

24-Year-Old Austin Bombing Suspect Blows Himself Up

The 24-year-old man who terrified residents of Austin, Texas, with a three-week bombing campaign that killed two people blew himself up on the side of a highway north of the city as police closed in on him early Wednesday, police officials said.

Police had tracked the suspect to a hotel near Austin, the state's capital city, and were following his vehicle when he pulled to the side of the road and detonated a device, killing himself, Austin Police Chief Brian Manley told reporters near the scene.

"The suspect is deceased and has significant injuries from a blast that occurred from detonating a bomb inside his vehicle," Manley told reporters. He said the suspect was white but declined to give his name.

Manley said the suspect was believed to be responsible for six bombs around Austin, including five that detonated, since March 2. He said what motivated the bombing campaign or whether the suspect had help was not yet known.

Most important, Manley warned that it was not clear whether any more bombs had been left in place around the city.

The series of bombings killed two people and injured at least five others, unnerving residents of Austin, a city of some 1 million people. The first bombings occurred as the state capital was hosting the annual South by Southwest music, film and technology festival.

Police found the suspect at a hotel in Round Rock, Texas, about 20 miles (32 km) north of Austin. While officers were waiting for reinforcements to make an arrest, the suspect left

the hotel and police followed him.

The suspect pulled off the city's main highway and two Austin police officers were approaching his vehicle when he set off his device. One officer fired at the vehicle and the other sustained a minor injury when the bomb went off, Manley said.

Police urged residents of the area to treat packages with suspicion during the bombing campaign, and Manley warned residents not to let their guard down yet.

"Everybody needs to remember that this investigation is continuing. We still need people to be vigilant," Austin Mayor Steve Adler told the local CBS news affiliate early on Wednesday. "We don't know where the suspect has been the last 24 hours."

U.S. President Donald Trump on Twitter congratulated police, saying, "Great job by law enforcement and all concerned!"

The first three devices were parcel bombs dropped off in front of homes around Austin neighborhoods. A fourth went off on Sunday night, apparently detonated with a trip wire, and one exploded inside a FedEx Corp facility on Tuesday.

The series of bombings began on March 2 and bewildered law enforcement officials, who by Sunday began taking the unusual step of publicly calling on the bomber to get in touch and explain why he was carrying out the attacks.

The first two bombs killed black men, raising fears that they were part of a hate crime, but investigators said the later, more random blasts made that less likely.

Manley said investigators still had no clear idea of what prompted the suspect to carry out the bombing.

"We do not understand what motivated him to do what he did," Manley said.

“We don’t know if he was on his way to deliver another bomb,” Manley said. “He had one with him and that’s what he detonated as we approached.” {eoa}

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