

Saboteurs send train hurtling over bridge, causing one death

■ **TERRORISM:** "Sons of Gestapo" pulled spikes from a railroad track, injuring 100 and killing one

HYDER, Ariz. (AP) — Saboteurs calling themselves "Sons of Gestapo" pulled 29 spikes from a stretch of railroad track, sending an Amtrak train hurtling over a bridge into a dry stream bed Monday, authorities said. One person was killed and about 100 were injured.

A note found outside the train in a remote expanse of desert referred to the federal sieges at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho — both rallying cries for right-wing, anti-government extremists.

"That's what leads me to believe this is a terrorist attack," said Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Asked who might be responsible, he said, "It leans toward the domestic side."

Amtrak's Sunset Limited, bound from Miami to Los Angeles with 248 passengers and 20 crew members, derailed while

crossing a 30-foot-high bridge 50 to 60 miles southwest of Phoenix sometime after 1 a.m.

Four cars plunged from the bridge at 50 mph, with three coming to rest on their sides on the sandy bottom of the desert wash. Passengers, jolted awake, made their way through jumbled belongings and crawled out the windows.

"I heard babies screaming, and their mother was hollering each one of their names, one after the other," said Betty Addington, 60, of Dallas, who was traveling with her 80-year-old mother to visit a sister in Los Angeles.

One person was killed, 12 were seriously hurt and about 100 others suffered less serious injuries, said Sgt. Tim Campbell, a sheriff's spokesman. The dead man was identified as Mitchell Bates, 41, a sleeping-car attendant based in Los Angeles.

"The last thing he said to me, before he went to bed last night, was 'See you tomorrow, baby doll,'" said Helen Martinez of Los Angeles, a waitress on the train.

Phoenix hospitals reported treating at least 40 people, including one woman who was listed in critical condition. Among the hospitalized were a 3-month-old boy and a 31-year-old woman who was on her honeymoon.

Deputies found a one- or two-page message signed "Sons of Gestapo" at the scene, the sheriff said. The note referred to the government sieges at Waco and Ruby Ridge, the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

An electronic database search of U.S. newspapers big and small found no mention of a "Sons of Gestapo." A search of about six months' worth of Internet discussion groups and World Wide Web pages also found nothing.

The site — 27 miles east of this speck on the map of southwestern Arizona — is accessible only by air and by four-wheel-drive vehicle. It took an hour for the first rescuers to reach the victims.

Investigators from the FBI, National Transportation Safety Board and other federal and state agencies combed the scene.

The sheriff said the saboteurs somehow "separated" the rail and that a wire was attached to disable an electronic system that would have warned the crew of a break in the line.

Investigators found that in a 19-foot section of track, 29 of the spikes that hold the rail to the wooden cross-ties had been pulled out, according to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Amtrak President Thomas M. Downs told a Washington news conference that someone removed a 36-inch steel bar weighing about 18 pounds that is used to connect two sections of rail. He said he hadn't heard about the spikes being removed.

"Someone obviously intended to drop the train off the trestle into the ravine," Downs said.

The bars are bolted to the rails and keep them from separating when trains pass over, Downs explained. He said the sabotage could have been done in about 10 minutes by someone with a rudimentary knowledge of railroading.

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Passengers recall roar of derailing Amtrak

■ **WRECK:** Many riders thrown from beds as train cars plunge off tracks

HYDER, Ariz. (AP) — Bartender Roberto Concepcion bid good night to a fellow crewman in the lounge of the Amtrak Sunset Limited and climbed into bed.

He was just falling asleep when the train began shaking violently from side to side, throwing him to the floor.

"It was very quiet, and then we heard wailing cries from the children," Concepcion said. "I just prayed, 'My God, my God, my God.'"

The roar of the 12-car train derailed sliced through the stillness of the desert night and the sleep of many of the 268 passengers and crew members aboard.

"I heard babies screaming and their mother was hollering each one of their names, one after the other," said Betty Addington, 60, of Dallas, Tx, who was on her way to Los Angeles with her 80-year-old mother, Velela Clark.

Addington was pitched off the top bunk as the railroad car flipped onto its side. She groped around in the darkness for what seemed like several minutes. Realizing the windows had become the floor, Addington managed to squeeze herself and her mother through a cracked wall and into the moonlight.

Eight of the train's cars derailed, four plunging 30 feet off

a bridge into a dry riverbed. The passengers and crew shouted to one another as they walked, crawled and climbed on the toppled train.

"I did a bit of a swan dive. It was quite peculiar. It happened so quickly, I didn't realize we'd gone off a bridge. I just thought we'd derailed," Virginia Addison said. The 42-year-old journalist from Sydney, Australia, was thrown from her top bunk as she was sleeping.

Juanita Jones, 59, of Moss Point, Miss., was traveling with her 70-year-old husband, George Jones, who is blind, when the train derailed.

"The next thing we knew, we were done piled up," she said. "We were pinned and we couldn't get out the window."

Henry Ford, 47, a car attendant from Los Angeles whom many passengers credited with pulling them from the wreckage, cried as he recalled what he saw in the moonlight.

"I stood up on the train, looked at the horizon and saw all the people — sick, hurt, elderly, crying. What I saw was a sick mind," he said, referring to reports the train may have been sabotaged.

Among the injured passengers were numerous senior citizens, a 3-month-old infant, a couple on their honeymoon and many crew members, who mourned the death of an Amtrak attendant killed in the accident.

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