



The Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FBI REPORT CONFIRMS FINDINGS OF LOCAL INVESTIGATORS INTO EXPLOSION

On Wednesday, October 03, 2018, at about 8:40 p.m., Police received a report of an explosion at an apartment building that houses students of the Medical University of the Americas. The building is situated at Pot Works, Nevis. As a result, the Police responded immediately, along with the Fire and Rescue Services.

28-year-old Nada Khalil and 31-year-old Gayane Balasanyan, both citizens of the United States of America (U.S.A.), were in a section of the apartment building when an explosion took place in that area destroying the section and extensively damaging adjoining sections. The two students sustained severe thermal burns and were immediately transported to the Alexandra Hospital for treatment. As a result of their injuries, both students were transported to the U.S.A. via air ambulance for further medical attention.

Members of the Fire and Rescue Services extinguished the fire caused by the explosion. The area was cordoned to allow for personnel from the Crime Scene Unit and the Criminal Investigation Department, along with Fire investigators to process the scene.

On October 09, 2018, the Royal St. Christopher and Nevis Police Force (RSCNPF) made a request for assistance from the U.S. Embassy in Barbados regarding the investigation into the explosion. On October 10, 2018, a Supervisory Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrived in the Federation.

After a briefing with local investigators, interviews with key persons and an analysis of the scene, a section of the report provided by the agent stated:

"...there were no known indications that either victim was targeted, or that either victim intentionally caused the blast. Examination of the scene did not reveal any evidence of a destructive device or illicit activity that could result in an explosion. The condition of the stove burner control knob and/or gas supply line present the possibility that propane unintentionally leaked into the apartment. If initial reporting is corroborated, the victim's attempt to light a cigarette was the likely source that led to the blast and subsequent fire."

His findings are in line with the findings of local investigators. It must be noted, however, that the report also stated that conclusions regarding the origins of the suspected gas leak could not be provided by the FBI. Notwithstanding that, the observations provided will serve to further the investigations of the RSCNPF.

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