

Nashville Police Believe Explosion That Injured 3 Was 'Intentional'

An explosion shook the largely deserted streets of downtown Nashville early Christmas morning, shattering windows, damaging buildings and wounding three people. Authorities said they believe the blast was intentional. The FBI is leading the investigation.

Metro Nashville Police Department spokesman Don Aaron said police responded to a call of shots fired just before 6 a.m. but found no immediate signs of a shooting, although officers noticed a suspicious vehicle and called for a hazardous unit. While they waited, the vehicle exploded.

Aaron said three people were taken to area hospitals for treatment, although none were in critical condition. He said some people were taken to the department's central precinct for questioning but declined to give more details.

The FBI will be taking the lead in the investigation, said spokesman Joel Siskovic. Federal investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were also on the scene. The FBI is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for investigating federal crimes, such as explosives violations and acts of terrorism.

At noon, police dogs continued to search cars and buildings in the nearby area.

A Philadelphia man staying in a nearby hotel said that when he heard the blast, he was knew it wasn't a harmless noise.

"It was a very loud explosion," said Joseph Fafara. "We tried to rationalize it that it was an earthquake or something. But

it was obvious it wasn't an earthquake." He said he traveled to Tennessee with his family on Christmas because the state has looser COVID-19 restrictions than Philadelphia.

Fafara went outside to look at the damage but police barricades had already been put in place.

Black smoke and flames were seen early Friday billowing from the area, which is packed with bars, restaurants and other retail establishments and is known as the heart of downtown Nashville's tourist scene.

Buildings shook in the immediate area and beyond after a loud boom was heard.

Buck McCoy, who lives near the area, posted videos on Facebook that show water pouring down the ceiling of his home. Alarms blare in the background and cries of people in great distress ring in the background. A fire is visible in the street outside.

McCoy says he says he heard gun fire 15 minutes before the explosion rocked his building. McCoy said the windows of his home were entirely blown out.

"All my windows, every single one of them got blown into the next room. If I had been standing there it would have been horrible," he said.

"It felt like a bomb. It was that big," he told The Associated Press.

"There were about four cars on fire. I don't know if it was so hot they just caught on fire, and the trees were all blown apart," he said.

President Donald Trump has been briefed, according to White House spokesperson Judd Deere, who said that Trump, who is spending the holidays in Florida, will continue to receive regular updates. The U.S. Justice Department said Acting

Attorney General Jeff Rosen was also briefed and directed all department resources be made available to help with the investigation.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said on Twitter that the state would provide the resources necessary “to determine what happened and who was responsible. Please join @MariaLeeTN and me in praying for those who were injured and we thank all of our first responders who acted so quickly this morning.”

Nashville Mayor John Cooper said the city was lucky that the number of injuries was limited.

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