The Moscow Times
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# Minsk Makes 2 More Arrests in Bombing

April 14, 2011




Surveillance camera footage showing the suspected executor of a bomb blast at the Oktyabrskaya metro station.

MINSK —Belarus on Thursday announced two more arrests in this week's deadly metro bombing as fears grew among opponents of President Alexander Lukashenko that he was using it as a pretext to further consolidate power.

It brings to five the number of suspects arrested since Monday's blast, which killed 12 and injured more than 200. Authorities said Wednesday that three suspects had been arrested, including a man in his mid-20s accused of placing the bomb on the platform of Minsk's busiest metro station, Oktyabrskaya.

Announcing the new arrests Thursday, Deputy Prosecutor General Andrei Shved said all five suspects were Belarussian citizens under the age of 30 without previous convictions.

He refused to release their identities, discuss what roles the other suspects played, or speculate on their motives.

He showed reporters surveillance camera footage of the suspected executor of the attack in

the metro.

Lukashenko has already suggested that the blast was the work of dissidents and has ordered the prosecutor general to round them up for interrogation, fueling speculation the president is seeking to use the explosion as a pretext to pressure opposition groups and independent journalists.

Shved confirmed the interrogations had begun and more would be conducted, but there were no details.

Opposition activists worry that the Internet, the last pillar of free speech in the tightly controlled nation, could suffer unprecedented restrictions in the wake of the blast.

Prosecutor General Grigory Vasilevich said late Wednesday that "it is necessary to bring order" to certain Internet portals that covered the bombing. State television on Thursday lambasted opposition web sites that suggested the blast was useful for the authorities, saying they harmed the country's interests.

Alexander Starikevich, editor of the Solidarity opposition site, said he had received a warning from the prosecutor's office for "discrediting" the nation.

"We fear our site will be closed because the Internet is the only alternative and independent source of information and the authorities are scared of this," Starikevich said.

The UN Security Council condemned on Wednesday what it called an "apparent terrorist attack" on the metro station, phraseology that appeared to reflect uncertainty over who was behind it.

Two of the detained suspects — an electrician and a lathe-operator — confessed to carrying out the attack and admitted to two earlier bomb attacks, Lukashenko said Wednesday. Smaller blasts in 2008 and 2005, which also have been blamed on some of this week's detainees, caused no deaths.

Monday's attack was the first lethal bombing in Belarus's post-Soviet history.

Late Wednesday, state television showed unidentified Belarussians thanking security services for a swift investigation and urging capital punishment for those responsible for the attack.

It also showed pro-Lukashenko politicians and officials denouncing suggestions of the government's involvement as "irresponsible" and "illegal."

"We will investigate all knowingly untruthful statements," Shved said. "We will summon and question ... all those spreading panic and lies."

*(AP, Reuters)*

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