



Paris: Ricin find 'non lethal'

PARIS, France --Traces of ricin found in two small bottles at a Paris railway station this week were too small in size to be lethal, France's interior minister said.

The quantities were "non-lethal," The Associated Press quoted Nicolas Sarkozy as telling Europe-1 radio Friday.

He also said France may not have been the intended target of those who had left the deadly ricin in two small bottles at Gare de Lyon station Monday.

Instead it may have been destined to be used by Chechen rebels.

"One could make a link" to previous finds of chemicals and gear in Romainville and La Courneuve destined for Chechnya, Sarkozy said.

Two people with alleged links to the Chechen network were detained Tuesday, but Sarkozy did not say whether they were connected to the railway find.

Officials said five suspicious bottles were discovered in a routine sweep of lockers at the Gare de Lyon.

Three of the bottles contained a yellow liquid, and two of those showed traces of ricin, which was mixed with other products to make a "highly toxic poison," a source in the French counterterrorist services said.

The other two bottles contained an unidentified powder. Results of chemical testing on the bottles were released Thursday. No information was released about the powder.

The counterterrorist source said the bottles were encased in a kind of plaster mould, probably to protect them if they were being carried. The mould and the bottles were inside a red plastic bag, the source added.

The earliest the bottles could have been placed in the locker was a week ago as locker sweeps by rail employees take place every three days.

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Gare de Lyon serves southern France, Italy and Switzerland.

Ricin is a deadly poison made from castor beans which, if inhaled, swallowed or injected, can cause severe shock or death because it suppresses breathing. There is no known antidote.

Eight people were arrested in London in January after police raided two apartments in the city and found traces of ricin and equipment to produce the toxic agent.

-- *CNN State Department Correspondent Andrea Koppel, Senior International Correspondent Sheila MacVicar, Senior Producer Henry Schuster and Consultant Claude Moniquet* contributed to this report

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