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Bank Bombs Link To a Weird Plot

By Robert Hollis and Hubert J. Bernhard

Long-range "demonstration" time bombs were found in the safe-deposit vaults of two banks here today—and in six banks in New York and Chicago—after special delivery letters to news outlets warned that they had been planted.

The bombs, according to the letters, were intended to show the capability of a revolutionary new underground strategy:

"To kidnap property and offer it in exchange for the freedom of our people."

Those found and deactivated here were in the Crocker-Citizens Bank at 1 Montgomery St., and the Wells Fargo Bank at Market and Montgomery Streets.

A third was supposed to have been placed in the Bank of America at Market and New Montgomery, but none was found there.

Of nine targets named in

the anonymous letters, it was the only one that failed to produce a bomb.

An explosion did take place in the safe-deposit vault of that bank over the weekend of last Sept. 6-7, however, and both bank officials and police investigators said today they believed it was one of the nine but had gone off prematurely.

Their belief was based on the facts that all the bombs were placed in the vaults last July, according to the warning letters, and that all the

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**LIVE BOMBS
FOUND IN
2 S.F. BANKS!**

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VAULTS

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safe deposit boxes involved were rented in the same name — Christopher C. Mohr.

The FBI officially took over investigation of the bombs in all three cities at 9 a.m. today, and began an intensive study of the letters and the recovered explosive devices.

217 - Day Range

They were described in the letters as an "unusual prototype" which could be set to go off on any date within a range of 217 days, the timing mechanism based on calendar watches with seven-day week and 31-day month cycles.

Access to the vaults here and elsewhere was delayed by time-lock mechanisms which had locked the safe-deposit areas for the night and did not permit them to be opened before 8 a.m.

Bank officials and police conferred last night and went to the vaults this morning with bomb squad experts, locksmiths and two German Shepherds named Bourbon and Richter that are specially trained to sniff out explosives.

Keys Mailed

Each of the nine warning letters sent to three news outlets in each city contained a key to the safe deposit box involved.

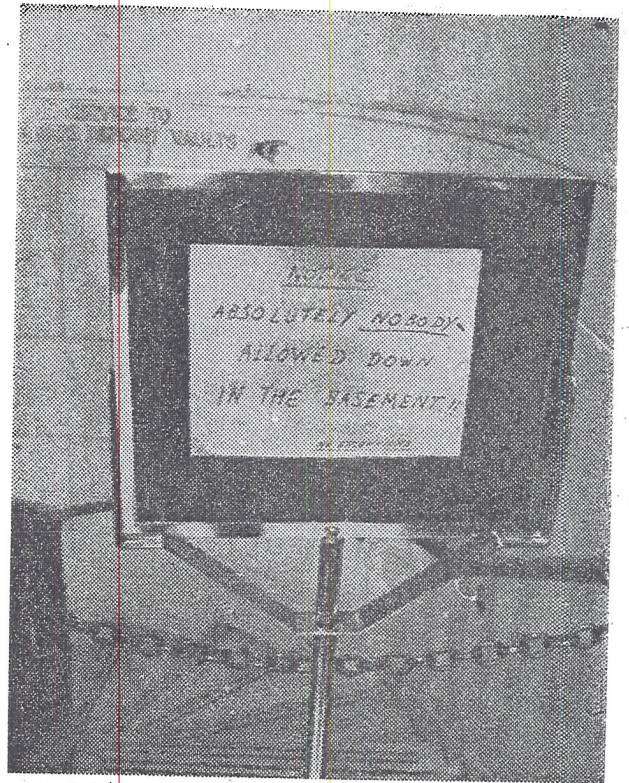
The key for the Wells Fargo Branch here, sent to the Berkeley Tribe, was not available, however, and bank officials explained that they did not retain duplicate keys to customers' boxes.

Don Bankson, a locksmith from the Herman Safe Company, drilled through the face of the box in the Wells Fargo vault, and reported that a black leather case with a "time-loaded" bomb containing black powder was found inside.

"I wasn't worried," he said. "I knew it couldn't go off by drilling through the plate."

The bomb found there, and that at Crocker-Citizens, was described on the basis of press reports as being similar to those discovered in the New York and Chicago banks.

All were described as containing about a half-pound of smokeless powder, connected to electric calendar clocks. It was not disclosed when they were set to explode, but if



WARNING TELLS ITS OWN STORY

Sign kept the curious away during search for bombs

they were placed six months ago they would have gone off shortly. The two devices located here, were placed in cardboard boxes about 18 inches



FOCAL POINT OF THE POLITICAL RANSOM BOMB PLOT

From left: the Crocker-Citizens Bank, Wells Fargo Bank and Bank of America

long, and taken away by FBI agents in a black car with Massachusetts license plates.

The first bomb, found at the Marine Midland Trust Bank on lower Broadway in New York City, would have damaged the safe deposit vault but probably would not have affected the lobby or the floor above, detectives there said.

It probably would have killed the officers who dismantled it had it gone off while they were working, they added.

That which exploded in the Bank of America branch here last September apparently did little more than blow the door from the safe deposit box in which it had been left.

Spokesmen for all the banks pointed out that the safe deposit vaults were the safest spots in their buildings for a bomb to ignite without damage to people.

The other bombs found to date were in the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co. on Wall Street and the First National City Bank in New York, and at the First National Bank, the Northern Trust Co. and the Continental Illinois Bank in Chicago.

"Mohr," the name used in renting the safety deposit boxes, was presumed to be fictitious. Quick checks in Chicago disclosed that one address he gave there was non-existent, but that a "Mohr" who identified himself as a physicist had lived at another Chicago address for two days in December of 1970.

Chicago Visits

He had paid his last visits to the box in Chicago's First National at 1:23 p.m. July 15, and again the next day at 10:26 a.m., according to bank records.

The first time, he signed the name "Christopher Charles Mohr," and the second, "Christopher C. Mohr."

The bill for \$16 for 1972 rent which was mailed him was returned unopened.

The letters announcing the bombs made it clear that they were intended for dem-



Depositors wait nervously in rotunda of Crocker Bank while police check vaults

Examiner photos by Sid Tate, Charles Doherty and Gordon Stone

onstration purposes, and said similar devices could be used to "kidnap a luxury hotel, a corporate office building or a superhighway and demand the release of a political prisoner for ransom.

Written with black felt pen on yellow letter tablets in neat printing, the letters were characterized by the use of capital "L's" even in lower-case context, and of European-style Z's. They described the plot in these words:

'Remember Jackson'

"A seven-month time bomb could easily be embedded in the structure of a building under construction . . . In three of four months continued construction would make the device virtually undetectable.

"The authorities and the public would then be told who is to be freed in exchange for the exact location

of the device. They would also be told how much time remained on the timer.

"In case the authorities should claim not to believe that the threat is real, then planting two devices and telling the media where one of them is located would cure that misconception."

The letters concluded with a declaration, in capital letters:

"FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS," and, in lower-case, "Remember George Jackson and Sam Melville."

Jackson was the prisoner killed last August in an abortive escape attempt at San Quentin Prison in which three guards and two other prisoners died.

He originally had been one of the defendants in the current trial of two former inmates of Soledad Prison accused of murdering a guard there.

Melville, 35, was one of the convicts killed during the suppression of the uprising at the Attica prison in New York State last September.

How It Works

He had been serving a 13-year sentence for the bombing of eight large buildings in New York City from July through November in 1969.

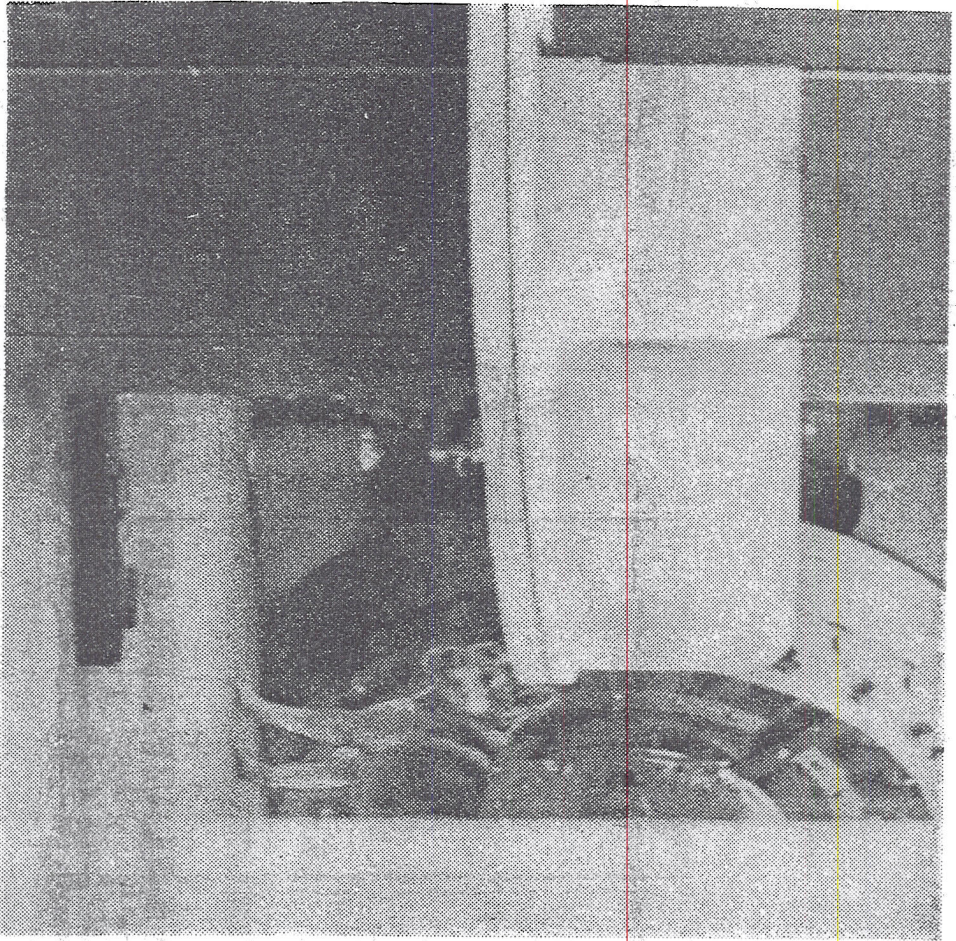
One of the bombings blamed on Melville was that of the Marine Midland Building in New York, which also was one of the targets in today's plot, in August, 1969. The bomb sent off on the eighth floor and injured 18 people.

The basic principle of the new-type bomb was described in the letters in these words:

"Calendar clocks and watches have 7 day weeks and 31 day months. Any given day and date combination

repeats itself only once every 217 days.

"Let today be any given day and date (e.g., Sunday the 31st), then the timepiece "day" and "date" of any future day can easily be calculated.



POLICE DOG RICHTER LOOKS AT WELLS FARGO BOMB ON FLOOR

Trained canine sniffers are used to help police locate explosives



DOG BOURBON AT CROCKER BANK

Policeman Bill Langlois leads it down to vaults



FBI AGENT CARRIES EXPLOSIVES UP BUSY MARKET ST.

Bomb had been defused before removal from bank vaults

—Examiner photos by Sid Tate and Charles Doherty