

Suicide Bombers Strike U.S., Israeli Embassies in Uzbekistan

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The explosions, which occurred outside the buildings of both embassies in the Uzbek capital Tashkent, appeared to have been set off by suicide bombers, Reuters reported. Two Uzbeks were killed in the attacks.

A U.S. Embassy official said no Americans were injured as a result of the blast.

“There has been a confirmed explosion near the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent,” a spokeswoman in Moscow told Reuters. “And there are no confirmed injuries at this time.”

Israeli Ambassador Tzvi Cohen said no Israelis were injured in the blast directly outside the Israeli Embassy.

“The attacker came as close as possible to the door, saw the Uzbek security men and then detonated himself,” an Israeli security source told Reuters.

Neither of the embassy buildings, which sit in separate areas of the mostly modern city of Tashkent, were damaged in the explosions.

The three blasts, which included one at the state prosecutor’s office, took place as 15 suspected al-Qaida members stand trial in Tashkent for a series of violent attacks earlier this year that killed nearly 50 people. Uzbek officials have accused the men of trying to overthrow the government led by Islam Karimov.

Karimov, who runs the former Soviet republic with an iron fist, according to the AP, and who has been accused of abuses by human rights groups, has been trying to eliminate Islamic extremism in his country. During the 2001 U.S. war in Afghanistan, Karimov allowed the placement of U.S. military bases within his countries boundaries which border Afghanistan. He has been an ally of the United States since.

Just before the attack on the Israeli embassy, witnesses said a man with a belt of explosives around his waist approached the building, according to Reuters. After the explosion, police sealed off the debris-strewn area. The attack is now under investigation by Uzbek officials.