

The anti-Castro terror they call Omega 7



AP Photo

Members of the New York City bomb squad search the entryways into the Cuban Mission this weekend

after a bomb explosion outside the building. A group called Omega 7 claimed credit for the bombing.

"About the only thing they haven't accused us of doing is the killing of Jesus Christ,"

Ignacio Novo Sampol

By GARY M. FISHMAN

Shards of glass and pieces of concrete flew through the air like small missiles.

The impact of the bomb broke all the windows in the front of the Cuban Mission to the United Nations as well as windows in surrounding buildings and nearby cars. It also blew open a two-foot crater in front of the mission at 6 East 67th St.

When it was over, three persons, one of them a New York City policeman, were injured, but not seriously. Only the metal frame of the canvas canopy in front of the mission remained intact. A red Camaro, parked in front of the mission, was wrecked.

It was probably only the timing of the bomb—at 7:52 Saturday morning when the streets and sidewalks were still fairly empty—that prevented other people from being hurt.

Police believe the bomb contained plastic explosives and a timing device and although police have a 24-hour guard at the mission, Assistant Police Chief Harold Schryer said the bomb could have been planted "in the time it takes to drop a piece of paper."

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Omega 7, bombs and anti-Castroism

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Who did it? Within an hour after the blast the Associated Press and the United Press International news organizations received telephone calls from a man with a Spanish accent, who said the bombing was carried out by a group called Omega 7.

If the caller told the truth, Saturday's violence becomes the fifth anti-Castro and anti-communist bombing or attempted bombing in the New York and New Jersey area in two years that has either been linked to or claimed by Omega 7. Saturday's blast, however, was the first time anyone has been injured by an Omega bomb.

In almost every case of an Omega 7 blast, the caller said the bomb was in response to either a pro-Castro action or something that offended those Cuban exiles who want to end Castro's government and return to their native land. So it was with Saturday's caller.

He said the bombing was in reply to Castro's intention, made in interviews last Thursday, to re-establish relations with the United States and, in a major change of policy, to discuss with Cuban exiles ways to improve relations and reunite families.

The caller also said that the bomb was a reply to Castro's "recent dialogue with some traitors from the Cuban community in the U.S."

Coincidentally, the bombing follows a meeting held among major anti-Castro and anti-Communist organizations Friday night in Union City in which it was agreed to protest Castro's overtures.

"No dialogue could be had with Castro," Armondo Santana Alvarez, head of the fiercely anti-Castro and anti-communist Cuban Nationalist Movement (CNM) of Union City and Miami, said flatly.

He explained yesterday that many Cuban exiles believe that Castro's announced intentions are part of a plot to divide the exile community so it will not remain so staunchly against him.

What is Omega 7 and who are its members? According to court documents filed in Newark by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it is a secret arm of the CNM that has a penchant for terrorist activities. The CNM, however, denies the charge, even though it believes in such terrorist or counter-revolutionary actions as Saturday's bombing as long as no one is hurt.

The CNM, meanwhile, has become the subject of renewed local and national attention this year because five high ranking members from the North Hudson Cuban exile community have been indicted in connection with the 1976 car-bombing assassination in Washington of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier.

Reaction to Saturday's bombing was swift. The U.S. State Department yesterday condemned the blast. Spokesman Charles Shapiro in Washington said, "We regret all outbursts of violence against diplomats. We deplore this violence."

Ignacio Novo Sampol, one of those indicted in the Letelier case, said yesterday in one of his first interviews since he was recently released on bail that "the bombing proves that the people do not accept what Castro is

offering. He is just trying to project the image of humanity, but that is nonexistent. It is just another play and I hope the U.S. does not fall for it."

It seems fairly clear what is going to happen next. The Omega 7 caller told the news organizations that his group has vowed that "these actions will continue."

"Let this also be a warning," he said, "to the American and Cuban exiles that are dealing with a tyrant, Castro, ignoring completely thousands of Cuban patriots killed by the Communists."

The FBI, meanwhile, has already sent out teams to investigate. And Santana, who pleaded guilty in 1976 to an attempted Omega 7 bombing, served time, and is now out on parole, predicted that agents would be swarming all over the North Hudson Cuban community today and that he would also be heavily questioned by his parole officer.

Novo said that the FBI "is probably going to harass us" and "if they can't prove we did it, I expect they will try to revoke the probation of many of us that are on parole. About the only thing they haven't accused us of doing is the killing of Jesus Christ."

He also expected the search for the bombers would interfere with the preparation of his defense for the Letelier trial.

As far as possible arrests go, the FBI has few to its credit in its Omega 7 file. The last time there were arrests was when Santana and two others were picked up driving around a theater in New York that they had planned to bomb.