

The Number of Fatalities in the Explosion of the Saratoga Hotel Rises to 43

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MADRID, Spain. - The number of fatalities from the explosion at the Saratoga Hotel rose to 43 this Tuesday.

According to information released by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP, by its Spanish acronym), the most recent body found in the rubble is still being identified.

Until 6:30 pm of Tuesday, May 10th, 97 persons were reported injured. Of these, 17 remain hospitalized in six medical institutions in the capital. A total of thirty-seven patients were discharged.

In its note, MINSAP expressed its condolences to family members and friends of the deceased. It also thanked those who have continued to take care of patients.

Among the dead and injured in the accident are hotel workers as well as pedestrians who were strolling around the perimeter of the building when the

explosion occurred.

All the fatalities are Cuban nationals, with the exception of a 28-year-old Spanish woman, Cristina López-Cerón Ugarte. The young woman was visiting the island with César, her fiancé, who remains in serious condition.

Up to now, there are still three hotel workers missing.

The collapse also resulted in damages to 38 residences near the hotel. Communist Party First Secretary for Havana, Luis Antonio Torres Iríbar, stated that “22 families were evacuated and transferred to Villa Panamericana, a total of 69 persons; the rest evacuated their homes out of their own volition.”

Explosion in the hotel

The explosion at the hotel facility occurred last Friday, May 6th, at 10:50 am Cuba time.

At the time of the explosion, 51 workers were inside the building readying the hotel for its reopening. The hotel was schedule to reopen on Tuesday, May 10th, after being closed for two years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Cuban authorities, the cause of the explosion was a gas leak that occurred when a liquid gas tanker truck was refilling a hotel container.

The Saratoga Hotel

Located in Paseo del Prado in Havana, one of the busiest areas in the city, the hotel building was constructed in 1880 and, at first, served as a warehouse. It wasn't inaugurated as a hotel until 1933.

In 2005, the Office of the Havana Historian undertook a major renovation to commemorate the 486th anniversary of the founding of the City of Havana. That year, it reopened as a luxury 5-star hotel.

The hotel was equipped with 96 guest rooms, three bars, two restaurants and a business center. Afterward, a spa and a high-end gym were added. In addition, its roof terrace was remodeled to include a swimming pool that features a panoramic view of the city.

Celebrities, like American performing artist Beyoncé, her husband, the rapper Jay-Z, and pop-music queen Madonna, chose the Saratoga Hotel for their respective stays in Cuba.

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