

Bombs and Bombings, A Handbook to Protection, Security, Detection, Disposal, and Investigation for Industry, Police, and Fire Departments, Third Edition.

Brodie, Thomas G.

Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Ltd, Springfield IL
2005, 316pp.

Reviewed by Megan Bottegal, BS. and Bruce McCord, PhD. Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Florida International University, Miami, FL 33199, USA

This book is an overview of the vast and personal experience Captain Thomas Brodie has accumulated in twenty-four years as a founder of the Miami Bomb squad and supervisor of its crime scene unit. Over the course of his career, Captain Brodie investigated approximately 350 bombings and assisted in the disposal of over 4000 bombs and tons of explosives. He is a charter member of the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators and among other awards and honors, he was knighted by the Queen Elizabeth II for his role in protecting the British Empire in the Caribbean. Captain Brodie's experiences arise from his role in developing, adapting, and utilizing a variety of tools for bomb detection, disruption and disposal during his service to the city of Miami, and the counterterrorism community.

The book is organized in a variety of chapters covering issues from how to organize and equip a bomb squad to sections on types of explosive devices and legal issues. The text also covers techniques for finding, disrupting and disposing of bombs, explosive materials, and detonators. It concludes with sections on evidence collection, including checklists for workers in the field and an overview of the principles of bomb protection.

Over his years of service to the Miami Bomb squad Captain Brodie was kept busy investigating bombs and bombings resulting from violent Cuban exile groups, custom interdictions, criminal bombings and property crimes. He speaks with distinctive and personal experience on the methods for dealing with these situations. Thus, the sections in the book on methods for disarming and disruption of explosive devices are especially well

done. Captain Brodie has personally developed a number of techniques for bomb disposal and clearly describes the advantages and disadvantages of different modes of their operation. He also provides detailed descriptions of the operational procedures he and others have developed, and includes personal anecdotes that help emphasize each point.

The book contains extensive illustrations using black and white photographs of actual devices that the author has investigated and rendered safe. These photographs should prove extremely valuable in training new investigators on the types of evidence that may be collected from the scene. Other photographs include crime scenes, injuries to victims, and post-blast damage and are equally instructive. Also valuable are the sections in the book on how to properly organize and interface a bomb squad into the overall operation of a public safety program. These sections demonstrate prescient insight into the current problems of organizing states and communities for disaster preparedness and homeland security.

The book as written is more a series of overall guidelines for bomb disposal units than a handbook as it lacks the large appendix of references and resources commonly present in most handbooks of this sort. Hopefully the next edition will include such materials which will help the reader further examine the various useful tips and resources mentioned in the text. Also, the book would benefit from improved editing, as certain topics mentioned in the book could be more clearly defined and organized.

However, these are minor complaints when taken against the overall usefulness and descriptive value of the book. In general, there is a wealth of important information on all aspects of bomb investigation and disposal. Captain Brodie astutely recognizes that implementing standardized guidelines in the areas of equipment, training, organization, and procedures is vital, not just for bomb squad personnel, but also for management and administration to ensure the safest methods of bomb protection. This book is therefore a must read for anyone involved in bomb disposal, and should also be valuable resource for all persons involved the collection, analysis and prosecution of bombing incidents.