



Smoke Bomb Hurlled at Japanese PM During Outdoor Event, Motives Unclear

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was safely evacuated after a suspect hurled what seemed to be a smoke bomb at an outdoor event in western Japan on Saturday, according to Japanese media.

Moreover, a loud explosion happened at the scene, but Kishida took cover and emerged unscathed while police attempted to pin a man to the ground at the scene, public broadcaster NHK reported.

“Police are investigating the details of the loud explosive sound at the previous speech venue,” Kishida said in a video broadcast by NHK after the incident.



YouTube

Screenshot from video of attack on Kishida

The incident happened at the Saikazaki fishing harbor in Wakayama prefecture, around 65 kilometers south-west of Osaka city.

Right before the blast, Kishida was served local specialty seafood, based on media reports. News video depicted Kishida looking behind him in surprise as the area was filled with shouts.

The Asahi newspaper reported that a man identified as an employee of the fishery cooperative grabbed a young man as police surrounded the suspect and pinned him to the ground. A short while later, an explosion could be heard, along with a visible cloud of smoke near where Kishida had been standing.

A NHK video clip depicted the object the suspect hurled at Kishida. The object seemed at first glance to be a metal cylinder. Investigative sources claimed they seized two cylindrical objects from the scene. Although one of them exploded right away, the other allegedly remained in the hands of the arrested man.

More video footage showcased throngs of people fleeing the scene as various police officers appeared to pin an individual to the ground before removing him from the scene. The 24-year-old suspect from Kawanishi city was arrested by the police, Kyodo News reported. While some media reports claimed that the suspect’s name is Ryuji Kimura, another local media source said that police were still attempting to confirm the suspect’s name as he remained silent throughout questioning. Authorities are still trying to ascertain the motives for the suspect’s actions.

Kishida was about to give a speech after touring the harbor when the incident took place. His speech was supposed to be at 11:40 a.m. local time, Kishida’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) said.

Despite the morning’s events, Kishida decided to continue his Saturday afternoon campaign schedule, the LDP declared on its Twitter account. The premier left police headquarters shortly after the incident and proceeded to a train station in Wakayama city to give a speech. He said the incident must not upset plans for local elections.

Furthermore, Kishida apologized for the inconvenience and worry caused by the incident.



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on April 17, 2023

“I am sorry for causing many people to be concerned. We are in the middle of an important election for our country. We must carry this on together,” Kishida said. By-elections in several regions for the Lower House of Japan’s Parliament are scheduled to be held on April 23.

Unfortunately, one of the security officers who was guarding the venue at the scene of the attack sustained minor injuries due to the blast, Japanese media reported on April 15.

A woman at the scene said in an interview with NHK that she noticed a flying object and that it gave her “a bad feeling”.

“Then we heard a really loud noise. It made my daughter cry,” she added.

Another witness at the scene told NHK: “When we all stopped in front of the podium, someone started saying ‘culprit’ or something, or ‘an explosive was thrown’, so everyone started dispersing fast. And then, about 10 seconds after the culprit was captured, there was a blast.”

The next day (Apr 16), Kishida declared that the country needed to boost security as officials from the Group of Seven (G7) countries were due to visit for a meeting starting that day in the resort city of Karuizawa.

“At a time when high-ranking officials from all over the world are visiting ... Japan as a whole needs to maximize its efforts to ensure security and safety,” Kishida said in a speech to reporters.

“It’s unforgivable such a violent act was committed during an election campaign,” he added.

The two-day G7 meeting, starting April 16, was regarded as laying the groundwork for the G7 leaders’ summit in Hiroshima in May. Topics included international issues such as the Russo-Ukraine conflict, a belligerent China, as well as Myanmar’s military junta’s attacks.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno assured that police have been instructed to boost security and that the government would implement the necessary security measures at the upcoming G7 summit in Hiroshima.

Matsuno said the government would wait for the outcome of police investigations before providing details on the suspect’s motives.

Isao Itabashi, an anti-terrorism expert at the Council for Public Policy, told NHK: “The fact that an incident like this happened at this time must be taken seriously.”

Many compared Saturday’s explosion in Wakayama with the murder of the late former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. After all, Saturday’s incident came less than a year after Abe was murdered by a gunman in the western city of Nara on July 8, 2022. Police arrested the gunman on the spot.

“I thought there was some kind of explosion and something similar to what happened to former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe might have occurred,” an unnamed worker at the fishing port told Kyodo News.

Abe’s assassination shocked a nation that prided itself on safety and strict gun laws. Following Abe’s killing and the subsequent national outcry that ensued, Japan’s police ramped up their security measures after investigations found loopholes in security arrangements on the day Abe was shot.



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