

# The Moscow Times

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## Blast Outside National Hotel Kills 6

By Alex Fak  
STAFF WRITER

A bomb went off Tuesday outside the entrance to the National Hotel in the heart of Moscow, killing six people, possibly including a suicide bomber, and injuring 14.

Police said they suspect it was a terrorist attack but were not ruling out the settling of business scores. Moscow

Mayor Yury Luzhkov, however, said the bomb was set off by a female suicide bomber whose real target was the State Duma.

President Vladimir Putin called the blast "the actions of criminals, terrorists."

Police said many of the injured were students, including from Moscow State University's journalism school and the

Sechenov Moscow Medical Academy, both located near the hotel. One of the injured is a Chinese citizen. Five of the injured remained in critical condition late Tuesday.

The bomb went off at 10:53 a.m. near the main entrance to the hotel on Mokhovaya Ulitsa. Four mangled bodies could be seen on the sidewalk among shards of glass, plus the severed

head of a blond woman lying near a black Mercedes. A sixth person died on the way to the hospital, police said.

"I saw these bits of flesh, these fatty chunks of flesh scattered everywhere," said a British man who arrived at the hotel shortly after the explosion and asked not to be named. "It was just fucking awful."

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Mangled bodies lying on a sidewalk outside the National Hotel in central Moscow after an explosion Tuesday. Police say the bomb may have been set off by a suicide bomber.



# BLAST

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A lone black briefcase stood undamaged near the severed head. Several hours later, a robot inspected the site of the blast, and shortly afterward police blew up the briefcase and what they described as a second suspicious object.

No additional explosives were found, police spokesman Kirill Mazurin said.

Interfax, citing a police source, said investigators had found "components" of an explosives belt that could have been used by a suicide bomber.

In the afternoon, police briefly evacuated the busy Kievsky Station, after finding what they said was a suspicious object beneath a train bound for Chisinau, the capital of Moldova.

Investigators from the city police, prosecutor's office and the Federal Security Service combed the scene of the explosion for evidence. The FSB would not confirm that any evidence of terrorism had been found, but the prosecutor's office is investigating it as terrorism.

"It was probably an act of terrorism — that's our main theory," said Yevgeny Gildeyev, another police spokesman, though he said investigators could not rule out that it was a settling of business scores.

He said the decapitation of the woman "suggests she had the bomb on her or very near her," which could imply she was a suicide bomber.

Luzhkov said he saw a videotape shot by security cameras near the National that recorded a woman who appeared to be a suicide bomber. She was carrying a black bag that contained explosives and was wearing "the classic shakhid belt under her coat," he said on NTV television. He did not elaborate.

Luzhkov compared the bombing to the two explosions on July 5 at a rock concert at the Tushino airfield, which killed 16 people and injured dozens.

## A Chronology Of Moscow Blasts Since 1999

**Aug. 31, 1999** A bomb explodes in the underground Okhotny Ryad shopping center on Manezh Square, injuring 20. Officials call it an act of terrorism but do not link it specifically to Chechen rebels.

**September 1999** Bombs destroy apartment buildings in Moscow, Buynaksk and Volgograd, killing more than 300 people. Moscow blames the Chechens, who in turn accuse Russian secret services.

**Aug. 8, 2000** A blast in the Pushkin Square underpass kills 13. Officials remain uncertain whether it was a terrorist attack, part of a business dispute or hooliganism.

**July 5, 2003** Two female suicide bombers kill 15 people when they blow themselves up at an open-air rock festival at the Tushino airfield. Sixty were injured.

**July 10, 2003** A bomb explodes on 1st Tverskaya-Yamskaya Ulitsa, killing an FSB sapper trying to defuse it. Officials blame a would-be female suicide bomber.

**Dec. 9, 2003** An explosion near the National Hotel kills at least six people.

The blasts were blamed on Chechen female suicide bombers said to be wearing belts filled with explosives and scraps of metal.

Five days later, guards at the Imbir restaurant on Tverskaya-Yamskaya stopped a 22-year-old woman carrying a bomb in a bag. The bomb later exploded, killing an FSB sapper. Police said it was an attack organized by a terror ring training female suicide bombers.

Earlier Tuesday, Luzhkov said one and possibly two female bombers had asked a passerby the way to the Duma, located down the street from the hotel, on the other side of Tverskaya Ulitsa.





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A sapper dressed in a green protective suit examining the scene of the bomb blast outside the National Hotel on Tuesday.

"Evidently, the bomb went off by accident," he told Interfax.

His spokesman, Sergei Tsoi, linked the blast to Sunday's Duma elections. "We can say with certainty that this was a terrorist act. This terrorist act was linked to the elections to the State Duma," Tsoi told reporters at the scene.

Gildeyev said he did not know where Luzhkov's office got such information. "I have not heard this version [from investigators]," he said.

When an explosion rocked the Pushkin Square underpass in August 2000, killing 13 people, Luzhkov was quick to say that he suspected a "Chechen trail." Investigators later determined that the explosion was most likely the settling of personal or business scores. Despite this, the memorial plaque at the site is dedicated to the "victims of the terrorist act."

Late Tuesday, police were still looking for a woman whom witnesses have placed near the scene of the bombing and "who could have been involved in the blast — and I stress, could have been," Gildeyev said.

Four of the six people killed by the explosion have been identified. They are: Sergei Kashtanov, Ivan Anisimkin, Igor Aripov and Inga Gizoyeva, who initially came under some suspicion because she was born in Vladikavkaz and was only recently registered in Moscow. Investigators later determined she was probably not involved in the bombing, Interfax reported.

Police said they have been unable to establish the identities of two other women, having only found fragments of their bodies.

No guests or staff at the National Hotel were hurt, said Anna Amosova,



A second-floor window in the National Hotel that was broken by the force of the blast.

spokeswoman for the hotel, which is owned by the city.

Olga Trumen, 16 and Yelena Maximova, 17, said they had just come out of the Manezh Square shopping center across the street from the hotel when they heard the blast. "It was this ear-piercing boom, but I wouldn't say it was a huge explosion. I didn't see any smoke or fire until later," Maximova said.

"Tourists with video cameras and what looked like reporters" were the first on the scene, and police arrived minutes later, she said.

Dozens of reporters and cameramen were bunched up outside the entrance to the shopping center during the day while waiting for information from officials on the scene, which was cordoned off.

A clean-shaven young man with a large insignia from the ultranationalist

Liberal Democratic Party on his coat walked around the periphery, saying he was awaiting the arrival of LDPR leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The suicide bombers were clearly on their way to the Duma, he said. "This should put an end to all that talk about amnesty. No amnesty, no deal for these swine."

Sergei Goncharov, president of an association of veterans of the Alpha commando unit, said the bombing was clearly a reaction from Chechen fighters to the results of the State Duma elections.

"How else could they publicize themselves? If it were not in the center of Moscow, who would remember it? All international news agencies, you included, are writing about this now."

Staff writer Denis Maternovsky contributed to this story.



# Police Hunt for Bomb Suspect

By Alex Fak  
STAFF WRITER

Police confirmed Wednesday that the deadly explosion outside the National Hotel was the work of a female suicide bomber and said they were combing the city for a suspected female accomplice who fled the scene.

Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said Tuesday's bombing, which killed six, was "a manifestation of international terrorism, according to its handwriting, its character and its content."

Russia "does not see yesterday's terrorist act in Moscow as a manifestation of Chechen terrorism," Ivanov said during a visit to Berlin, Interfax reported. "The ethnic origins of those who carried out this terrorist act have no bearing on this case."

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said it believed the al-Qaida terrorist network was involved.

A Moscow prosecutor linked the attack to a series of recent blasts, including the train bombing in the Stavropol region Friday that killed 44 and the double suicide bombings at the Tushino rock concert in July that killed 16.

"All these blasts were organized by a single group and coordinated from a single center," Prosecutor Grigory Shinakov said.

Investigators were poring over hotel security recordings of what took place on Mokhovaya Ulitsa moments before Tuesday's explosion. The tapes show two women walking toward each other and the explosion occurring as they draw even, said National Hotel general director Yury Podkopyayev, who has watched some of the tapes.

Police on Tuesday ruled out the possibility that one of the two women, Tatyana Komarova, 23, was involved in the blast. The identity of the other woman, the bomber, remains unknown.

Podkopyayev said the tapes he saw do not show the alleged accomplice that the police were looking for Tuesday. Police described the missing suspect as a woman, 40 to 50, with Caucasian features, 160 centimeters in height and wearing a dark coat and dark fur hat.

Vladimir Kumerkov, who witnessed the explosion, told the newspaper *Gazeta* in Wednesday's issue that he saw a woman thrown to the ground by the blast. "She laid there for a while, then got up and walked off," he said.

Five of the 14 people injured in the explosion remained in critical condition Wednesday, health officials said. Many of the injured were students.

The bombing took place on the ninth anniversary of the start of the first



People passing flowers near the main entrance to the National Hotel on Wednesday.

Chechen war. *Vremya Novostei* noted that the head of the FSB's Chechen branch recently dismissed reports that Chechen suicide bombers were heading into other regions as "an invention."

"Yesterday, the 'invention' blew up in the center of Moscow," the newspaper said.

"The consequences of yesterday's act of terror are easy to foresee no matter who carried it out," *Kommersant* said. "The blasts will lead to tougher actions by federal forces in Chechnya and the surrounding regions and to tougher measures against terrorism nationwide. And it is the fight against terrorism that remains President [Vladimir] Putin's trump card."

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Chechen rebel web site *kavkaz.tv* suggested it was the work of Russian security services.

Pavel Felgenhauer, an independent defense analyst, said the masterminds were probably not affiliated with mainstream Chechen fighters such as rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov and warlord Shamil Basayev.

"Attacks by the mainstream are more combat-oriented," he said.

"They would have blown up something more substantial than a few students."

But taking into account the worldwide media coverage it received, the blast was just as successful from a publicity standpoint, he said.

"Fighting in Chechnya has no political resonance, but even a small blast in Moscow has great deal of it," Felgenhauer said. "A series of such blasts could influence political life in Russia and may even hurt President Putin. We can expect more of this."