

NEWS

14 injured in mid-afternoon explosion:

BOMB IN THE CITY

By FRANCIS JOSEPH

JUST FOUR days after the worst bomb attack in London since World War II, Trinidad experienced its own yesterday afternoon when a device exploded on lower Frederick Street, Port-of-Spain, injuring 14 persons, two of whom are listed in critical condition.

Within 30 minutes of the explosion, there was a mass exodus from the city, thousands of people scurried on foot for every available form of transportation home.

Yesterday's event reminded many of that afternoon of July 27, 1990, when a bomb detonated Police Headquarters and, armed gunmen invaded the Red House while the House of Representatives was in session, throwing Port-of-Spain in chaos.

According to eyewitnesses, a green dustbin in front of Maraj Jewelers on Frederick Street exploded at 2.03 pm, causing injury to everyone in the immediate vicinity.

The fatality list could have been greater if schools were not on vacation as Frederick Street is a regular liming spot on afternoons for many schoolchildren.

But the explosion sent shivers up the spines of many. Within minutes, every store on Frederick Street and environs were secured.

There was a mad rush by store employees and other persons to leave the city centre. Persons eating at Town Centre and Excellent City Centre Malls rushed out leaving their meals behind. Employees at the cateries packed up and ran and as one woman jokingly put it, "Ah leave plenty food there, go and help yourself." That brought a smile to several faces despite the seriousness of the situation.

One thing was certain. The security forces responded quickly. Gregory Aboud, president of the Downtown Owners Merchants Association (DOMA), was high in praise for the quick response of the security services. But he asked that nationals not be daunted by what happened. He asked them to return to work as normal this morning and show the culprits that they could not succeed in this country.

Within minutes, the area around Frederick Street was cordoned off. From Independence Square to the south, Abercromby Street to the west, Henry Street to the east, and Hart Street to the north, vehicular and pedestrian traffic were turned away.

The ambulance services arrived quickly on the scene and the paramedics dealt with the



DESPITE the rain, police and army officials search for clues in the blown-up dustbin on Frederick Street yesterday. PHOTO BY CURTIS CHASE

Within minutes, ambulances were hustling away from the bloody scene to the Port-of-Spain General Hospital carrying the wounded.

The top brass of the Police Service were present — Deputy Commissioner Glen Rouch, acting Deputy Commissioner Oswyn Allard, Assistant Commissioners Nazimul Hosein, James Philbert and Clyde Reyes. The Regiment was present also and led by Lt Colonels Rodney Smart and Ken Maharaj.

Even the politicians could not stay away —

Minister of National Security Martin Joseph, Housing Minister Dr Keith Rowley, Works Minister Colm Imbert, Tourism Minister Howard Chin Lee, and Port-of-Spain Mayor Murchison Brown.

Very soon, word spread that it was a dustbin that exploded and many walked away from the other dustbins on the main street in Port-of-Spain. Thirty minutes after the explosion, three dogs belonging to the Police Service and trained to hunt for bombs, arrived and immediately began to sniff for any further devices.

A newly acquired helicopter, manned by members of the Special Anti-Crime Unit, also swung into action and hovered over the bloody scene for a long time.

Just as the British did in searching for fine clues, the TT police were doing the same. Acting Inspector Terrence Nelson, the personal bodyguard of Prime Minister Patrick Manning, was seen in another role.

He is the premier bomb expert in the Police Service, having undergone overseas training. Nelson, attached to Special Branch, headed the Crime Scene Unit's search for clues which could assist in determining what type of bomb exploded, and maybe, who planted it in the dustbin. A British national was seen assisting the investigators search for clues and *Newsday* learnt that he is in Trinidad training personnel and dogs how to detect explosive devices.

During the investigations, two United States Marines were seen on the scene to get an update from local officials about what happened in the



ONE of the police sniffer dogs searches for clues in a public telephone booth on Frederick Street yesterday.



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