

North Country Public radio - Cuomo visits corrections officer injured by "bomb"

by Brian Mann

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Officials have released little information about a state corrections officer burned over the weekend near Utica when a suspicious package exploded outside his home. Governor Andrew Cuomo visited the officer in a Syracuse hospital yesterday.

A probe led by the Oneida County Sheriff's office grew over the Memorial Day weekend to include half a dozen state and federal agencies, including the FBI, the ATF, and the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

"I just met with the family of a corrections officer who has been severely injured from a package-slash-bomb that was at the end of his driveway, which he went to retrieve," said Cuomo in Syracuse on Monday

Authorities still have not identified the state prison guard, who lives in the town of Floyd, New York. Cuomo said there are still big unanswered questions. "What time of bomb, is it a sophisticated bomb? We don't know whether or not it is related to the prison at this point."

According to the Oneida County Sheriff's office, the victim of the attack was a 52-year-old man who sustained burns to his upper body.

Transcript from Governor Cuomo's press conference Monday

Governor Cuomo: Today, I am joined by the representatives from the Department of Corrections and State Police. I just met with the family of a Correction Officer who as the papers have reported, has been severely injured from a package slash bomb that was at the end of his driveway which he went to retrieve. We have basically the first concern is a health concern and this is a fantastic facility and they are doing a great job. They happen to have a burn unit that specializes in just this, so he's in exactly the right place. We're proud that it's part of the SUNY system and the doctors are monitoring his condition. He's in critical condition, but we keep fingers crossed and you pray for the best. With burns, it's a long road. Infection is the fear and is the enemy and I had a chance to see the room he's in and who are nurses taking care of him. He's getting the best care that he can get.

Second question is who, how, why and that we have a full investigation that's going on and all law enforcement is going to be coordinating. The Sheriff's office is taking the lead. The State Police are bringing significant resources. The FBI; the JTTF. What kind of bomb? Is it a sophisticated bomb, et cetera? That's all underway at the same time. We don't know whether or not it's related to the prison at this point. He did work in the State prison system and the State prison system is a dangerous place to work. Sometimes we take the men and women of the Corrections Department for granted. We have 54,000 people in State prisons; these people are not there because they're model

citizens. These are dangerous, dangerous places to work. Just think of that, 54,000 inmates. We'll see if its job related, if it is not job related we'll go from there. But in any event, he's a member of the family, of New York State, he's been doing public service, and helping keep everyone else safe as a Correction Officer. So we all wanted to come and pay our respects and give our condolences and warm wishes to the family. I wanted to make sure that the State was doing everything it could. I got a briefing from law enforcement before I met with the family, I then talked to the family, the family seemed happy with the way things were being handled. And time will tell at this point. Any questions?

Reporter: Can you explain, when something like this happens, across the state, is there extra care or extra vigilance taken for other Correction Officers?

Governor Cuomo: Well, every time a thing like this happens, you learn a lesson. Now, a thing like this has never really happened before. Unfortunately, we have too many things like this that never happen before, right? We have too many cases of first impression. We have hurricanes in places where they never had hurricanes. We had floods in places where they never had floods. You know, we've had attacks in places where we've never had attacks, so, the world is changing and it's changing quickly – and some would argue not for the better – so if there is a lesson to learn we will learn the lesson and move it forward. We've learned a lot of lessons on the emergency management side. This state is in a much better position to respond, deploy – I've been at every emergency situation for the past six years, and I can tell you that we are much, much better equipped than before. If there is a lesson to learn from this, if it does go back to the prison, and somehow someone in the prison inflicted this damage, we'll find out how and we'll make sure it doesn't happen again.

Reporter: Not sure if it's targeted but do you believe it's isolated?

Governor Cuomo: You know, let the investigation go forward, let's get some facts. I know the temptation is, "well let's hypothesize and suggest a conclusion." That can be dangerous, it can be misleading. Let's get the facts and then once we have the facts we'll make a decision, see if there's something to learn and go forward.