

# New train nerve gas attack has Japan's nerves on edge

YOKOHAMA, Japan (AP)—The old woman stood in front of the entrance to Yokohama Station, shopping bags in hand, and watched a chemical warfare unit suit up and head inside.

"Oh my god," she said. "Not again." A month after terrorists released nerve gas in Tokyo's subways, a possible copycat attacker let loose a mystery gas Wednesday at the main train station in Yokohama, just south of the capital.

This time, 300 people got sick, and the nation's ragged nerves were set on edge again.

The attack in Yokohama came after one of Japan's most trying months since World War II, in which cherished beliefs about the nation's security have been undermined.

Twelve people were killed and 5,500 sickened in the March 20 nerve gas attack in Tokyo. Ten days later, an assailant shot and seriously wounded the nation's top police official.

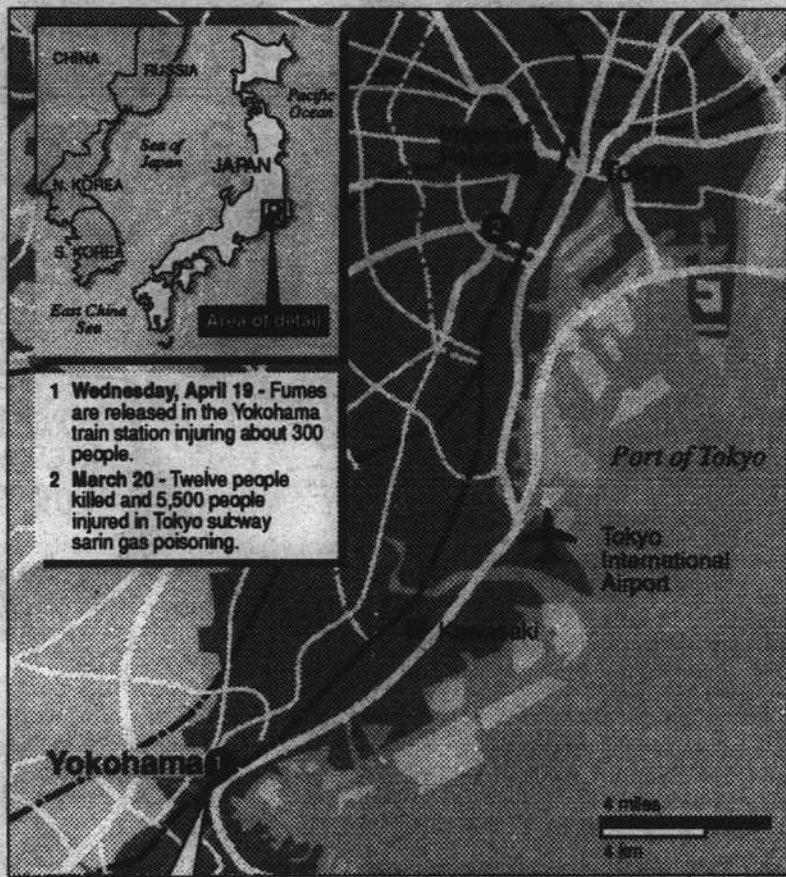
Last Saturday, stores closed and 10,000 police mobilized in Tokyo amid fears that the doomsday cult suspected in the nerve gas case would deliver a terrorist strike in the capital. Nothing happened.

Police said they believe Wednesday's case was a deliberate attack, and sent hundreds of officers and chemical weapons experts wearing gas masks to Yokohama Station to look for suspicious objects.

As with the Tokyo subway attack, they made no arrests and appeared to have no solid evidence.

At least 297 people were taken to hospitals, complaining of stinging eyes, coughs and dizziness after inhaling a foul chemical odor at the station, police said. No one was reported in serious condition; most victims were treated and released.

Pandemonium erupted as thousands of commuters raced out of the station. Some 50 emergency vehicles clogged the streets, many with their



red lights flashing and sirens wailing. Nearly a dozen helicopters buzzed overhead.

Police said the Yokohama case appeared different enough from the Tokyo subway attack that it may have been a copycat crime by another person or group. Sarin, the nerve gas used in Tokyo, was not suspected this time because the victims' symptoms were different.

Wednesday night, dozens of police with flashlights crawled on the floors at Yokohama Station, probing cracks for clues.

In a nation that boasts the lowest crime rate among leading developed countries, the idea that average com-

muters could face regular attacks by terrorists would have been dismissed as incredible just a month ago.

In the past few weeks, Japanese have been treated to one bombshell after another about Aum Shinri Kyo, the religious cult that has become the prime suspect in the nerve gas attack.

According to police, the secretive cult has spent the past few years assembling the ingredients needed to produce sarin, a deadly gas developed by the Nazis in World War II.

The cult denies involvement with the nerve gas attack and also said it had nothing to do with Wednesday's attack in Yokohama.

# Photos show dark spot arising above Neptune

WASHINGTON (AP)—A huge dark spot has formed in the blue-green clouds of Neptune, matching a feature that appeared and then disappeared from earlier photos of the distant gaseous planet.

What astronomer Heidi B. Hammel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology called "Great Dark Spot '94" was detected in photos of Neptune taken by the Hubble Space Telescope last fall.

Hammel said Wednesday at a news conference that the finding proves Neptune, a great sphere of mostly gas, was a place of constant weather change, like Earth.

She said a sequence of photos shows dramatic changes in cloud cover, with bright swirls appearing and disappearing within just a matter of weeks.

Steve Maran, a NASA astronomer, said the findings were surprising because many thought Neptune was less dynamic.

"Neptune is a much more lively world than most of us imagined," Maran said.

Hammel said a dark spot was first detected in Neptune's southern hemisphere by the Voyager spacecraft in 1989 and photographed from ground observato-

ries for three years. Images taken in 1993 indicated the spot vanished. Now the new Hubble shots show it reappeared, this time near Neptune's north pole.

She said the spots, which appear as dark voids in the blue-green clouds, were actually high pressure points of clear air that offered a window through the methane mists that shrouded Neptune.

About 17 times more massive than the Earth, Neptune is one of the giant gaseous planets and a first cousin to Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus. Neptune is 30 times farther from the sun than is Earth and was one of the least known of the giants until the visit by Voyager.

Neptune, at about 2.7 billion miles, currently is the most distant planet from the sun in the solar system. Pluto is usually the outermost planet, but its eccentric orbit will carry it inside of Neptune until 1999.

Astronomers also released dramatic new Hubble photos of Vesta, the third largest of the objects that orbit within the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. The photos were taken as Vesta passed within 154 million miles of Earth.

## Daily Nebraskan

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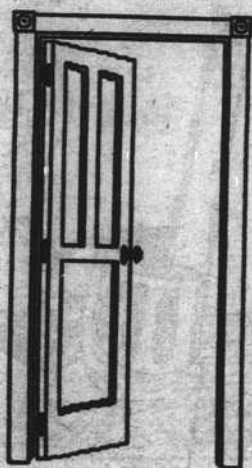
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