

Investigators Search for Links Between New Orleans Attack and Las Vegas Blast

The two episodes have superficial similarities, including that both suspects used the same car rental app.

By Glenn Thrush
New York Times

Investigators are looking into whether the deadly terrorist attack in New Orleans on Wednesday is linked to the detonation of a Tesla Cybertruck outside a Trump hotel in Las Vegas later in the day, but they have yet to find any connection between the two episodes, President Biden said.

Local and federal law enforcement officials are trying to determine if the man who drove a truck into a crowd in the French Quarter just after 3 a.m. on Wednesday and the man who rented the Tesla that exploded in Nevada are connected beyond superficial similarities: Both men chose soft targets on New Year's Day and rented trucks through the same budget car rental app, [Turo](#).

"Law enforcement, the intelligence community are investigating" the Las Vegas explosion, "including whether there is any possible connection to the attack in New Orleans," Mr. Biden said in a brief statement to reporters at Camp David.

"I directed my team to make sure every resource is made available to the federal, state and local law enforcement, to complete the investigation in New Orleans quickly, and make sure there's no remaining threat to the American people," he added.

Mr. Biden's statement reflected the heightened sense of alarm among federal law enforcement officials who are investigating whether the New Orleans attack involved a larger cell of ISIS sympathizers — a scenario the F.B.I. and intelligence officials have warned [was a growing threat](#).

Officials emphasized there was no reason to believe the two episodes were connected despite Mr. Biden's comments. But they have yet to nail down key details of the Las Vegas blast — including whether the badly burned body recovered from the Cybertruck matches the man who rented the vehicle, according to a senior law enforcement official briefed on the investigation.

One person was killed and at least seven people were injured after the Tesla, packed with fireworks and gas canisters, exploded outside an entrance of the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas.

At a news conference, Sheriff Kevin McMahon of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said the authorities “believe this to be an isolated incident” but have not yet ruled out a connection to the [attack in New Orleans](#) that killed at least 15 people.

“There is no further threat to the community,” Sheriff McMahon said.

As of Wednesday afternoon, there was no indication the explosion was connected to ISIS, which Mr. Biden said inspired the New Orleans attack, but the investigation continued, Sheriff McMahon added.

The police said the Tesla was rented in Colorado using Turo, an app that matches private car owners with renters. The authorities were able to trace the vehicle back to Colorado using video footage captured at charging stations.

Sheriff McMahon said he thought it was a “coincidence” that both men used Turo.

Turo officials said that they did not believe the renter of either truck “had a criminal background that would have identified them as a security threat.”

The F.B.I. said the driver in the New Orleans attack, Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar, 42, who served eight years in the Army, died after injuring two police officers in a shootout after he sped a truck into a crowd of New Year’s revelers at one the most popular tourist destinations in the city.