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## 2 Blasts Before Dawn Shatter Windows and Close Third Avenue



Peter Foley/European Pressphoto Agency

Investigators outside the building, 845 Third Avenue, at 51st Street. The damaged planter is on the left. The authorities knew of no motive for the blasts, and no threats or claims of responsibility were received.

By [JENNIFER 8. LEE](#)

Published: May 6, 2005

Two crude yet powerful explosive devices went off outside an office building on Third Avenue in Manhattan early yesterday, injuring no one but damaging a planter, shattering windows and prompting a large force of police officers to halt traffic on several blocks.

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Because the British Consulate is in the building and yesterday was Election Day in Britain, the blasts, which occurred at 3:55 a.m., had brief but wide-ranging effects.

In Chicago, the police shut down traffic and searched the British Consulate for explosives, and in Washington, the Secret Service stepped up security at embassies. In Britain, financial markets went into a sharp decline about an hour after the explosions, just as voters were going to the polls.

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Nevertheless, the authorities said they could not connect the explosions with the British Consulate, nor with any of the other foreign or domestic offices in the building, 845 Third Avenue at 51st Street.

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said the city had received "no threats, no phone calls" before the event. "It's quiet in the city," he said. The police said they knew of no motive, and the consulate said it had received no threats.

One police official said the early hour of the blasts suggested that they were not meant to cause injuries. "It is an indicator of perhaps sending a message without inflicting casualties - that's what the early hour of the day would indicate," the official said. He added, "The means doesn't indicate terrorism."

One device was placed in a concrete planter a few yards outside the glass entrance of the building, and the other exploded on the sidewalk. The blast in the planter was powerful enough to throw a foot-long chunk of concrete into a glass pane.

Another piece of one of the grenades, with the fuse still attached, was embedded in a wall across the street at 850 Third Avenue, nine stories up.

The explosive devices were "novelty" grenades that had been stuffed with black gunpowder and equipped with fuses, said Raymond W. Kelly, the police commissioner. He described them as "crude but powerful."

"If it were in a crowded area, it could have caused significant injuries," Commissioner Kelly said.

A bellman at the San Carlos Hotel on East 50th Street described hearing the explosions. "It was very loud, but it sounded exactly like thunder," said the bellman, Santos Figueroa Jr., 27. "I looked outside and it didn't look like it was going to rain."

In the bright spring morning, amid crowds of onlookers and television cameras, police officers in white suits gingerly picked up pieces of the shattered devices, placing them in plastic bags.

After examining fragments, the police said one grenade was modeled after the rough "pineapple" type commonly used during World War II, and the other was modeled after the smooth "lemon" type that was used in the Vietnam War. The police believe both were lighted shortly before

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they detonated. Neither had a timing device.

The police are reviewing 17 video surveillance tapes from 15 locations, including one from a bank across the street that shows the two explosions.

The bank video, which is of poor quality and needs to be enhanced, also shows a red flash arcing upward, hitting the building and bouncing off, the police said. It could have been a piece of a grenade, or a grenade thrown upward that then exploded on the ground, the police said.

The blasts drew police officers from the 17th Precinct station house and firefighters from the adjoining firehouse a half-block away on 51st Street. "No one saw anyone running away," Mayor Bloomberg said.

The police briefly questioned a possibly inebriated Dutch employee of the United Nations who arrived on the scene soon after the explosions and broke through a barrier. He was given a summons and eventually released.

The videotapes showed several potential witnesses near the building, including a number of pedestrians, a jogger, a bicyclist heading north on Third Avenue after the explosion, and a taxicab passing in front at the time of the explosion. Commissioner Kelly urged the witnesses to contact the police.

A consulate official said the police had emphasized that it was not clear that the consulate was the target.

Other occupants of the building have attracted controversy in the past, the police said. One recent protest, for example, concerned Israeli policy on Palestinians, and was directed at an official of the Caterpillar Corporation there, since the Israeli Army uses special Caterpillar bulldozers.

The police allowed traffic to resume along Third Avenue by 11 a.m.

*Matthew Sweeney and Michael Wilson contributed reporting for this article.*

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