

Explosion in Nashville, Tennessee leaves thousands without communication, disrupts emergency services

Our reporters
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A large explosion occurred in downtown Nashville, Tennessee in the early morning hours of Christmas Day, December 25. The blast damaged several city blocks and cut off communications and 911 emergency service for thousands of residents in the city and in the surrounding region.

The source of the explosion was determined to be a recreational vehicle (RV) that had belonged to Anthony Quinn Warner, 63, a resident of the Nashville suburb of Antioch. Authorities had discovered human remains amid the wreckage of the RV, which were later determined to have been Warner's. A former owner of a small alarm company, Warner has been described as "an IT guy" and a loner by neighbors.

No clear motives for his actions have been uncovered as of this writing and authorities said they believe he acted alone. Warner had recently transferred property rights for his home to a woman in California, as well as having retired from his job for over 15 years at a real estate firm in Nashville. Aside from Warner, no casualties have been reported.

Images from the scene of the explosion, which occurred on Second Avenue near the city's Lower Broadway entertainment district and tourist destination, show widespread destruction to the street and the surrounding buildings, including a large crater at the center of the blast.

On the day of the explosion, one witness reported hearing what sounded like gunshots at approximately 4:30 a.m. Shortly afterward, the RV began broadcasting a recording of a woman's voice warning those in the area to evacuate. A recording of the 1964 pop song "Downtown" could also be heard coming from the camper. Around 6:30 a.m., the RV exploded.

The blast disrupted telecommunications infrastructure owned and operated by AT&T, which may have been deliberately targeted by Warner. The RV was parked alongside a building which housed network equipment and acted as the central office of a telephone exchange.

As a result of the blast, residents throughout Middle Tennessee and into Kentucky were left without television, internet and phone service. In addition, the blast impacted the 911 emergency systems in 15 counties in Tennessee and three in Kentucky. Sumner Regional Medical Center in Sumner County, Tennessee reported a network and systems outage following the explosion. While the explosion itself seems to have not claimed any lives, it is unclear if the resultant loss of emergency services contributed to any unnecessary deaths.

AT&T, which reported \$42.8 billion in revenue in its first quarter earnings for this year, has struggled to return service to its customers. Two days later, many of its customers were still experiencing outages.

The disruption of 911 services could not have come at a worse time. Tennessee has become a United States epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 3,188 new cases were reported on Sunday while the state has over 77,000 active cases flooding its hospitals and medical infrastructure. Over 500,000 cases have been recorded in the state since the pandemic started.

Tennessee's Republican governor, Bill Lee, wasted no time in making all resources available to law enforcement. Meanwhile, the governor, in alignment with the national political establishment and his counterparts in other states, has done nothing to seriously confront the ongoing spread of COVID-19, and has withheld the necessary resources to educators

and students to allow for distance learning. Lee has been one of the most vocal proponents of reopening schools and other workplaces, despite the deaths of numerous educators throughout Tennessee.

In addition to the disruption of communication services, businesses in Nashville's historic entertainment district have had "the worst nine months that you could have as a business," according to statements given by Nashville mayor John Cooper to CBS. According to the *Chattanooga Times-Free Press*, as of October over 108,000 fewer people were employed in the state workforce when compared to last year.

Unemployment reached as high as 15.5 percent in April before settling at around 7 percent in fall, still more than double the state's unemployment numbers in 2019. The *Times-Free Press* reports that the Nashville hospitality sector has lost 22 percent of its workforce over the last year.



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