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## Early morning explosion damages controversial Georgia monument

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A rural Georgia monument that some conservative Christians have criticized as satanic and that others have dubbed "America's Stonehenge" was bombed before dawn Wednesday in an attack that turned one of its four granite panels into rubble.

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The Georgia Guidestones monument near Elberton was damaged by an explosive device, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation said. The Elbert County Emergency Management Agency said the explosion was seen on video cameras shortly after 4 a.m. Pictures and aerial video show the destroyed panel on the ground.

The bureau on Wednesday evening released surveillance video showing the violent explosion and a silver sedan speeding away from the scene. Investigators are asking the public for help identifying the perpetrators. No suspect descriptions, or a possible motive, have been released. It's unclear how many suspects may have been involved.

The agency has "many leads," Northern Judicial Circuit District Attorney Parks White said on Facebook. He said the monument could be considered a public building, and the penalty for using explosives to destroy a public building was a minimum of 20 years in prison without the possibility of parole.

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"Regardless of your feelings about the origin of the Guide Stones, their meaning, or the intention of the person who commissioned and erected them, they are a historical landmark, and this destructive act was an assault upon our community," White said.

After prior vandalism, video cameras connected to the county's emergency dispatch center were stationed at the site, said Elbert Granite Association Executive Vice President Chris Kubas.

The enigmatic roadside attraction was built in 1980 from local granite, commissioned

by an unknown person or group under the pseudonym R.C. Christian.

"That's given the guidestones a sort of shroud of mystery around them, because the identity and intent of the individuals who commissioned them is unknown," said Katie McCarthy, who researches conspiracy theories for the Anti-Defamation League. "And so that has helped over the years to fuel a lot of speculation and conspiracy theories about the guidestones' true intent."

The 16-foot-high panels bear a 10-part message in eight different languages with guidance for living in an "age of reason." One part calls for keeping world population at 500 million or below, while another calls to "guide reproduction wisely – improving fitness and diversity."

It also serves as a sundial and astronomical calendar. But it's the panels' mention of eugenics, population control and global government that have made them a target of far-right conspiracists.

The monument's notoriety took off with the rise of the internet, Kubas said, until it became a roadside tourist attraction, with thousands visiting each year.



An explosion July 6, 2022, damaged the Georgia Guidestones, a monument near Elberton, Georgia.

GEORGIA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

The site received renewed attention during Georgia's May 24 gubernatorial primary when third-place Republican candidate Kandiss Taylor claimed the guidestones are satanic and made demolishing them part of her platform. Comedian John Oliver featured the guidestones and Taylor in a [segment in late May](#). McCarthy said right-wing personalities including [Alex Jones](#) had talked about them in previous years, but that "they sort of came back onto the public's radar" because of Taylor.

"God is God all by Himself. He can do ANYTHING He wants to do," Taylor wrote on social media Wednesday. "That includes striking down Satanic Guidestones."

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The monument had previously been vandalized, including when it was spray-painted in 2008 and 2014, McCarthy said. She said the bombing is another example of how conspiracy theories do and can have a real-world impact."

"We've seen this with QAnon and multiple other conspiracy theories, that these ideas can lead somebody to try to take action in furtherance of these beliefs," McCarthy said. "They can attempt to try and target the people and institutions that are at the center of these false beliefs."

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Kubas and many other people interpret the stones as some sort of guide to rebuilding society after an apocalypse.

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Law enforcement officials walk around the damaged Georgia Guidestones monument near Elberton, Ga., on Wednesday, July 6, 2022. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation said the monument, which some Christians regard as satanic, was damaged by an explosion before dawn.



ROSE SCOGGINS / AP

The site is about 7 miles north of Elberton and about 90 miles east of Atlanta, near the South Carolina state line. Granite quarrying is a top local industry, employing about 2,000 in the area, Kubas said.

Elbert County sheriff's deputies, Elberton police and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation are among the agencies trying to figure out what happened. Bomb squad technicians were called out to look for evidence, and a state highway that runs near the site was closed for a time.

Kubas said the association has helped remove previous vandalism and will likely seek to stabilize the damage. He said local officials and community leaders may have to decide who, if anyone, pays for restoration.

"If you didn't like it, you didn't have to come see it and read it," Kubas said. "But unfortunately, somebody decided they didn't want anyone to read it."

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