

Rebels take credit for Mexico bomb blast

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MEXICO CITY --

A small leftist guerrilla group claimed responsibility for a homemade bomb that exploded outside a Sears store and another left outside a U.S.-owned bank in southern Mexico.

The statement by the People's Revolutionary Army, or EPR, said the action was intended "to hit the interests of Mexican and foreign oligarchy."

It was posted late Wednesday, hours after the blast, on a web site that serves as clearinghouse for Latin American leftist and guerrilla groups. EPR statements with similar language and style have been posted there in the past.

The bomb caused no injuries, but damaged an entrance to the Sears store, which is operated in Mexico by Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim. A similar bomb was deactivated outside the entrance of a nearby Banamex bank branch, officials said. Banamex is owned by Citigroup Inc.

"We are willing to continue our actions to achieve the necessary conditions so that our detained and disappeared comrades ... are presented, alive," the group said, referring to two men it claims were arrested in May by security forces. The government denies holding the men.

The EPR voiced the same demands when it took responsibility for bombing three gas pipelines in central Mexico in early July.

In 2004, an EPR splinter group placed small bombs outside banks and an office of Telmex, Slim's telephone company.

Oaxaca has suffered more than a year of political unrest with numerous protests by anti-government groups.