediately condemned the bombing and imposed tight security measures on the region, said his spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky.

The attack followed a bomb blast last week in the waiting room of a railway station in the southern town

of Armavir, which killed two people and wounded eight. The device was concealed in a piece of luggage.

Police said they were looking for three men suspected of involvement in that bombing and issued their descriptions and composite portraits.

A maverick Chechen guerrilla leader, Salman Raduyev, claimed responsibility for the Armavir bomb-

ing, which he called "the beginning of a series of spot strikes throughout Russia, especially at railway and military facilities," the Interfax news agency reported.

Raduyev has said the bombing would mark the first anniversary of the death of Chechen separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, killed by Russian forces in April 1996.

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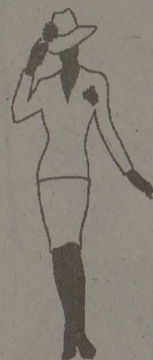
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