

Police in 3 Cities Defuse Bombs Placed in 8 Banks

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Alerted by letters from political radicals, the police moved early yesterday to defuse time bombs planted in safe-deposit boxes at three Wall Street banks and six others in Chicago and San Francisco.

Aware that at least some of the explosive had been set as long as seven months ago, the police bomb squads carefully deactivated the devices in eight of those banks.

Police officials declared that one of the bombs had already exploded last September in a San Francisco branch of Bank of America—although the incident was never publicized.

The time bombs were found after news media in San Francisco and Chicago had received letters from political radicals describing the exact locations of the explosives and warning that in the future similar devices might be planted elsewhere "to kidnap property and offer it in exchange for the freedom of our people."

The letters — sent by a group that calls itself the "Movement in Amerika" — specified that bombs were in the following nine banks:

¶New York — The Marine Midland Grace Trust Company, 140 Broadway; the First

National City Bank, 107 William Street, and Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, 40 Wall Street.

¶Chicago — The Continental Illinois National Bank, 31 LaSalle Street; the First National Bank of Chicago, First National Plaza, and the Northern Trust Company at 50 South LaSalle Street.

¶San Francisco—The Crocker Citizens National Bank, 1 Montgomery Street; the Wells Fargo Bank, Market and Montgomery Streets, and the Bank of America, Market and New Montgomery Streets.

Police officials reported that explosive devices had been uncovered yesterday morning at eight of the listed banks, but that a bomb had exploded at 12:45 A.M. Sept. 7 in a safe-deposit box of the San Francisco branch of the Bank of America listed in the letter.

According to San Francisco police officials, that blast was never publicized and has been under investigation by agents of the United States Department of Treasury. They said that damage was limited to the safe deposit box area and that there were no injuries.

In New York, policemen were

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stationed in front of the three listed Wall Street banks before 8 A.M. yesterday.

Although New York policemen had been alerted by San Francisco police officials shortly after midnight yesterday, they were unable to reach the bombs until time locks opened safe-deposit vaults in the banks about 8:30 A.M.

At the Marine Midland Grace Trust Company branch, the police kept customers and most employees outside the bank's glass doors while three members of the bomb section — Capt. Kenneth O'Neill and Detectives Christopher Hayes and William Suchowski — entered the vault area below the lobby and defused the bomb shortly before 9 A.M.

"The device would have made an effective bomb," said

Captain O'Neill while exhibiting the device, consisting of about a half-pound of powder explosive charge attached to a battery-driven calendar clock as a timing detonator.

To deactivate the bomb, the detectives drilled holes through the two-key lock of the container holding the safe deposit box and then detached wires running to the smokeless powder charge.

"Their [the detectives] lives were on the line for five and a half minutes," said Police Sgt. Edward Powers, although he noted that the bomb—had it exploded — was not large enough to cause damage outside the immediate vault area.

Police officials said the safe-deposit box was registered in the name of a Christopher Charles Mohr, who listed his address at 560 West Arlington Place, Chicago.

A Marine Midland bank official said the box had been rented on Jan. 6, 1971, for \$15 and had last been opened on July 14.

The letters specifying the location of the bombs also explained that the devices contained seven-month fuses. New York police officials said it was possible to set a timing device over that long a period.

The other banks where bombs were found also reported that a Mr. Mohr had rented their safety deposit boxes, and some said that the boxes also had last been opened in July.

Investigation Under Way

A Treasury Department spokesman said that treasury agents have been looking for a Mr. Mohr since the August bombing of the Bank of America branch in San Francisco,

where his name was also listed on a safe-deposit box at the time of the explosion.

The manager of the apartment house at 560 West Arlington Place in Chicago reported that a Christopher Charles Mohr had briefly rented an apartment there in the fall.

Among the news media that reported receiving warning letters, either by air mail or special delivery, during the last two days were The Chicago Daily News, Chicago Today, The Chicago Sun-STimes, The Seed (an underground Chicago newspaper), WMAQ-TV (a Chicago station), The San Francisco Chronicle, The Berkeley Tribe (an underground publication) and SWAN-TV (a San Francisco station).

Business Danger Cited

The four-page letters — all postmarked in Chicago — were written by hand on yellow legal-size lined paper and were not signed. The letters called the explosives "demonstration time bombs" and said a "seven-month time bomb could easily be embedded in the structure of a building under construction, e.g. the new F.B.I. building in Washington or under the roadway of a highway not yet paved over" as ransom for "political prisoners."

"Of course, the power structure could refuse to meet our

demands," the letter continued, but "who will want to vacation in that hotel, met in that board room, or drive on that superhighway for the next few months?"

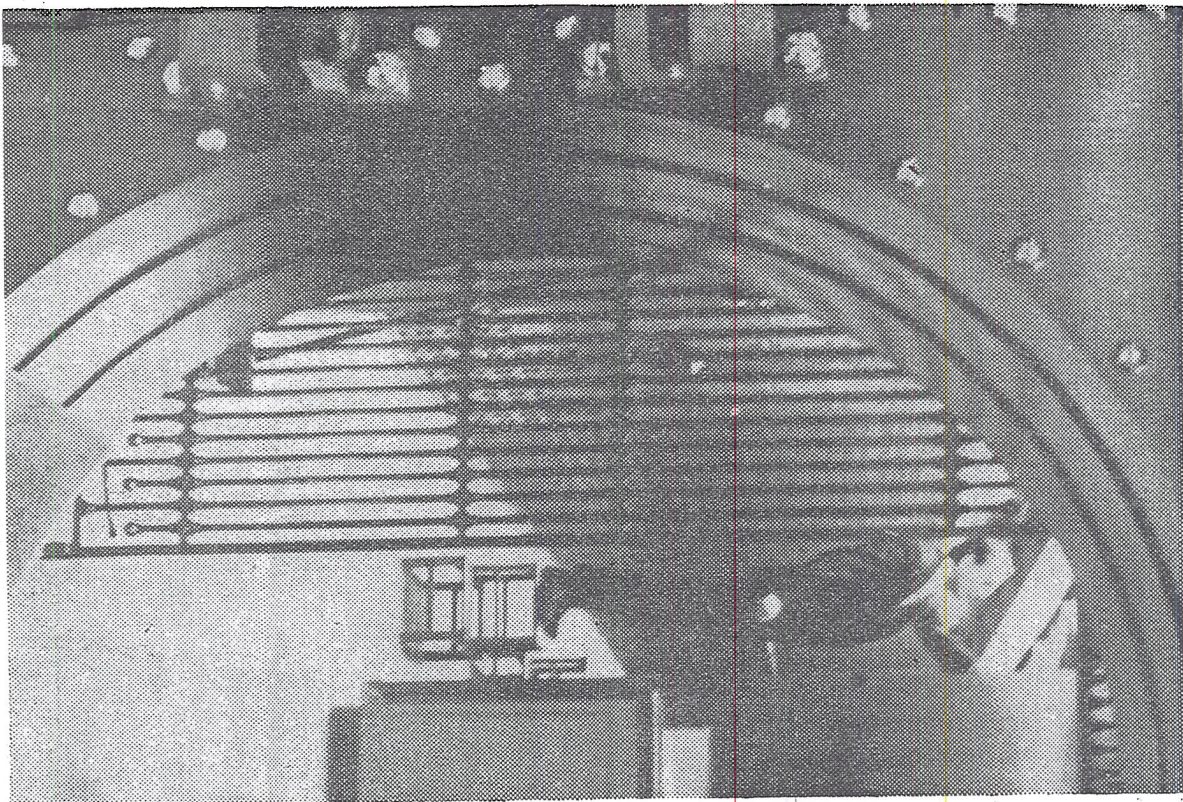
"Remember George Jackson and Sam Melville," the letter concluded. Jackson, a black revolutionary, was killed during an escape attempt at San Quentin Prison in California last August.

Melville was killed during the uprising last September at the State Correctional Facility at Attica, N. Y., where he had been serving a 13-year sentence for his part in a series of bombings in New York City.

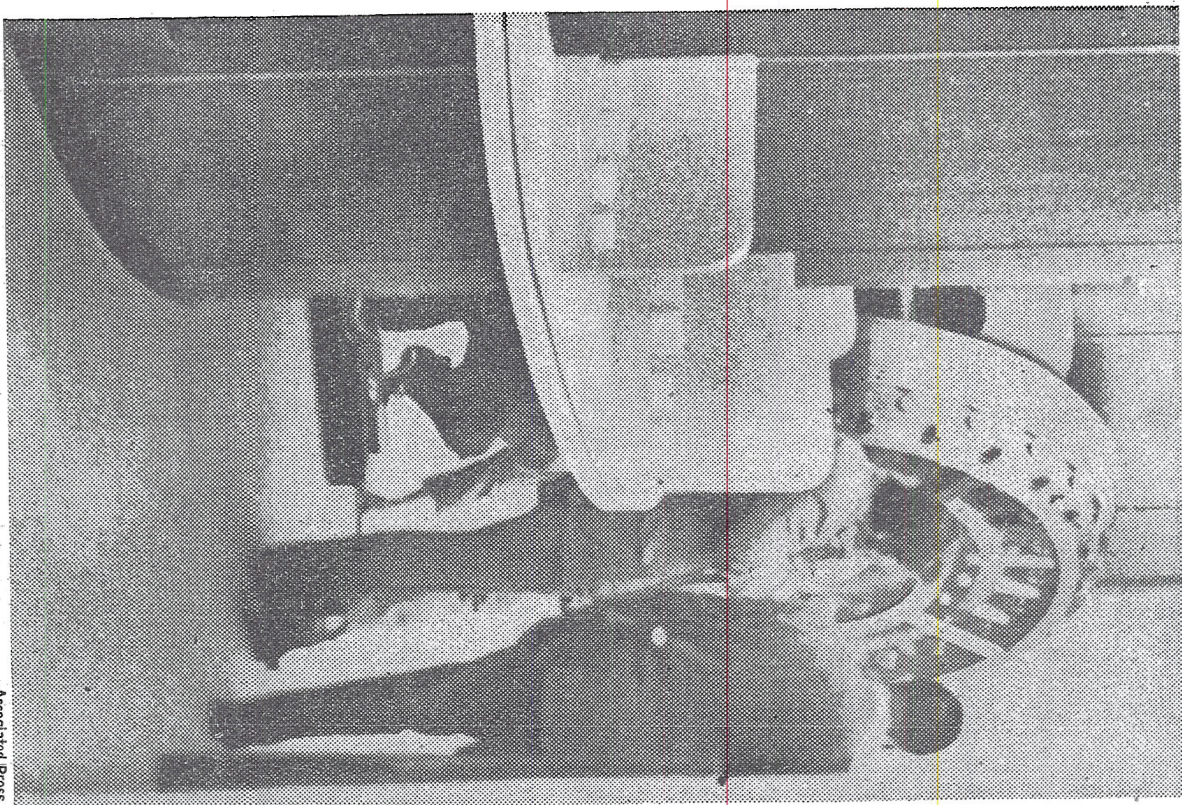
One of those bombings involved the same Marine Midland Trust Company branch, where the police yesterday deactivated a bomb. At that time, an explosion on the eighth floor of the building injured 18 people, none seriously, and caused "more than \$5-million" in damaged property and losses or records, according to a bank official.

In New York, a spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said he had not heard of the Movement in Amerika, the group which claimed credit for planting the bombs.

"We are assisting in the investigation with the city Police Department," the official added.



CHICAGO: William Plechaty, auditor of the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company, examining the vault where bomb was found in a safe-deposit box. It was one of three found in Chicago banks.



Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO: A bomb expert—kneeling at bottom center—examining a safe-deposit box in which a bomb was found at a branch of the Wells Fargo bank. The box had been removed from the vault at rear.