

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of "Bombs and Bombings"

REFERENCE: Brodie TG. *Bombs and Bombings*. Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, IL; 1996, 276 pp.

Tom Brodie, formerly with the Metro Data Police Department in Miami, Florida, is widely recognized as one of the foremost bomb technicians in the United States. He has investigated hundreds of bombing incidents and rendered safe many improvised explosive devices. Since its formation in the early 1970s, Mr. Brodie has steadfastly supported the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators, the primary organization for law enforcement officers dedicated to this type of work, and has attempted to pass on his considerable knowledge to others in the field. This book is a continuation of that effort.

Bombs and Bombings, subtitled "A Handbook to Detection, Disposal and Investigation for Police and Fire Departments," is the second edition of a book Mr. Brodie wrote in 1973. The original book served as a practical guide for law enforcement for many years. The writing was somewhat uneven, with extraneous subjects jumping in and out of paragraphs. However, the down-to-earth nature of the book made it extremely valuable for officers faced with the formidable task of assembling the tools and knowledge needed to combat the increasing frequency of explosive incidents in the United States.

The second edition has been expanded by almost 100 pages. In addition to the original 10 chapters, Mr. Brodie has included a final chapter titled "Principles of Bomb Protection" in which he

provides succinct guidelines for ensuring the maximum safety of personnel confronted with explosive investigations. Throughout the book he describes many of the tools that have become part of the bomb technician's arsenal over the past 23 years. While the first edition talked about bomb disposal techniques which required the technician to be in close proximity to the suspected device for prolonged periods of time, the new edition spends considerable space on the use of robots, body armor, disrupters, and other mitigation techniques that are so important to today's explosive disposal officers.

Detracting from the book is Mr. Brodie's use of many of the same photographs that were in his first edition. Admittedly, many of the devices and situations confronted today are similar to those in 1973; however, incorporating new photographs to depict these situations would have improved the appearance of the book. It should also be noted that many paragraphs from the first book were incorporated intact into the second edition, leaving the text with the same unevenness in content and style.

For most forensic scientists in today's crime laboratories, *Bombs and Bombings* will not hold great interest. Only two chapters, titled "Commercial Explosives and Military Ordnance" and "Evidence of Explosives," touch on the chemical composition of explosives and the laboratory examination of explosives and bomb debris. However, for the few federal and large city forensic chemists who spend a considerable portion of their time at bomb scenes or examining evidence from explosions, this book will be valuable. The more the forensic chemist can learn about bomb disposal and investigation, the better he/she will be able to carry out constructive and scientifically accurate laboratory examinations.

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