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Car Bombing Wounds 23 in Pyatigorsk

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Police guarding a street where a blast rocked a cafe Tuesday in Pyatigorsk. **Pavel Bogdanov**

ROSTOV-ON-DON — A car bomb exploded outside a cafe in the Stavropol region city of Pyatigorsk on Tuesday, injuring 23 people, police said.

The explosion occurred just outside the cafe in downtown Pyatigorsk, wounding 23 cafe customers and passers-by, said Stanislav Belyayev, a spokesman for the Stavropol regional police. All were hospitalized, three of them in serious condition.

Belyayev said a powerful homemade explosive blew up in a Lada car, which was parked outside the cafe. Investigators were treating it as a terrorist attack.

Bombings and other attacks occur regularly in the North Caucasus, where violence has spread following two separatist wars in Chechnya. While most attacks are carried out by militants targeting police and other officials, some are the result of business disputes.

Tuesday's car bombing drew the immediate attention of the Kremlin. President Dmitry Medvedev ordered the Federal Security Service and the Prosecutor General's Office to do everything possible to identify and capture those responsible.

Hours earlier Tuesday, a suicide bomber killed a police officer and wounded two others in the neighboring North Caucasus republic of North Ossetia.

The attacker blew himself up at a police checkpoint on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Vladikavkaz, regional police spokesman Aslan Dzgoyev said. The bomber was accompanied by two other men. One of them was captured after police shot and wounded him, while the other escaped.

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