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Two Americans Among Victims Of Terrorists

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By MALCOLM W. BROWNE

SAIGON, Viet Nam—Terrorists set off an estimated 250 pounds of explosives in a parked car alongside the U.S. Embassy today, killing at least 17 persons and wounding at least 151.

Windows and brick work of the five-story building were shattered.

Two Americans, a girl secretary and a U.S. serviceman, were among the dead, and 45 or more Americans were injured. The other casualties were Vietnamese and non-American foreigners, many of them strolling on the street when the massive charge went off at 10:55 a.m.

Seven Americans Serious

Seven of the injured Americans, including a woman secretary, were in serious condition. A total of seven, some with lesser hurts such as eye injuries from flying glass, were flown to Clark Air Base in the Philippines for specialist treatment.

(In Washington, the State Department disclosed that one of the two dead Americans was Miss Barbara A. Robbins, 21, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Buford Robbins of Denver, Colo. She was a secretary in the U.S. Embassy and had been assigned to Saigon since last Aug. 5.

(The other American was a chief petty officer in the Navy. The State Department said the Pentagon would release his identity after next of kin were notified.

(The State Department reported a total of 196 casualties. It listed two Americans and 11 Vietnamese dead; 54 Americans and 129 Vietnamese injured.)

The Vietnamese dead included one of two terrorists who participated in the bombing. The other, who carried a .45 pistol, was shot by a policeman just before the bomb went off and was in serious condition.

Among non-American foreigners injured by the blast were a French businessman and several Japanese residents of Saigon.

The mighty blast punched a gaping hole in the five-story concrete embassy. It shattered every window in the building and dug an enormous crater in the tarred street.

Flames and smoke mushroomed 300 feet into the air. The death-dealing charge was secreted in a French sedan which a terrorist drove onto the street.

The bombing of the embassy was one of the worst terrorist blows delivered by the Communist Viet Cong.

Target of Several Attacks

It came as no surprise. The embassy has been the target of several Communist terrorist attacks. It had been considered a prime goal of the Reds since U.S. air strikes began against Communist North Viet Nam.

About 150 embassy personnel and visitors were in the embassy building when the black sedan turned into a street along side just before 10:30 a.m.

Most of those at the scene were killed or disabled, but a reconstruction of the attack indicated:

The car stopped and a Vietnamese policeman ordered the driver to move on. The driver said he had engine trouble.

A motorcycle pulled up, the driver leaped from the car onto the seat behind the cyclist and they started off. The policeman fired at the terrorists and was killed as they fired back.

Another policeman wounded the motorcycle driver, dropping him to the street. Just then the bomb exploded with a roar heard for miles. The other terrorist and several policemen were killed in the blast.

Everyone in the nearby ground floor consular section of the embassy was wounded to some degree.

Deputy Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson was at his desk in his fifth-floor office when the windows shattered. Slivers of glass cut his face. His office furniture was overturned.

Johnson ignored his injuries until he had supervised handling of the dead and dispatch of the wounded to hospitals.

One secretary was carried out with a U.S. Army jacket thrown across her face and deeply gashed body. Another had deep wounds in the chest. At least 30 other women suffered facial wounds.

Richard Robertson, a security official, carried his wounded wife from the building.

Another embassy official, Richard Cleveland of Wayne, Pa., said everyone in the office of Robert Miller, deputy chief of the embassy's political section, appeared injured. Miller was cut about the face and body.

American servicemen ran to the scene from blocks away and dashed into the building to help the injured.

"For a few moments, hell and devil appeared on the street," said Army Sgt. Lyle Goodin from Pekin, Ill. He was walking toward the embassy, 50 yards away, when a car burst through, knocking him down. He stum-

bled toward the embassy, falling over the bodies of two policemen.

A Vietnamese restaurant across the street was demolished, and the wooden rooms above it crumbled. Goodin said he looked in the restaurant and saw "about 17 people, most of them dead." He heard a wounded Vietnamese woman calling from above for help and helped her down the broken stairway.

At the embassy Goodin met Army Capt. Don Elledge of Mabank, Tex., and the two joined the growing corps of rescuers in assisting secretaries and other injured out of the debris-littered building.

Cars Set Afire

Firemen poured foam on the hulks of about a dozen cars set afire by the blast. Work crews picked up debris from the street.

The last major terrorist attack on an American installation in Saigon was the Christmas Eve bombing of the Brink Hotel, the major U.S. officers' billet in the capital. Two Americans were killed and 81 Americans and Vietnamese were injured.

A U.S. military billet at Qui Nhon was bombed on Feb. 10, and 23 Americans died.

Last Saturday, Communist frogmen blasted holes in the side of an American Landing Ship Tank in Da Nang harbor, injuring a Japanese crewman.

Among earlier attempts on the embassy was one in which a grenade concealed in a loaf of bread was thrown at the building. It failed to go off.

Ten days ago, police announced they had foiled a plot to bomb the embassy. They found 35 pounds of plastic explosives hidden in a Saigon house by Communist terrorists.

The sidewalk in front of the Embassy is cordoned off with barbed wire. Vietnamese police are always on duty outside the bronze gate and Marine guards are inside.

The embassy is on Ham Nghi Street, a main Saigon thoroughfare half a mile from the presidential palace. Traffic moves freely on the street.

The embassy was to be replaced eventually because it has no fire escape and was so close to the street.

Red China's New China News Agency reported the embassy bombing without comment today.

U.S. Embassy spokesman Barry Zorthian said the embassy had many reports in recent months that the Viet Cong intended to attack it. He said U.S. security measures had been increased and that police activity

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around the embassy also had been increased.

Zorthian said additional protection would be given the embassy in the future, drawing on a newly arrived 400-man U.S. Army military police detachment.

A South Vietnamese government statement said the attack was an act of savagery and murder and that free Vietnamese would avenge the bombing.

Premier Phan Huy Quat visited American and Vietnamese wounded and offered his government's medical facilities to the American mission.

Quat called on Ambassador Johnson to discuss the bombing.

"If the Viet Cong have any expectation of intimidating the U.S. government and the members of this mission by their deed today, they are thoroughly mistaken," Johnson said in a statement.

"I desire to express my admiration and appreciation of the courage and reaction of the embassy staff, Vietnamese as well as American."

Police sources said the plan for bombing the embassy had been known to both Vietnamese and American authorities for three weeks. They said the plan was to use a motorcycle or car loaded with explosives which would suffer "motor failure" outside the embassy. While the driver ostensibly went for help, the bomb was to explode.

In the consulate section Thomas Wilson, 37, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., said he heard the shots and asked an aide, Edith Smith, of Evanston, Ill., if they were automobile brickbats. She replied she thought they were shots.

Looking out the window, they saw the parked car and started to flee. Other employes took refuge under their desks.

A Vietnamese employe stood by the window looking into the street and died as the blast blew in the window.

Wilson, a vice consul, was slightly scratched and Miss Smith was not seriously hurt.

Robert Burke, 42, from Washington, D.C., said the blast blew the air conditioner into his office on the third floor. He said secretaries in the office were injured but most put away classified papers and materials before being seriously wounded.