Beat: Travel

Moscow metro derailment kills 21, injures 129

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USPA News - A packed commuter train derailed in the Moscow subway on Tuesday after it abruptly braked between stations, killing at least 21 people and injuring nearly 130 others, Russian authorities said, making it one of the worst ever incidents on the world`s third busiest rapid transit system. The accident happened at about 8:35 a.m. local time on Tuesday when a train suddenly braked between the stations Park Pobedy and Slavyansky Bulvar on the Arbat-Pokrovskaya line in western Moscow, causing three carriages of the train to derail with hundreds of commuters on board at the height of morning rush hour.

Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for Russia`s Investigative Committee, said the accident happened when the train was traveling at a speed of 70 kilometers (43 miles) per hour in violation of underground railway safety requirements. He said the committee had launched a criminal investigation into the derailment, though such a probe is standard procedure when an accident results in mass casualties. Markin said investigators were looking into several possible causes for the accident, including a technical fault in the train, a switch failure, or a possible subsidence of the rails as work was underway on the other side of the tracks. "The investigators are also checking the version of a power surge causing the train`s sharp braking, but it has not been confirmed yet," he said. But although investigators were considering several possible causes, the spokesman described the accident as "likely man-made," though he ruled out any links to terrorism. "It is obvious that there are people responsible for it, so soon there will be suspects in the case," Markin said. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin also supported the criminal investigation, and expressed hope that a cause would soon be determined. "There are no versions so far that would explain the accident," he said. "There is only information concerning emergency braking and the subsequent crash. Why this happened and what can explain the huge number of victims are questions that should be answered by investigators and a related review." The health ministry confirmed at least 21 people had been killed while 129 more were hospitalized, including 42 people who remained in a serious or critical condition, meaning the death toll could still increase. The Russian news agency ITAR-TASS reported late Tuesday that the death toll had already risen to 22, but that figure could not be independently verified. Sobyanin said he declared Wednesday a day of mourning for those who died in the derailment. The Moscow Metro, the world`s third busiest rapid transit system, serves nearly 2.5 billion passengers a year. And while incidents happened regularly, accidents resulting in mass casualties are rare. Thousands of people were evacuated from the Moscow subway in June 2013 when a power cable caught fire during morning rush hour, causing stations to fill with smoke and injuring 76 people.

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