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## **Investigative operations conducted as part of probe in gas explosion and house collapse in Volgograd killing and injuring people**



The Volgograd Region Office of the Investigative Committee continues investigating unsafe work entailing death of two or more people under Part 3 of Article 238 of the RF Penal Code after a gas explosion that took place in a block of flats in Universitetsky Avenue in the city of Volgograd.

An investigative team of the most experienced investigators of regional and territorial investigative authorities and criminalists was charged with the investigation. In addition, Chairman of the Investigative Committee has ordered that a team of experienced investigators and criminalists of the Committee's Central Office should be dispatched to Volgograd to provide practical assistance and guidance to the investigation.

Initial investigation has revealed that on 14 May, a man employed a 35-year-old local resident via an online job advertisement to connect his son's shop to the city water supply system. To do that the

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worker had to use special equipment to prick soil under the road in Panfilovskaya Street in Sovetsky District of the city in the direction of a water well located near No 60 in Universitetsly Avenue. The investigators discovered that the said work had not been authorized by Soversky District Administration, Volgogradgorgaz or any other controlling bodies.

About 11 AM on 16 May 2017, the said worker was pricking the soil when he damaged a gas pipe and called an emergency team of Volgogradgorgaz who stopped the gas leak by cutting off the supply. Two hours later, when the team was doing the repairs, there was a gas explosion which took down the third section of No 60 in Universitetsky Avenue. The house had 45 flats occupied by 97 people, according to preliminary data.

Four bodies were found under the debris. One of them was identified as an emergency gas service, the others were residents of the house. The bodies were sent for a postmortem.

At least 11 people, three of them in grave condition were taken to hospital, while 6 more are experiencing shock.

By now, the investigators have detained three suspects – the owner of the shop Yuraslav Babayan, his father Yury Babayan who employed the worker to do the unauthorized job and the worker Vladimir Leksunkin. The investigators have searched their flats and confiscated business documents, a laptop computer and the worker's drafts on similar kind of work he did before.

A total of 80 people have been questioned so far, including 57 victims. Investigative operations are ongoing. The investigators are now readying a request to courts to remand the suspects in custody pending trial. They have been interrogated, but denied the charges.

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