

# Time Bombs Found in S.F. Banks --Others in Chicago, New York

JAN 8 1972

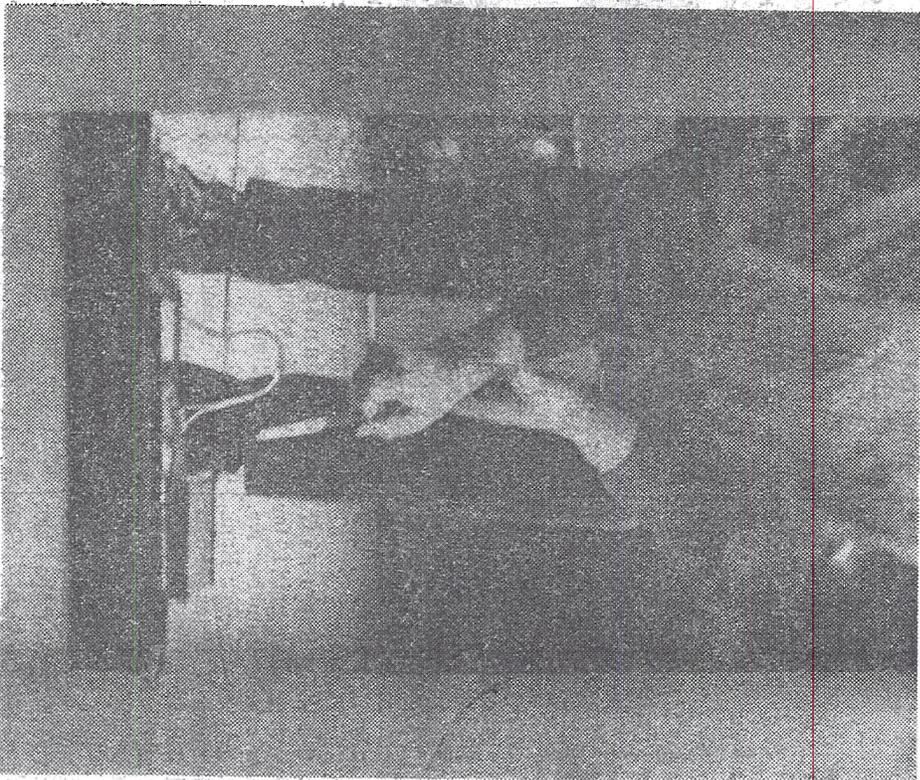
SFChronicle  
**Earlier**

## B of A Blast Is Revealed

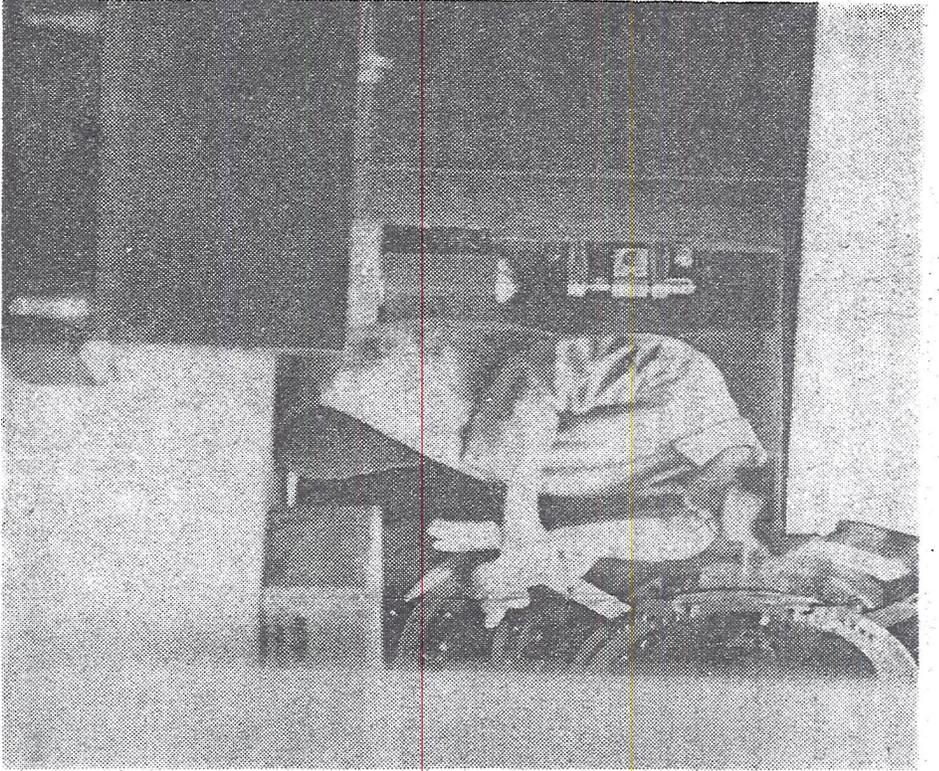
Eight time bombs designed as a "demonstration" of an apparent new radical technique were disarmed and removed from bank safety deposit boxes in San Francisco, New York and Chicago yesterday.

Police here said a ninth bomb apparently had gone off prematurely last September 7 in a safety deposit box in the Bank of America branch at Market and New Montgomery streets. That explosion was kept secret by the police—at the FBI's request—until yesterday.

All the bombs were rigged with an unusual long timing



While a German shepherd sniffed about for any additional bombs, an expert began to disarm the device at Wells Fargo



**The delicate work of disarming the black powder bomb continued until it was safe to remove it from the bank.**

*Photos by Clem Albers*

# *New Radical*

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# THE BANK

## **The Weather**

**Bay Area:** Cloudy Saturday morning, clearing afternoon. Fair Sunday. Highs, 50s; lows, 35-45.

See Page 28

# San Francisco

# ***Strategy***

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# **BOMB PLOT**

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***Chronicle***

★★★  
**FINAL**

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**More news about bank  
bombs on Pages 2 and 3.**

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device that could delay an explosion up to seven months.

The black powder used was not particularly potent. The earlier explosion at the Bank of America in San Francisco had ripped off four adjoining doors to the small box compartments.

If either of the two bombs discovered here yesterday had exploded, it could have killed or severely injured the officer working on it. But there would have been no serious damage to the vaults or to the banks involved.

Authorities in San Francisco were notified of the possible existence of the bombs late Thursday after reporter Tim Findley of The Chronicle received an anonymous letter and a key to a safety deposit box in the Crocker Bank at 1 Montgomery street.

"During July 1971 unusual prototype bombs were planted in different banks across the country," the hand-printed letter said. "These

*See Back Page*

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# Bombs in S. F. Banks

## *Others in Chicago, New York*

### From Page 1

bombs were placed in safety deposit boxes in the vaults of the banks listed below. Enclosed is one key to one of these boxes."

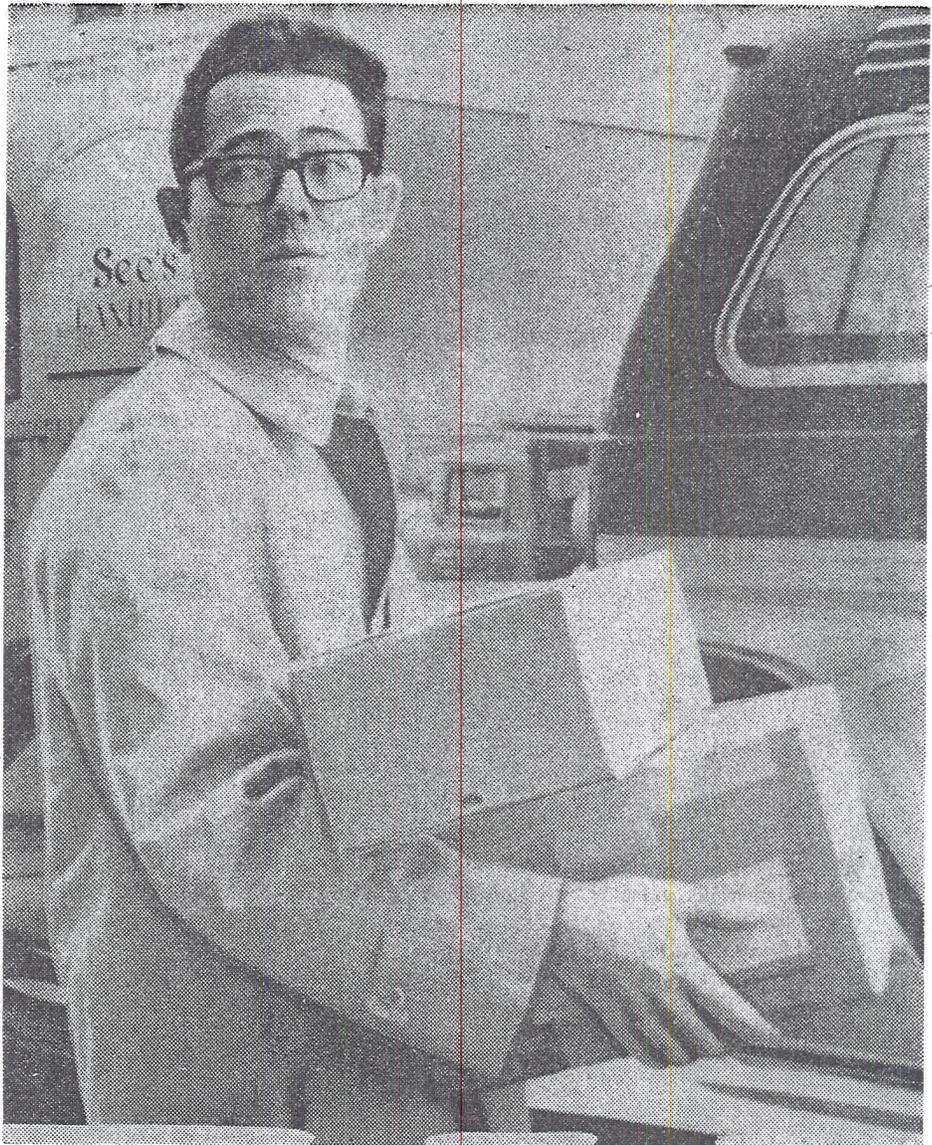
#### **KEYS**

Identical letters with keys to eight other banks were received by news media in all three cities.

In San Francisco, a letter to KSAN radio station included a key to a safety deposit box in the Bank of America branch and a letter to the Berkeley Tribe newspaper included a key to a safety deposit box in the Wells Fargo Bank branch at 44 Montgomery street. No key was produced with this letter, however.

But the Bank of America box had been exploded earlier — perhaps because of some malfunction of the timing mechanism.

The three banks face each other at the Financial District intersection of Market, Montgomery and New Montgomery streets.



**An unidentified FBI agent removed the bomb from the Wells Fargo Bank**

All the letters received in the three cities were post-marked in Chicago, and in each case, they arrived special delivery to news media after the banks had closed for the day and time locks had sealed the vaults containing the safety deposit boxes.

#### SEALED

In San Francisco, police alerted by The Chronicle went to the Crocker Bank about 5:30 p.m., but the time lock on the vault had sealed it until 8 a.m. yesterday.

As the new day began on the East Coast, police were waiting for time locks to click off first in New York where bombs were found in the First National City Bank, the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company and the Marine Midland Grace Trust Co. of New York.

An hour later, police entered the vaults at the Continental Illinois National Bank, the First National Bank of Chicago and the Northern Trust Company.

By 8 a.m. in San Francisco, six bombs had already been found, and police here were aware that five months ago a mysterious explosion ripped apart safety deposit box 1508 in the Bank of America branch at Market and New Montgomery.

Everything was identical — the curious arrangement of wires between an electric calendar clock and the half-pound charge of black pow-

der. The same type safety deposit boxes ranging in price from \$7 to \$10 for a year's rental were used. And with minor variations the name used by the renter was the same in each instance, Christopher Charles Mohr.

Bomb squad officers here employed the use of a dog trained to smell out powder devices as they entered the vaults. But the dog was primarily used to determine if there were other bombs in the area. The only bombs found were those in the box numbers given in the warning letters.

At the Crocker Bank, the time lock snapped off at 8 a.m., and Chief Security Officer Walter Patti pulled open the huge round vault door.

Police Officer Bill Langlois was standing to one side with his specially trained dog, "Bourbon."

Langlois and the dog went in first, the German shepherd hardly hesitating before he picked out only one of the some 1000 safety deposit boxes in the room. He went directly to box number 2511, the same one identified in the letter and the same one for which police had been given a key by The Chronicle.

Sergeant William Pacheco and Patrolman Raymond Portue dressed only in their routine uniforms with no protective armor entered next and gently slid the key into its matching slot.

"Delicately, very delicate-

## 'It Could Have Been The FBI'

### San José

Angela Davis' chief defense attorney said yesterday "the FBI or the CIA" could have planted the bombs found in banks in San Francisco, New York and Chicago.

The bombs, according to an unsigned letter received by news media, were intended to show how underground terrorists could force the release of political prisoners.

"The FBI or the CIA could have done it," Howard Moore said. "I hope everyone will act responsibly. We don't want to see any harm to any person or even to property. We feel the power of the people will free Angela Davis."

United Press

ly" was the way Patti described the careful turn in the lock.

Inside the safety deposit box — a covered tray really — police found the clock and powder charge arrangement.

Still in the vault, where even a large blast would be contained, Pacheco and Por-

tue carefully loosened two screws holding the fusing wires to the clock. That simply, the bomb was disarmed.

Police and FBI agents immediately began dusting it for fingerprints.

Across Montgomery street at the Wells Fargo Bank, the operation was not going as smoothly. Another team had moved into that bank's vault, but in this case they did not have the key to the safety deposit box. There were long moments of tension while the specialists drilled open the lock.

The bombs were quickly taken away by authorities who later refused to allow them to be photographed or to describe them in detail.

#### CLUES

But there were ominous clues in the letters.

"The prototype timers were made of low quality cordless electric clocks," the writer revealed. "In future bombings they will be highly reliable, nearly silent electric watches. Similarly, the slow burning powder placed in these safety deposit boxes would instead be a compact plastic explosive."

The investigation was focusing on Chicago and a mysterious Christopher Mohr. The name, thought to be fictitious, was used by the renter of all nine safety deposit boxes. He gave a Chicago address.