

Homemade bomb explodes outside NAACP offices in Colorado Springs

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A homemade bomb exploded outside the offices of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in south Colorado Springs Tuesday, in what the FBI has called a possible act of domestic terrorism. Police are currently searching for a person of interest spotted by eyewitnesses, described as a “balding white man in his 40s” driving an older pickup truck.

The bomb, which exploded around 10:45 AM Tuesday morning, was powerful enough to knock items off of interior walls, but no one was reported injured and no damage was reported except charring to the building’s outer wall. NAACP volunteers reported seeing “some kind of incendiary device” rigged to a can of gasoline which failed to ignite, according to the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, indicating a crude homemade explosive. The FBI later characterized the “improvised explosive device” as a pipe bomb placed adjacent to a gas can. Investigators also found pieces of duct tape and metal 40 to 50 feet from the scene that may be related to the crime, according to the Associated Press.

Gene Southerland, who owns a hair salon in the same building as the NAACP offices, told the *Gazette* that he was in his shop with a beautician and a customer when he heard something that “sounded like a shotgun blast.” “It was such a beautiful day and everything, sunny. And in broad daylight, you hear this explosion. It’s frightening.”

The head of the local NAACP, Henry Allen Jr., has avoided definitively calling the attack a hate crime. “[We are a] little bit confused,” Allen told the media, “Never in the history of this organization in Colorado Springs have there been live threats.” The national NAACP office released only a brief statement on Tuesday declaring that they are “[looking] forward to a

full and thorough investigation” by the FBI and local police.

Other figures in the civil rights establishment have been more outspoken. “Obviously, this is a terrorist attack” former NAACP chairman Julian Bond told *Time* magazine. “You always have to worry about it. All of our branches are potentially vulnerable. We want to send a message to everyone to be on their guard of this occurring to them.” Congressman and former civil rights leader John Lewis (D-GA) tweeted Wednesday, “I am deeply troubled by the bombing in Colorado. It reminds me of another period,” referring to the civil rights era, when such attacks on the NAACP were common.

Although the FBI is currently investigating the incident as a possible domestic terrorist act, the motives of the attack are not yet known. The FBI has not yet ruled out other possibilities or said definitively whether the NAACP office was the target of the attack. “We’re looking at all possible motives, not just specifically that the NAACP was targeted, although that is one possible motive,” an FBI spokeswoman told the media.

There has been relatively little mention of the attack in the mainstream press. According to the liberal website *ThinkProgress.org*, the bombing in Colorado Springs had only been mentioned once by any of the major cable news channels as of 1:00 pm Wednesday afternoon, more than 24 hours after the attack. The *New York Times* has only published two brief wire summaries. Word about the attacks has spread largely through social media, where it is currently one of the top subjects on Twitter.

The bombing in Colorado Springs occurred the same day as the reelection of Louisiana Republican Steve Scalise to the post of Majority Whip, the third-most important post in the House of Representatives, despite

revelations that he had delivered a speech at a white supremacist conference in 2002.

The attack also comes amidst the growth of extreme right-wing forces nationwide amid a deepening social crisis. Last April, right-wing militia groups, armed to the teeth with assault rifles, rallied to the defense of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy in a standoff with the federal government. Bundy subsequently declared in an interview with the *New York Times* that “negroes” had been “better off as slaves.” In November, the Ku Klux Klan in Missouri publicly threatened to use “lethal force” against “terrorist” protesters shortly before the announcement of the grand jury decision in the Michael Brown case.

Colorado Springs in particular has gained a reputation as a bastion for the extreme right. Last year, members of a neo-Nazi gang shot and killed the director of Colorado’s prison system in his Colorado Springs home. The military and defense contractors also have a major presence in the area. The region is home to three military bases and the Air Force Academy, and defense contractors Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman are two of the largest private employers in the area.



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