

No Motives Apparent In California Bombings

Post 1972 Nov 8
By Jack Schreiber
Associated Press

Dynamite, black powder, kerosene, gasoline—these are the weapons of the secret bombers who do their mysterious work of blast and fire in the California night.

In early October, a rest room in the Oakland police headquarters was wrecked by a dynamite blast and windows shattered in the Alameda County Courthouse a few hours later.

There were no arrests. Detectives gave no hint on the progress of the investigation. That's been the general pattern.

To the north in the San Francisco area, and the south, around Los Angeles, the bombers have left no group immune from their packages and bottles of destruction.

The targets have been on the political right, left and middle; scholastic, military and industrial. At least one target defies attempts to put it in any category at all.

However, the FBI seized some Cuban exiles on Oct. 11 in Miami and charged them in connection with a nationwide series of bombings that included some in Los Angeles. There, police have blamed Cuban anti-Castro terrorists this summer for a quick series of dynamite explosions at widely divergent targets spaced minutes apart.

But a lot of other explosions or firebombings have not so far been linked to any group.

On Sept. 13, a youth was seen depositing a black satchel on the front porch of

the Naval ROTC building on the University of California's Berkeley campus. He took off in a car. Shortly, the unoccupied one-story structure was ripped by a dynamite blast.

Last February, four homemade firebombs—wick-stuffed bottles of inflammable fluid—were tossed at the building, starting a \$2000 fire.

That same month, 50 miles away on the Stanford University campus, the Naval ROTC building was set afire by an arsonist, and three months later the job was finished. It was burned to the ground.

Chief Gordon R. Davies of the campus police department, said the methods employed in the setting of the two fires seemed the same—in each case the smell of gasoline was reported—but there is no hard evidence they were connected.

The manufacture of crude bombs, or even fancy ones, isn't much of a problem, according to Ben Huber, general manager of the products division of the Explosive Technology Co.

He pointed out that anyone interested in blowing up something can spend under \$3 on a handbook that explains the whole thing.

Last July, a police guard shack was blown up near a Berkeley campus entrance;

the previous month the Berkeley draft board—another symbol of the Vietnam war—was attacked for the third time in a year by a bomb that shattered windows and made flak out of metal blinds. The other two times firebombs were used.

Without apparent motive, a \$45,000 tractor was blasted last June in the East Bay.

That same day, some 30,000 Alameda County homes and businesses were blacked out by saboteurs who blasted three 70-foot-high Pacific Gas & Electric Co. power towers on the Oakland outskirts.

Three months before, a pair of rapid-fire blasts severed main PG&E power cables between the Oakland-Berkeley area and Contra Costa County. These jobs were apparently done by highly expert bombers who used the right amount in the right place.

The felled towers, said one policeman, even were toppled in the apparently desired direction. Police feel the PG&E blasts were related but "we have no proof."

Last July 5, perhaps the most tragic of the arson-caused fires struck a two-story building on the Stanford campus which housed the offices of now-retired President Wallace Sterling.

In one stroke, the firebugs destroyed Dr. Sterling's collection of rare books, paintings and treasured mementoes of a 40-year career.

At dawn, flames leapt 15 feet; witnesses reported "a strong smell of gasoline." Replacement cost of the building is \$200,000.

No one could figure out the motive.

A campus policeman suggested that Dr. Sterling was chosen because he was a "symbol of the university" where picketing and demonstrations raged not long before.