

Record-Journal

137th Year, No. 72

Meriden, Connecticut, Friday, March 12, 2004

50¢

'I saw bodies flying'

At least 192 dead in coordinated attacks

Rush-hour train bombings cause havoc in Madrid

By Elaine Sciolino
New York Times News Service

MADRID, Spain — Ten bombs ripped through four commuter trains in Madrid on Thursday, killing at least 192 people and wounding more than 1,400 in the deadliest terrorist attack on a European target since World War II.

Spanish authorities initially blamed the Basque separatist group ETA. But after finding a van near Madrid with detonators and a tape of Quranic verses, they held open the possibility of militant Islamic terrorism.

A group claiming links to al-Qaida took responsibility in a letter delivered to an Arab newspaper. An American counterterrorism official said the claim should be viewed skeptically.

Spain, a U.S. ally in the war on Iraq that has 1,300 troops stationed there, was explicitly threatened as a target in an audiotape reportedly made by Osama bin Laden last October.

As the country struggled to absorb the devastation three days before general elections, Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said, "March 11 now has its place in the history of infamy."

The bombings came in coordinated explosions that went off within a 10-minute period shortly before 8 a.m. as people headed to work and school. The police found and detonated three other bombs.

At the main Atocha commuter station in the heart of Madrid just a block from the Prado Museum, an explosion cut a train in two, sending pieces of metal high into the air. Bloody victims crawled from mangled train cars and staggered into the streets. Other victims were found burned to death in their seats.

There, and at the nearby Santa Eugenia and El Pozo stations, broken bodies and body parts were thrown along the platforms as rescue workers struggled to separate the dead from the wounded.

Amet Oulabid, a 23-year-old carpenter, said he got off the front of the train at the Atocha station just seconds before the bomb went off in one of its rear cars.

"I saw bodies flying," he said. "There was a security guard dripping with blood. People were pushing and running. I saw a woman who had fallen on the tracks because people were pushing so hard. I escaped with my life by a hair."

At El Pozo, just east of downtown Madrid, Luz Elena Bustos, 42, got off a nearby bus just 10 minutes before the explosion at that station.

"There were pieces of flesh and ribs all over the road," she said. "There were ribs, brains all over. I never saw anything like this. The train was blown apart. I saw a lot of smoke, people running all over, crying. I saw part of a hand up to the elbow and a body without a head face down on the ground. Flesh all over. I started to cry from

Please see **Train bombings / 5**



92Emiliano Naranjo (above) Peter DeJong (below) / Associated Press

Above and below: Police carry bodies from the twisted wreckage of a passenger train at the Atocha station in Madrid, Spain, Thursday morning. More than 175 people were killed and 1,400 injured in the series of blasts, whose causes are still under investigation.



Investigators try to sort out rationale behind incidents

By Dafna Linzer
and Pamela Sampson
Associated Press

Spanish leaders were quick to accuse Basque terrorists for setting off Thursday's devastating attacks in Madrid.

But hours later they were less sure. A shadowy Muslim militant group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida and a van found near the attacks had detonators inside plus tapes of Quranic verses.

Getting at the truth could take time. Spanish officials used to blaming terrorism on the Basque separatist group ETA said they were opening up several lines of inquiry. As recent events have shown, it won't be easy. Other terrorist attacks carried out in the past two years in places such as Morocco and Turkey remain unsolved.

In Washington, a U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was too early to determine who was responsible for the attacks, which killed more than 190 people and wounded over 1,400.

"We're not ruling out the possibility there was outside responsibility (beyond ETA) in this," the official said. "That's something being pursued, but at this point it's too early to tell."

If ETA was behind the 10 bombs that tore through trains and stations around Madrid, it would mark a stunning turning point for the group.

For years ETA relied on targeted killings, extortion and kidnappings to press for an independent homeland straddling parts of Spain and France. Now experts believe a younger generation of ETA leaders is moving the group toward al-Qaida-style actions.

"You've lost the old guard who were very reticent about killing larger numbers of people because they think that will not help their cause," said Mia Soar, a European terrorism analyst for Jane's Information Group in London. "Then you have this new, younger cadre who've been trained in urban violence who don't think like that."

Spain's Interior Minister Angel Acebes said ETA tried a similar attack on Christmas Eve, placing bombs on two trains bound for a Madrid station that was not hit Thursday. He also noted the Feb. 29 police interception of a Madrid-bound van packed with more than 1,100 pounds of explosives. Thursday's bombers used titanium, a kind of compressed dynamite also found in the van intercepted last month.

But a top Basque politician, Arnold Otegi, denied the separatists were behind the blasts and blamed "Arab resistance."

Otegi told Radio Popular in San Sebastian that ETA always phones in warnings before attacking. Acebes said there was no warning Thursday.

A top French anti-terrorism official said a "small door" must be left open for the possibility that Islamist radicals were be-

Please see **Investigators / 4**

Murdy steps aside

Move seen as Buccilli's opening to lead panel

By Hannah C. Glover
Record-Journal staff

MERIDEN — What could have been a power struggle has turned into virtual victory for Planning Commission Vice Chairman Enrico Buccilli.

With long-time Chairman Roger DeZinno not being re-appointed, a void was left in the commission, and in January, it seemed like a competition was brewing to fill it.

Local developer William C. Murdy, who had been an alternate on the commission for years, but who this year moved into a full-time spot, expressed interest in the chairmanship, although Buccilli had been the presumed successor.

On Thursday, Murdy said he is no longer interested in the commission's top spot, and that he will support Buccilli at the commission's elections next month.

"I just have a lot going on," Murdy said Thursday, adding that he has recently been engaged. He plans to spend more time with his new fiancée and at his vacation home in Naples, Florida. "It just wouldn't be fair," he said.

Buccilli, who has been vice-chairman for six years, said he looks forward to leading the commission, if elected.

"I enjoy a leadership role," said

Please see **Murdy / 4**

Calif. court blocks gay marriages

Massachusetts moves towards proposed ban

By David Kravets
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The California Supreme Court ordered an immediate halt to same-sex weddings in San Francisco on Thursday as Massachusetts lawmakers gave preliminary approval to a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriages in the only state where they have been ruled legal.

Teary-eyed couples were quickly turned away at San Francisco's City Hall, where 4,161 gay couples have tied the knot in the last month.

"We were filling out the application and they told us to stop," said Art Adams, who was the first to be denied as he and partner Devin Baker sought a license. "It's heartbreaking. I don't understand why two people in love should be prevented

Please see **Gay marriages / 5**

Southington councilors seek override



Boccuzzio

6 believe drive-in property should belong to town

By Robert C. Pollack
Record-Journal staff

SOUTHTON — Six members of the Town Council made it clear Thursday they intend to override the Board of Finance rejection of the proposed town purchase of the 40-acre Southington Drive-In property for \$1.6 million to expand adjacent Recreation Park.

Six of nine council votes are needed for such an override.

The property was assessed at \$975,000 by Arthur B. Estrada & Associates of North Haven as of July 10. By a 4-2 Wednesday vote, the finance board recommended the town reject the purchase — which must be approved in an April 27 referendum — on the grounds it was overpriced.

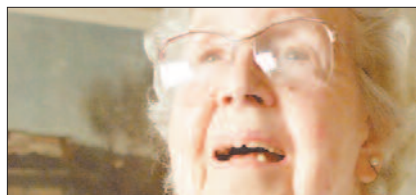
The majority also doubted the authenticity of the proposal by attorney Anthony Denorfia to buy the property himself and put condominium-

Please see **Councilors / 5**

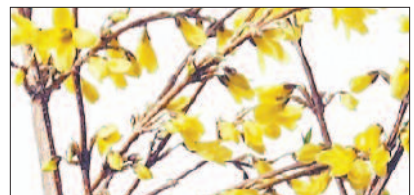


Pomposi

Sage Voices: "You have to try to accept things as they are, and take the time to understand others. It can make all the difference." **Page 25.**



Look! You can bring forsythia cuttings indoors and they will bloom a sunny yellow until spring catches up. **Page 25.**



Today: Variable cloudiness, chance of snow showers. Highs in the mid-40s. **Page 16**

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