

Blaze Rips Through Urals Munitions Depot

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A fire caused intermittent explosions Monday near the town of Koltubanovka in the Orenburg region.

A fire tore through a southern Urals military depot, setting off stores of ammunition and forcing 700 people to be evacuated from their homes, officials said.

Police received an emergency alert about 5:45 p.m. Monday that a blaze was causing intermittent explosions at Military Unit No. 96558 near the town of Koltubanovka in the Orenburg region.

By Tuesday evening, 1,200 people and 210 pieces of firefighting equipment, including airplanes and helicopters, had been mobilized to fight the blaze.

By then, the fire had been contained but was still burning in some parts of the warehouse complex. The evacuated residents were allowed to return home late Tuesday.

Police patrolling the area rescued three civilians, two pensioners and an invalid from the rubble of their home, which had collapsed during an explosion.

A military serviceman and a young woman sustained minor injuries from flying shards of glass Monday night.

The depot borders a national park dried out by a recent lack of rain and temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius.

"It's important that the forest did not burn," a local government official told Interfax.

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