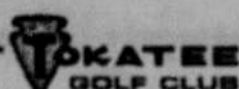




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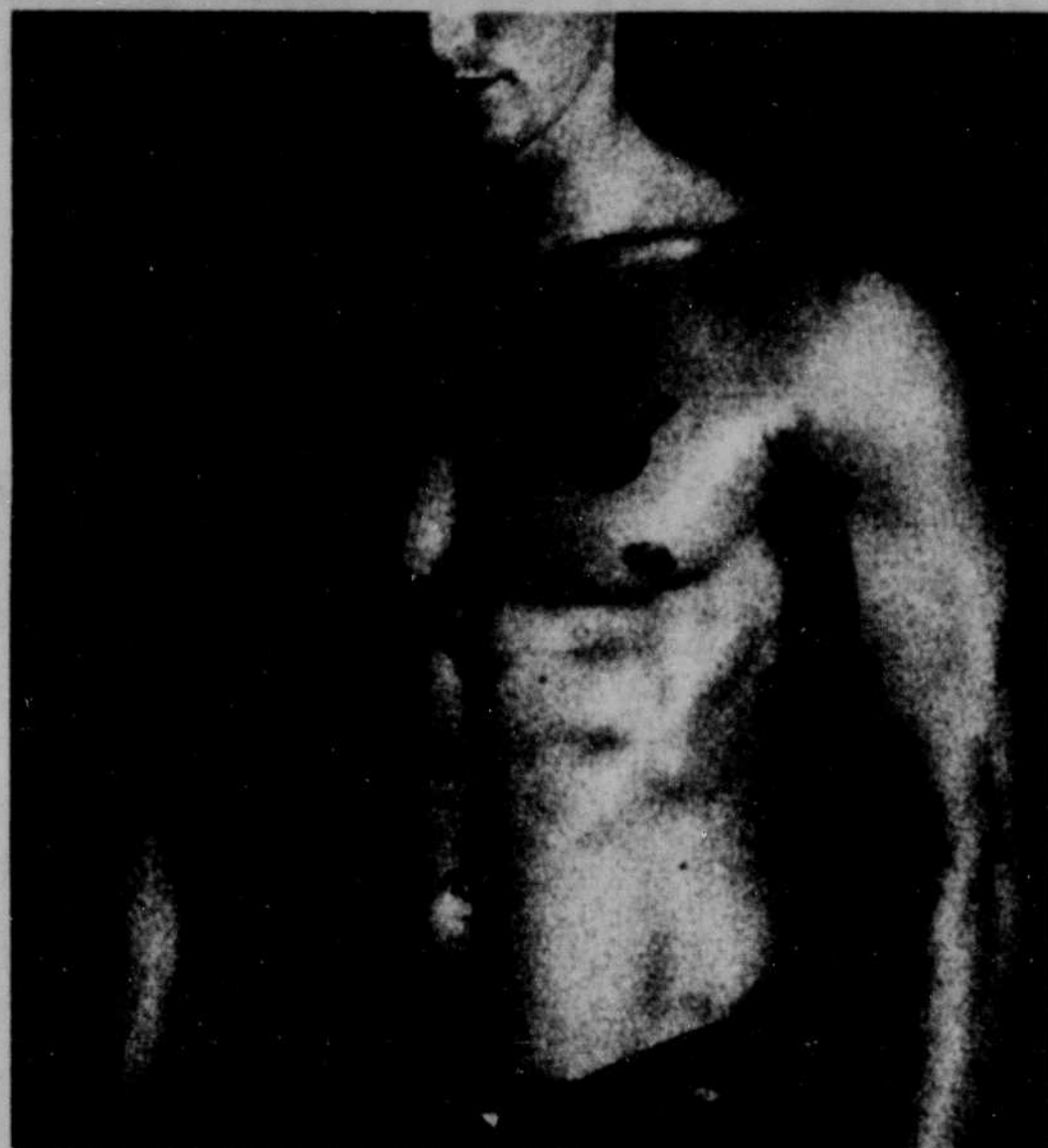
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REGIONAL

NEWS FROM THE NORTHWEST

Explosive-filled building blows up; owner sought

■ **EXPLOSION:** The area is thought to be home to anti-government activity

MOSIER (AP) — Hundreds of pounds of live explosives remained Thursday at a rural acreage where three explosions demolished a storage shed and a large truck, said federal agents who ordered neighbors to evacuate.

Agents are looking for the shed's owner, who described himself to a neighbor as a survivalist. Authorities didn't know what the explosives and ammunition were intended to be used for.

"With what we have already seen in here, if it blew up, we would all be killed," Jerry Taylor, a U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent, said of the remaining explosives.

The explosions, which occurred about 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, rocked nearby houses and sent bullets stored in the shed shooting into the air. Shredded gun pamphlets and bomb-making literature rained down like confetti.

Various types of explosives remained on the site, said Dave Houck of the Portland Police Bureau bomb squad. Debris covered a wide area and the truck's cab was a charred hulk next to the demolished shed.

Wasco County Sheriff Art Labrousse said 30 to 40 homes were evacuated. Federal agents were seeking a search warrant to search the property, he said.

Investigators were seeking the shed's owner, Ray Hamblin of nearby Hood River, said Bob Palmer, a Wasco Rural Fire Protection District assistant chief.

Neighbor Hobart Darter said Hamblin described himself as a survivalist.

"He wanted his privacy and I respected that," Darter said.

Mosier, about 60 miles east of Portland, is near The Dalles, the seat of Wasco County. The north-central Oregon county has been

the scene of anti-government activity and a report by Seattle's Coalition for Human Dignity, a group that monitors anti-government activities, notes the county is home to one of two "common-law" courts in Oregon.

The idea of common-law courts has been embraced by militias and anti-government groups such as the Montana Freeman. Supporters of the besieged Freeman, for example, have said the convening of a common-law grand jury could end the standoff.

However, it was unknown whether there was any connection between the explosions and anti-government sentiment.

Records show Hamblin has a state permit good through Jan. 17, 1997, to possess explosives, said Becky Daugherty, a licensing assistant with the state fire marshal's office.

Palmer confirmed neighbors' accounts that Hamblin was seen in the area after the explosions but had not talked to authorities. Hamblin did not respond to messages left on his answering machine.

Authorities were unsure whether anyone was at the shed when the explosions occurred. Two loud blasts were followed by a larger explosion, said neighbor Mike Roark, whose house is down a hill from the 900-square-foot shed.

Exploding ammunition sounded like "popcorn going off in the microwave," said one firefighter. "It went off for 40 minutes. You could hear the pop, pop, pop, pop, pop," Roark said.

Darter, whose property overlooks the shed, was outside and several hundred yards away when the first explosion occurred. He said he started walking toward the shed and was knocked down by the second explosion. He got up and was knocked down again by the third blast.

County records showed Hamblin bought the 16-acre property and built the shed last year.

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- 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Students Working Towards World Peace and Justice Ben Linder Room Presented by the Survival Center
- 1-2 p.m. The Politics of Class and Gender in Zanzibari Women's Music - Presented by Professor Laura Fair Department of History
- 2-3 p.m. How It Feels to be "Foreign" Ben Linder Room Presented by ICSP

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