



## Acid Bombs

By Frederick J. Fischer

In the past year we have seen an increase in the use of acid bombs. Are they just a school prank or a more serious offence? In the State of Florida the construction and use of an acid bomb is a felony under section 790.161 of the Florida statutes. An acid bomb meets the definition of a destructive device that uses expanding gas as means of detonation. (Section 790.001)

The theory behind the construction of an acid bomb is to use acid and a catalyst to produce a gas that expands until the pressure within the container become so great that it ruptures the container. This causes a powerful explosion spraying acid and anything else in the container in all directions.

The production of acid bombs is fairly easy. With all the components needed for construction readily available to anyone.

I would like to state at this time that acid bombs are very unstable and can detonate at any time. Once the chemical reaction begins there is no way to tell when it will explode.

Undetonated devices should be collected by a certified bomb technician.

As a Crime Scene Investigator we are sometimes asked to help document the post detonation scene through still photography and video making sure to show the spatter pattern of the acid. Document the location of the components that are recovered. We may also be called upon to diagram the post detonation scene.

A detonation device should be thoroughly washed down. Clean water should be used to remove any acid residue left on the components before being handled by the crime scene investigator. This task should be left to bomb technician. Heavy rubber gloves should still be used when handling the components.

The most common sizes of devices are made with either a twenty ounce or two liter plastic soda bottles.

Several methods have been tried to detect fingerprints on the plastic containers used in the construction of acid bombs. The containers have been allowed to air dry after being washed. Cyanoacrylate ester (super glue fuming), SRP (small particle reagent) and fingerprint power have been tried. They have not produced a positive result as of this date.

Tests have been conducted without washing the containers (not recommended). The containers were allowed to air dry. Cyanoacrylate ester and fingerprint powder were used. There are still no positive results as of this date.

It is recommended to allow components to fully dry before sealing them in evidence bags. It is also recommended that the components be double bagged in clear evidence bags before being turned into the evidence section for storage.

Caution should always be used with acid bombs and their components. ■

*(Mr. Frederick J. Fischer is a Crime Scene Investigator for the West Palm Beach Police Department's Crime Scene Unit.)*

## Arrest Made In Two Homemade Bomb Incidents

By Natthew Volz

Police fear a dangerous trend is starting among local teens in manufacturing homemade weapons, and are warning parents their children may be learning destructive games from information available on the Internet that is fraught with errors.

A 12-year-old male was arrested Monday for setting off two homemade acid bombs near Mandeville, the same day three teen-agers were arrested for making the homemade bombs that detonated outside a Covington school last week.

The Mandeville-Covington area has been a hotbed of activity lately. There have been three incidents and over 20 homemade acid-based bombs found in the past week, and in the past month, four

vehicle arsons and an incident where a homemade pipe bomb exploded in the hand of its maker. Police are taking these matters very seriously, and with growing alarm, as the last two incidents took place in residential areas, increasing the potential for injury.

The Covington Police Department arrested Cody Gill, 19, 106 Windover Rd., Bush, Jessica Marlar, 17, 73216 Hwy. 59, Abita Springs and a 15-year-old juvenile for allegedly making and planting six bombs made of a corrosive acid in plastic soda bottles, eight of which exploded on a basketball court at the Kehoe-France School in Covington. Nobody was injured and no damage was done to the property. Covington Police Lt. Bob Donald said the three involved learned to

make the explosives through word of mouth, and this incident is unrelated to similar incidents.

Two similar bombs were discovered Saturday evening in a garage in Colonial Court, a subdivision between Mandeville and Covington. The family owning the residence returned home and found one of the bombs had exploded. The family contacted the police. The bomb squad extracted the second bomb from the garage and blew it up. Investigating the surrounding area, eight more bombs were discovered. Sheriff's officials said they have leads on this incident, but no arrests have been made.

Sheriff's officials said the 12-year-old blew up two similar bombs in the street outside his Mandeville home and at-



tempted to blow up his own mailbox with a third bomb Sunday. After interviewing the juvenile, Sheriff's spokesman Tim Reichenbach said investigators determined the juvenile had nothing to do with the other bombings. Reichenbach said the arrested child was found with a well-known "cookbook" downloaded from the Internet.

The book was originally published in 1971, but evidently has a large degree of popularity with teen-agers now that it is available online. Word as to where the book can be downloaded is apparently spreading in the schools. Lt. Donald said the teens involved in the Kehoe-France incident did not get instructions from the Internet, but he has heard the book was popular in high schools. Chapters are divided into topics such as drugs, weapons, explosives and electronics. It was recently made available online in violation of copyright laws. The text as a whole is available, as are excerpts. Many imitators of the book exist online.

The "cookbook" in question is consid-

ered by many to be entertaining reading, but unsafe and inaccurate for those who want to apply the "recipes", which, according to a warning on the Web site, contain "many dangerous errors and formulas that are likely to hurt you." One Web page references another Web page entirely devoted to errors found in the book.

The Web page itself carries a disclaimer: "The (book) describes activities which may be dangerous and illegal. In addition, (the book) contains many dangerous errors. I strongly advise against performing any of these activities."

Sheriff's officials believe the other incidents were performed by different people who obtained the same recipe, and a certain Internet site with the recipe may be circulating around schools. Spokesman Reichenbach and James Hartman fear that as popularity grows, so does the danger. Nobody has been hurt yet, but it's only a matter of time, and authorities are taking these outbreaks of homemade weapons very seriously. "people around

here are playing with fire," Hartman said, adding when caught, manufacturers of the bombs will face serious charges.

Authorities are also cautioning parents to monitor how their children use the Internet. "Parents need to monitor their children's access to and use of the Internet at all times, since the government can't," Sheriff Jack Strain said in a press release. "Because of the unstable and unpredictable nature of the chemicals being used in the creation of these devices, the bomb-maker is as much at risk as an intended victim."

The 12-year-old was charged with manufacturing incendiary devices, a 20-year jail term and/or a \$10,000 fine. He is at the Florida Parishes Juvenile Detention Center. Gill, Marlar and the 15-year-old were charged with illegal use of weapons or dangerous instrumentality's. ■

*(This article originally appeared in "The News Banner" dated March 24, 1998.)*

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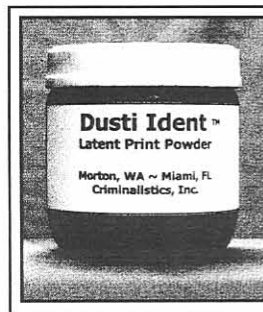
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