

# Suspect remains unknown in South African city bombing

SOWETO, South Africa (AP) — A series of bomb blasts rocked the poor township of Soweto early Wednesday, killing one person, ripping a hole in a mosque and damaging several railway stations and rail lines running into the nearby city of Johannesburg.

No group claimed responsibility for the attacks, but authorities said they were investigating whether right-wing militant groups were behind the bombings.

"Whoever is responsible for this ... is going to face the full might of the law," said Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula.

He said the first bomb exploded at about 11:55 p.m. Tuesday and the ninth went off

at about 1:40 a.m. Wednesday. Another bomb was found at a gas station and defused.

"Had it exploded it would have caused maximum damage given the fact we have fuel at the filling station," said Nqakula.

Police fanned out across the massive township and began searching public places, including schools. Roads all over the township were closed.

Authorities said they did not know what type of explosive was used.

National Police Commissioner Jackie Selebi said two white men reportedly were seen acting suspiciously near the gas station where the bomb was later defused.

"We think we know who

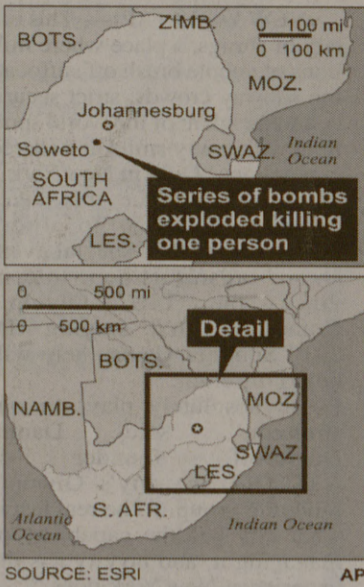
did this," Selebi told Parliament. "We think that the people who did this wanted to send a message."

"We calculate that there are many more bombs than those that have exploded," he said.

Nqakula said police were trying to put together a profile of the bombers.

"Whoever manufactured ... the bombs and placed them are experts," he said.

He refused to say whether investigators suspected the blasts were part of an alleged white extremist plot to attack the government uncovered earlier by police. In recent weeks, police have discovered several weapons caches and arrested 14 people accused of involvement in the plot.



# Japan announces plan to spur economic revival; will clear debt

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's government announced a long-awaited economic revival plan Wednesday, pledging to help clear bad debts that threaten stability of the banking system and help the country's increasing numbers of jobless workers.

Once a rapidly growing economic powerhouse, Japan has suffered from a decade-long downturn with dropping prices, stagnation and burgeoning unemployment.

The announcement was an achievement for Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who was embarrassed earlier this month when opponents in his own ruling Liberal Democratic Party blocked the release of the blueprint, fearing that its reforms were too severe. However, critics of the new program complained that it does not go far enough.

"I think it is a good start," said Japan's get-tough Economy Minister Keizo Takenaka after unveiling the plan.

The program aims to clear \$336 billion in the bad loans saddling the nation's banks and reverse the trend of falling prices, or deflation, that has undermined corporate profits and caused some firms to go under.

Takenaka's original measures called for tightening accounting rules for the nation's banks in a way that could have increased the number of bad loans on their books. Some feared the rules would bankrupt banks and debtor companies alike.

Reflecting LDP concerns, the final version of the plan guarantees special loans to companies that hire people thrown out of jobs. However it is vague on other safety net items. It also backs down by containing no timeframe or numerical targets for implementing the suggested accounting reforms.

Some economists were disappointed by other things the package left out.

Ryo Hino, an analyst with JP Morgan

investment bank in Tokyo, said the government would need to spend more money to further stimulate the economy. Koizumi has been uncommitted to the idea because of the government's already huge public debt.

"Obviously these reforms are necessary, but they are just a first step," Hino said. "Even if they get this through, it is not enough."

Some members of the ruling party coalition agreed.

Takenori Kanzaki, a leader of the LDP junior member New Komeito party, said the package would have only a "weak impact" without a supplementary budget, according to Kyodo news agency. He said his party will urge the government to compile one through next March.

Japan's once booming economy began to unravel in the early 1990s with the bursting of the real estate bubble.

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