

**Breaking
news
International****Annan: Spain Blaming ETA Affected
Election**

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From the Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Tuesday that Spain's initial insistence that Basque terrorists were behind last week's Madrid train bombings was a factor in Sunday's upset election victory by the Socialists.

But he said there were other factors including strong public opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq and an al-Qaida claim the bombings were punishment for Spain's support for the United States.

Annan was asked if terrorism affected the election which saw Socialist leader Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, an opponent of the war, defeat conservative Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, one of President Bush's staunchest allies.

"I think the events in Spain need to be looked at very critically," Annan told reporters.

He cited "many factors" in the election: "One was the question of who did it, and whether the public felt they got a full, clear picture from the government of what was going on. There was a question of the large number of the population having been opposed to the war, being reminded of the war by the claims made by the terrorists who committed the attack."

"But I think what is important, and what this underscores, is that we need international cooperation - working across borders - to defeat and contain terrorism," Annan said.

Zapatero has promised to fulfill a campaign pledge to withdraw Spain's 1,300 troops serving in the U.S.-led coalition by June 30 unless the United Nations takes over. The U.S.-led coalition is expected to hand over power to an Iraqi body on that date.

Annan said the Spanish government's initial insistence that ETA was responsible for the bombings, which the Security Council endorsed, demonstrate the difficulties of acting too quickly.

Immediately after Thursday's bombings, which killed 200 people and injured 1,400 others, Spanish Foreign Minister Ana Palacio and Spanish diplomats here and in other capitals started lobbying for a resolution blaming ETA.

Spain is currently serving a two-year term on the Security Council, and just hours after the blasts its 15 members unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the bombings "perpetrated by the terrorist group ETA."



But as evidence mounted that Islamic extremists with links to al-Qaida were behind the bomb blasts, the Security Council was left in the embarrassing position of blaming the Basque separatists.

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