

Hello, and welcome back for another chance to learn and improve your American English. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. Today we look back one year to a time of terror at a race in Boston, Massachusetts.

Then we travel to the Central African Republic. The United Nations says thousands of Muslims there are in danger. We'll tell you why.

Thank you for spending some time with us at VOA as we give you our world ...the good and the bad ...As It Is.

Tuesday marks the first anniversary of the bombings at the Boston Marathon in Massachusetts. On Monday April 15th, 2013, two bombs exploded near the finish line at the race. The explosions killed three people and injured more than 250 others.

Last week, a United States congressional committee invited law enforcement officials from the Boston area to share their experiences. They also discussed ways for other communities to prepare for possible attack. Anna Matteo has been watching developments for us.

Lawmakers from the two main parties were united over Boston's reaction to the events of one year ago. Michael McCaul is chairman of the House of Representatives' Homeland Security Committee. He was emotional as he praised police officers from Boston and the neighboring city of Watertown.

Officials say the Boston Marathon bombings were the work of two brothers, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. In the early hours of Friday, April 19, the two fought a gun battle with police. Tamerlan Tsarnaev was killed. His brother escaped but was caught later that night after an extensive manhunt.

At the Congressional hearing, Representative McCaul stated that the brothers had reportedly planned to attack New York City.

"These terrorists had six more bombs in their car and they were on their way to Times Square. If it wasn't for these heroic acts of bravery, New York City could have been hit again."

Representative Loretta Sanchez noted that the investigation is still continuing. She warned committee members not to interfere with the government's case against Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. He goes on trial November 3rd.

Former Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis told the committee that the people of Boston remain united. He said many people are preparing to compete in the marathon next week to honor those who died last year.

"And we run for the men and women and children who cannot be there this year, Krystle Campbell, Lu Lingzi, Martin Richard and Officer Sean Collier."

Those are the names of the people who died last year in the bombings. Krystle Campbell was a 29-year-old student from Arlington, Virginia. She was waiting to take a picture of a friend who was finishing the marathon. Eight-year-old Martin William Richard lived in Dorchester, Massachusetts. He was waiting to see his father cross the finish line. Lu Lingzi was aged 23. She was from China and was studying at Boston University.

And 26-year-old Sean Collier was a police officer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Officials say he was shot and killed by Tamerlan Tsarnaev three days after the bombings.

This year, the Boston Marathon will take place on April 21st. Watertown Police Chief Edward Deveau said he is entering the race.

"This year I will run with 12 of my officers. It is going to be an emotional day for my officers as we run that route and cross the finish line on Boylston Street."

Harvard University Professor Dutch Leonard said there is good reason why Boston area police and other officers did such an excellent job. He said one year earlier police and medical personnel held a training exercise to prepare for just such an attack.

"Any community can engage in joint planning and execution for any major fixed event. Paying your dues on good days builds the infrastructure of inter-agency familiarity, respect and trust, and has an immediate payoff. And if a bad day ever comes, as it did in Boston, that infrastructure is literally a lifesaver."

Several lawmakers said that local law enforcement is important in reacting to terrorist and other attacks. I'm Anna Matteo.

U.N Issues Warning to C.A.R. Muslims

The United Nations says 19,000 Muslims in the Central African Republic are in danger. The UN says they should move to safer towns farther north or across the border.

Tens of thousands of Muslims have already fled violence in the capital, Bangui, and the western half of the CAR. Some local officials fear that more such evacuations could strengthen calls to divide the country. Steve Ember tells us more.

The C.A.R. is a country divided. Muslims are effectively separated from Christians. In a Muslim part of Bangui, some people talk of an eventual understanding between the two sides. But others say a permanent split is more likely.

This man, Moustapha Nasse, says, "That is what I want. If we separate the country, everyone can be at peace."

Two-thousand Muslims are trapped in the PK 12 neighborhood of Bangui. They cannot risk going out. French and African Union troops stand guard, but trouble still makes its way in, almost daily.

Ibrahim Alawad is a member of the Islamic committee of PK 12. He stands at the entrance to a small house and points in the distance.

“They throw it through that way, and it coming down here.”

He is talking about a grenade. A militia fighter threw the small explosive device into the area two days ago. Five people were wounded in the attack.

UN agencies are preparing to move the Muslims of PK 12 north to towns that have agreed to accept them. In another part of Bangui, many people have left. Others say they want to go.

This man says, “We are in an open-air prison. We are held hostage. We do not feel safe. We want to go north where we can be free and earn our livings.”

There are about 10,000 Muslims left in the neighborhood of PK 5. The government has asked them to stay.

The minister of communication and reconciliation came to Friday prayers at the main religious center as a show of support.

Early this year, much of the CAR's Muslim minority fled attacks in the south and the west. Anti-balaka militia fighters were seeking to answer abuses by Seleka rebels. The anti-balaka are largely Christian. The rebels are mostly Muslim.

International forces helped large numbers of Muslims to leave Bangui and other areas safely. Some went to Cameroon and Chad. Others went to towns in the north and the east, areas still under rebel control.

The mass evacuation saved lives. But the government opposes the forced movement of so many people in the future. But it says it can do little to protect Muslims still in danger.

Some question whether international troops could fight off a separatist attempt by armed groups in the northeast. The rebels appear divided on the idea of dividing the country in two.

Some people in the CAR say those wanting a split are looking forward to sales of diamonds and possibly oil in the northeast.

The northeast has produced several rebellions over the past 10 years. Critics say the central government has done little to develop the north or deal with security problems. A political advisor to the country's president says the government needs to take steps to deal with those security concerns. The advisor, Clement Anicet Guityama-Massogo, is also a presidential spokesman. He says a division of the country is a dangerous possibility.

He says, "we feel there are Islamist extremist groups who are trying to seize upon this situation to worsen the crisis."

The government says its position is clear: the Central African Republic is indivisible. Many of the Muslims preparing to leave Bangui agree. They say they want to make peace, and that they will return when it is safe. I'm Steve Ember.

And I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. There are more Learning English programs straight ahead from VOA Washington.

