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Drunk Driver Kills 7 at Moscow Bus Stop

By Alexander Winning

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Emergency workers inspecting the scene of Saturday's crash on Minskaya Ulitsa.

A drunk driver traveling at about 200 kilometers an hour plowed into a bus stop in Moscow's southwest over the weekend, killing seven and injuring three.

The driver, identified in media reports as Alexander Maximov, 30, lost control of his Toyota sedan on Minskaya Ulitsa about 3:20 p.m. Saturday, police said in a statement.

In an unfortunate twist of fate, the tragedy coincided with World Car-Free Day, an annual event that aims to promote the improvement of public transportation and cut people's reliance on cars.

After crashing through a metal safety barrier, Maximov veered into the bus stop, where a line of people was waiting by the side of the road, the police statement said. Seven bystanders, including four teens, died at the scene, according to Interfax.

RIA-Novosti gave their ages as between 14 and 18.

Police have not released a list of those killed and wounded in the incident.

The Emergency Situations Ministry said that Maximov was traveling at about 200 kilometers per hour at the time of the crash and that he was hospitalized with bruises and a suspected concussion, Interfax reported.

When questioned by police, Maximov told them that he had been drinking for two days straight and that he should "shoot himself" for what he had done, the Gazeta.ru news portal said.

Unconfirmed reports said that Maximov behaved aggressively toward police when they arrived at the scene of the crash and that he threatened officers who were making a video recording.

Law enforcement officials subsequently carried out a Breathalyzer test and confirmed that he had been drinking, Interfax reported, adding that Maximov had his license confiscated in 2010 for drunk driving.

His license was only returned in March, police told Gazeta.ru.

Police are considering charging Maximov with multiple counts of manslaughter while driving under the influence of alcohol, which carries a punishment of up to nine years in prison followed by a three-year ban on driving.

Authorities have made decisive efforts to curb alcoholism and drunk driving, including banning the advertising of alcoholic drinks on the Internet and introducing a law in 2010 that outlaws even low blood alcohol levels for people behind the wheel.

But despite these efforts, Russia's road-safety record remains dismal. In a similar incident in mid-June, 24-year-old Yekaterina Zaul struck eight people standing on a roadside in the Moscow region while driving a Land Rover SUV.

Five people died in that crash, and police found traces of alcohol in Zaul's blood.

Zaul, who is awaiting trial, also faces up to nine years in jail.

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