

Test Blast in Woods Puzzles L.I. Police

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By FRANCIS X. CLINES
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SOUTH SETAUKET, L. I., April 15—Police bomb experts puzzled today over a carefully prepared testing ground in an isolated woodland here where a powerful explosive was detonated mysteriously last weekend.

A hole three feet deep and 18 feet in diameter was gouged in the ground by the blast, which was heard 10 miles away from this North Shore area.

In preparation for the explosion, more than 100 trees had been neatly cut down in a 90-by-20-yard area, and a sturdy observation bunker had been constructed, complete with shatterproof windows.

"It was hardly a spur-of-the-moment thing," said Orey L. Edwards, chief of the Suffolk

Continued on Page 35, Column 4

Suffolk Detectives Investigate Blast At Hidden Test Site

Special to The New York Times

SOUTH SETAUKET, L. I., April 16 — Suffolk County detectives today interviewed residents of this North Shore area who live near an isolated woodland where an explosion was set off Saturday at a hidden test site.

"We're receiving numerous bits of information and we'll check out all of them," declared Sgt. Richard Nook of the bomb squad. He said evidence found so far at the deserted, carefully prepared test site did not point to any one type of individual or group.

There has been speculation that college experimenters or militant extremists might have been responsible for the explosion, as well as the advance work of clearing the test ground of timber and building an observation bunker.

Sergeant Nook said that the 17-foot-wide crater left by the blast indicated, along with other evidence, that the experiment involved something more than amateur rocketry.

"The evidence points to a high explosive," he said, declining further speculation until laboratory tests are finished.

An agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been at the scene purely as an observer, according to Inspector William Coleman of the Suffolk police.

The owner of the wooded tract used for the explosion was identified as Henry Gilbert, a resident of Amityville, who told the police he had been unaware of the activity at his property.

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Test Blast in L.I. Woodlands On North Shore Puzzles Police

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

County police detectives, after tramping a mile through the woods to the blast site. He said the labor involved would indicate something more than a prankish experiment.

Police investigators said the explosion could have been the work of various individuals running from "college experimenters to extremist groups." But they emphasized they had no specific suspects in mind.

The blast, at 3 P.M. Saturday, started a brush fire that covered 60 acres of woodland before it was brought under control that evening.

The bomb orator was near the western edge of the rectangular clearing in which the trees had been sawed off about 18 inches from the ground. The bunker, made of timber and sandbags, was to the east, 45 yards beyond the clearing.

The felled timber was pushed off the sides, leaving an open setting for the explosion. The police said the job could have been done with hand tools.

The site, which was roped off today, is about two miles from the nearest residential area, in Setauket. The clearing is near a narrow dirt path used occasionally by utility line

workers and horseback riders. The police were not able to learn immediately who owned the land.

About four miles to the west is the State University campus at Stony Brook and a mile south a group of oil storage tanks, which were not involved in the fire.

Among the evidence being studied by the police was a single strand of television antenna wire that connected the explosion site and the bunker, 420 feet away. The bunker was eight feet long and had four plastic windows measuring 4 by 6 feet each.

Between the bunker and the crater were two small wooden platforms. On one of these the police found numbers penciled that they said might have been lens settings for cameras.

Police technicians were analyzing soil and bits of burlap and wire in an effort to determine the explosive used.

Two years ago, the Suffolk police said they had reports that weapons might have been tested in the Calverton woodlands 15 miles to the east by right-wing militants. An investigation produced no arrests. Detectives said today they had no evidence implicating such a group in the weekend explosion.