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At Least 60 Killed, 145 Injured in Mass Shooting Outside Moscow

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Emergency services respond to Friday night's mass shooting outside of Crocus City Hall. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

A group of armed men opened fire at a concert hall in a Moscow suburb on Friday night, killing at least 60 people and injuring 145 others, Russian authorities said, marking one of the deadliest such attacks in Russia in recent decades.

A video shared online showed at least two masked men entering the Crocus City Hall, with one repeatedly firing shots from what appeared to be an assault rifle. Another graphic video showed four men, with at least three carrying weapons, chasing a group of people and firing at them point blank.

According to a state media reporter who was at the concert hall during the time of the attack, a grenade or an incendiary bomb was thrown after the shooting broke out and caused a fire.

Footage published by the state-run TASS news agency showed a large fire at Crocus City Hall, which is located around 16 kilometers northwest of the center of Moscow.

Later on Friday, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack, according to a post on its Telegram channel.

Three children were among those killed in the attack, the Moscow region branch of Russia's Health Ministry said Saturday morning.

Shortly following initial news reports of the shooting, Moscow region Governor Andrei Vorobyov said he had arrived at the scene and was leading response efforts to the incident.

Spetznaz and riot police units were sent in response to the incident, TASS reported, while a video later shared by news outlets showed law enforcement agents encircling the concert hall as firefighters worked to put out flames bursting from the roof of the building.

Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev also arrived at the scene, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

A video published by the independent news outlet Sotavision showed riot police shouting and pointing their weapons at journalists and camera crews who were trying to cover the events outside the concert hall, physically pushing them away from the area.

"People in the hall were lying down on the floor to escape from the shooting, lying between 15 and 20 minutes, after which they began to crawl out. Many managed to get out," an unnamed state media reporter at the scene was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency.

Related article: Islamic State Group Claims Russia Gun Attack

Around 100 people escaped through the theater basement, while others were sheltering on the concert hall's roof, Russia's Emergency Services Ministry said on its Telegram channel.

Up to 6,200 people may have been inside the concert hall at the time of the attack, according to a seating plan of the venue.

Members of Piknik, the band performing at Crocus City Hall on Friday night, were not injured, the concert's director said.

Shortly after midnight, Russia's Emergency Services Ministry said the fire had been contained. Governor Vorobyov later said the flames had been "mostly eliminated," and rescuers had been able to enter the auditorium.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, announced that it opened a criminal terrorism case into the incident.

President Putin — who was informed of the attack "within the first minutes," according to the Kremlin — wished a speedy recovery to the wounded victims, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

Putin has not commented publicly on the attack.

Meanwhile, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said he had given orders to provide assistance to

those affected by Friday evening's shooting.

"A terrible tragedy happened today at the Crocus City shopping center. My condolences to the victims' loved ones," he said, adding later that all public events in the Russian capital had been canceled for the weekend.

Long lines of people wishing to donate blood to those injured in the attack were seen at one Moscow clinic on Saturday morning.

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Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Friday night's mass shooting had been a "bloody terrorist attack."

"The whole international community must condemn this odious crime," she said on Telegram.

The White House called the attack "terrible" but said it did not see any immediate sign of a link to the war in Ukraine.

So, too, did Kyiv insist it had "nothing to do" with the attack, while its military intelligence called the incident a Russian "provocation" and claimed that Russian special services were behind it.

The Freedom of Russia Legion, a pro-Ukrainian militia responsible for attacks on Russia's border regions, also denied any role.

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev vowed on Telegram that Ukraine's top officials "must be found and ruthlessly destroyed as terrorists" if they were linked to the attack.

The United Nations, European Union, France, Spain, Italy and several other countries also condemned the attack.

The White House said its "thoughts are with the victims of this terrible shooting attack", while French President Emmanuel Macron also expressed "solidarity with the victims, their loved ones and all the Russian people."

Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill was "praying for peace for the souls of the dead," his spokesman said.

Previous warnings

Moscow and other Russian cities have been the targets of previous attacks by Islamist groups but there have also been incidents without any clear political motive.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow said it was monitoring reports that "extremists" were planning "to target large gatherings in Moscow," including concerts.

The White House said Friday that it had warned Russian authorities earlier in March about a "planned terrorist attack" possibly targeting public events in Moscow.

Washington had "shared this information with Russian authorities," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said.

In 2002, Chechen separatist fighters took 912 people hostage in a Moscow theater, the Dubrovka, demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from the North Caucasus region.

Russian special forces attacked the theater to end the hostage crisis, and 130 people were killed during the operation, nearly all suffocating to death by a gas used by security forces to knock out the gunmen.

AFP contributed reporting.

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