

BOMB LEFT ON DOORSTEP KILLS JERSEY COUPLE AND INJURES 2

Special to the New York Times

Feb. 26, 1982



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A couple was killed this morning when a bomb that had been placed in a box at their front

door exploded while they were examining the package inside their modest one-story home here.

A police officer at the scene said the blast was of such force that it lifted the roof off the house. The building was immediately engulfed in flames.

Richard S. Rebeck, the Middlesex County Prosecutor, said a "usual background check" was being conducted on one of the dead, Andrew Puskas Sr., 35 years old, to help determine a motive for the bombing. Mr. Puskas's wife, Patricia, 35, was also killed.

"He was either someone with a hard enemy or else it was a big mistake," Mr. Rebeck said. Two Children Hurt

Mr. Puskas's employer, Richard Seggel, president of the Dodge-Newark Supply Company, said, "I don't know why or how anybody would do anything to Andy." Mr. Puskas had been a salesman with the company for seven years.

Two of the couple's children, Andrew Jr., 9, and Scott, 7, were slightly injured and briefly hospitalized, Mr. Rebeck said. Their third child, Brian, 4, was apparently uninjured.

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According to the Prosecutor, Mr. Puskas had called the Middlesex Borough police at 8:35 A.M. to report finding a two-foot-square box outside the front door of his house, at 182 First Street.

Lieut. Edward Meyer of the Middlesex police said Scott Puskas had first noticed the box while taking out the garbage and had evidently brought it to his father's attention. Mr. Puskas then called the police to come and examine the box.

The bomb was brought into the house and placed next to an archway separating the living room from the kitchen, Mr. Rebeck said. Explosives experts said they believed Mr. and Mrs. Puskas were looking into the box when the bomb exploded because their chests and abdomens were riddled with shrapnel. The extent of shrapnel, Mr. Rebeck said, suggests the device was a pipe bomb.

The Prosecutor said members of the Middlesex Arson Task Force and 10 agents of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms had determined an accelerant was used

with the bomb because of the speed with which flames engulfed the frame structure.

Flames Spread Next Door

Nothing remained of the Puskas house but the concrete front steps and half of the charred frame. Part of the floor had collapsed into the basement.

Barbara Kolb, a next-door neighbor and friend of Mrs. Puskas, said the explosion occurred while she was getting ready to send her son to school. "I just heard this enormous blast," she said. "I thought it was her house or mine."

Within seconds, Mrs. Kolb said, Scott Puskas was banging on her door to ask that the Fire Department be called. Flames swept across the 15-foot space between the two houses, setting the Kolb home on fire. The house was damaged but no one was reported injured.

Patrolman Robert Schwarz, responding to Mr. Puskas's call, was just getting out of his car in front of the house when the explosion occurred, Mr. Rebeck said.

"Officer Schwarz described it as the roof of the house literally lifting up and coming back down," Mr. Rebeck said. "He was blown across the hood of his car, recovered himself and went to the rescue of two of the three children, who had obviously suffered some burns.

"The youngest child was in a car. They were apparently getting ready to go to school. The parents were killed instantly inside the house."

Mrs. Kolb said she and Mrs. Puskas had planned to have lunch today in a restaurant. They had talked Wednesday night, and Mrs. Kolb said her friend did not seem in the least upset or apprehensive.

"Everything was just fine," Mrs. Kolb said. "She was as happy as can be. There wasn't anything we didn't tell each other." Mr. Seggel, Mr. Puskas's employer, was still stunned this afternoon as he described Mr. Puskas as a "happy, young, Christian man, very active in the church, loving his family, a quiet - not aggressive - type of salesman."

"Everything was the church," Mrs. Kolb said, referring to social life in the neighborhood of one-story, ranch-style houses neighboring the Middlesex Chapel. She said the Puskas boys attended the Christian Academy in Green Brook.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section B, Page 2 of the National edition with the headline: BOMB LEFT ON DOORSTEP KILLS JERSEY COUPLE AND INJURES 2