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*and now it's christmas*



# fire hits rotc building

By THOMAS JACKSON  
News Editor

A fire, apparently caused by a "homemade incendiary device" ripped through the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) building here early yesterday morning, gutting two rooms and causing moderate damage to office equipment in the AROTC Administrative Office.

The fire, which was reported by a UConn student parking lot patrolman at approximately 1:45 devastated ROTC Commander Colonel Richard F. DeKay's office and severely damaged an adjoining conference-reception room.

Colonel DeKay told The Campus yesterday that "the personal files we keep on our cadets were not damaged by the fire." He also noted that the UConn AROTC program "won't be interrupted by this senseless act of violence."

ROTC classrooms directly above the burned area were not damaged by the fire, and the Air Force ROTC Offices in the front of the building were also untouched.

The fire, which drew firefighters from Mansfield, North Eagleville, and the UConn Fire Departments, was under control shortly after 2 a.m. Firemen continued their cleanup operation into the early morning hours, wetting down remaining embers and ejecting smoke from the building.

University President Homer D. Babbidge Jr. and UConn Provost Edward V. Gant arrived on the scene of the fire at approximately 3:00. Flanked by ROTC Officials and members of the UConn Security Department, Babbidge and Gant made a fifteen minute tour of the damaged offices.

In a statement released at 4:00 a.m., Babbidge announced "The assistance of State and Federal agencies has been requested in the investigation of the incident."

"Prompt response by the University Fire Department, aided by neighboring town fire units, confined significant fire and smoke damage to three inner offices housing the Army ROTC Staff." He also noted that "a preliminary survey indicates that damage done to ROTC records

was modest."

Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), State Police and UConn Security were sifting through the debris looking for clues until 9:30 Tuesday, when reporters were allowed to enter the damaged area.

ROTC Officers later explained that, while the ROTC Hangar is Connecticut State property some of the property destroyed in the offices was owned by the Federal Government. FBI agents are also empowered to investigate firebombings under a provision of the 1968 Gun Control Act.

While the exact cause of the blaze has yet to be officially determined, firemen at the scene said glass from two broken bottles and a third, unbroken bottle was found in the ROTC Offices.

A State Police Officer said that he thought the blaze was caused by the explosion of two "incendiary devices" in the AROTC Commander's Office. Published reports have claimed that the type of devices used were a glass bottle filled with flammable liquid and ignited by a small firecracker attached to the bottle.

At approximately 2:20 a.m.

yesterday, a UConn Security Officer was observed carrying a "Cotts Cream Soda" bottle from the damaged offices. The bottle appeared to be filled with a pink liquid. The officer refused to comment on the contents of the bottle. A pair of UConn Security Officers worked in the pre-dawn cold measuring a trail of footprints leading from the rear of the ROTC Hangar up to a sidewalk near the Faculty-Alumni Center. Later, several pieces of charred wood were removed from the ROTC Building and taken to the UConn Security Headquarters for closer examination.

Early yesterday evening a "call for public assistance" was jointly issued by State Police and UConn Security. A University spokesman explained that the police felt that "the person or persons who set the blaze might have suffered burns requiring medical treatment."

"In this connection," he continued, "they have asked for help from anyone who might have information which could lead to the apprehension of the individuals responsible for the fire." The spokesman added that investigating officers are also interested in gaining "information from persons who might have seen anyone near the ROTC Hangar in the vicinity of 1:45 Tuesday."

"Such information," he concluded, "may be telephoned to the State Police at Stafford Springs or to the UConn Security Department."

University Security Officers were patrolling the roads adjacent to the ROTC Hangar well into the early morning hours

Tuesday. A Campus reporter and photographer were stopped at approximately 4:30 a.m. on

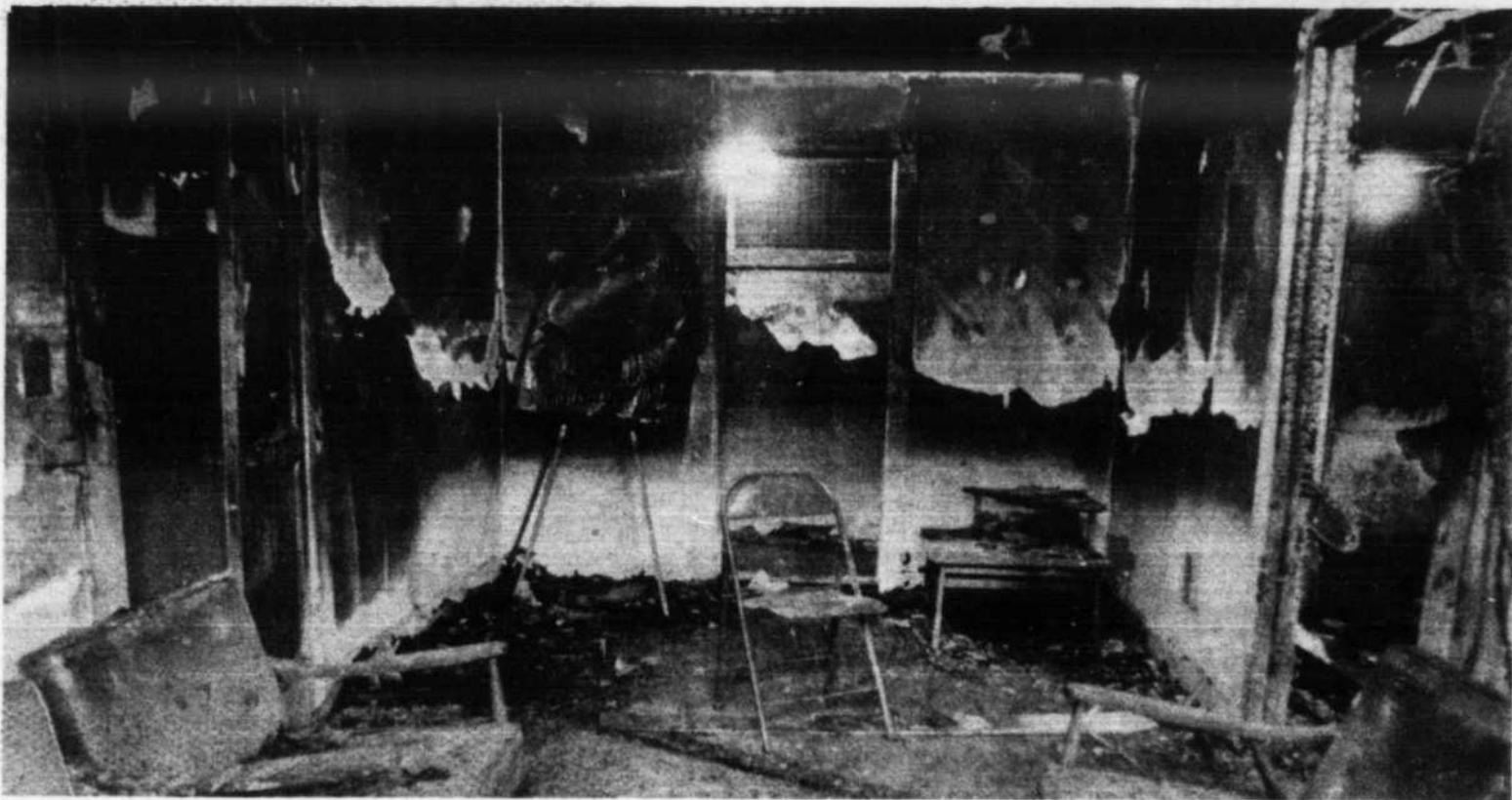
the leading to the hilltop dormitories and detained for some fifteen minutes while UConn Security checked their identification.

As of late last night, UConn Security Officers refused to comment on their progress in the investigation.

Constructed in 1948, the ROTC Hangar has housed the University of Connecticut Air Force and Army ROTC offices and classrooms since the early 1950's. During last spring's Student Strike, the ROTC Hangar was the scene of a "paint-in" in support of expanded day care facilities. Some 3,000 students occupied the building and covered the inside and outside walls with designs, political slogans and peace symbols.

The students, participating in the nationwide strike which followed the deaths of four students at Kent State University and two at Jackson State College, were protesting the continuing presence of ROTC programs on campus and supporting a demand by the UConn Strike Coalition that the ROTC Hangar be converted into a day care center.

Standing amid the charred remains of his office, Colonel DeKay told The Campus yesterday morning that "this fire won't disrupt ROTC activities." He admitted, however, that "it is a bit of an inconvenience." ROTC classes continued as usual in both the Army and Air Force wings as office personnel tried to reclaim some of their belongings from the charred, soot-



Interior of the AROTC Conference room from the west window.

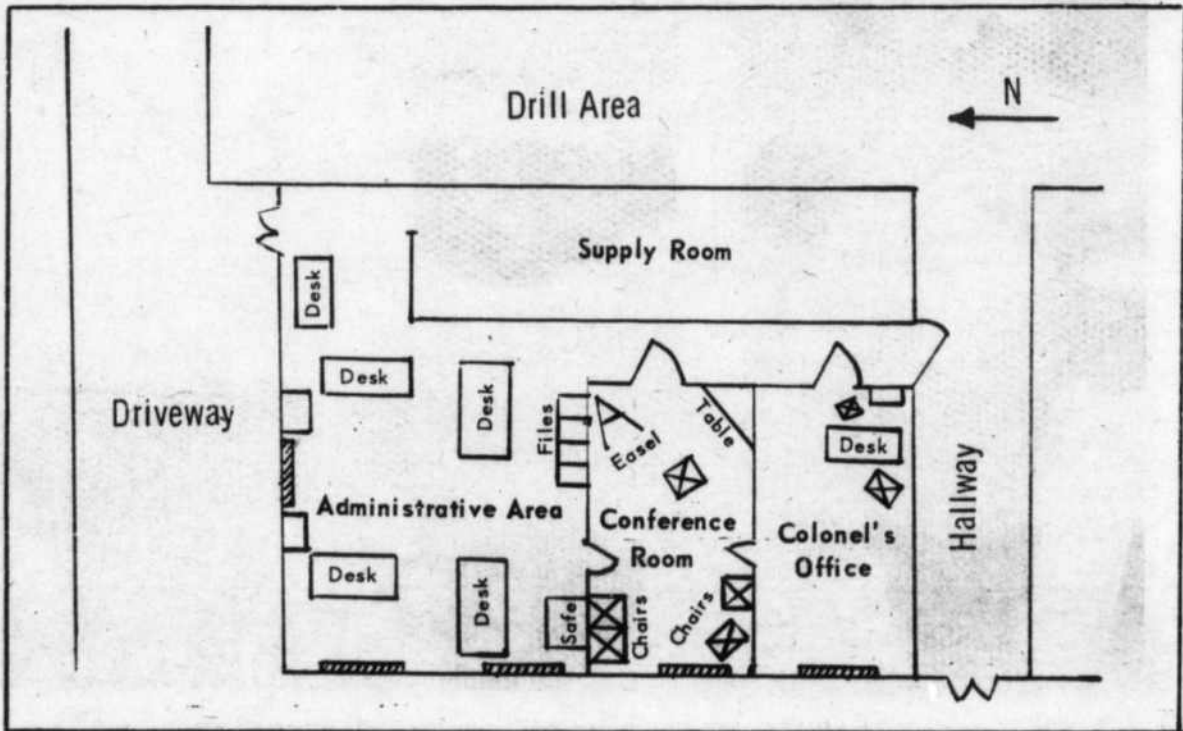


Smoke rises from the wall away, early Tuesday morning, encrusted desks.

"Hey, look at my pen," one AROTC secretary exclaimed, holding a half-melted desk pen up for the group's inspection. "I've had this pen for three years. You know what?" she continued, "I'm going to keep it."



Sergeant First Class Joseph W. Martin checks the contents of his desk in the moderately damaged administrative AROTC offices.



Sketch of the northwest corner segment of the UConn ROTC hangar affected by Tuesday morning's fire.



# 'rumors and guesses'

By RENEE STEPNO

Colonel Richard F. DeKay, whose office in the ROTC Hangar was destroyed by a firebomb, was one of the calmest persons at the scene yesterday morning.

At 10 a.m. DeKay was sorting through the remains of the books on his charred and blackened desk. He refused to speculate on a possible culprit, saying, "I know what the press is going to do with this. You're going to end up blaming the entire campus for the acts of a single deviant individual. There are 12,000 very fine students here and I'd hate to see them get blamed for something obviously done by one, well, one nut."

SDS issued a long statement yesterday denying any connection with the bombing. SDS blamed the incident on the "administration" or right-wing elements attempting to discredit the left. For one thing, the bomb was set just prior to the last day of Jim Sober's trial, which SDS didn't think was a coincidence.

Speculation about the politics and motives of the bomber ran a wide gamut. John Manning, Associate Dean of Students, was

asked by a television reporter to comment on possible suspects. "Please, don't speculate," Manning pleaded. "There are too many rumors and guesses and ideas circulating as it is now."

The reporter then asked Manning to comment on two specific rumors: that the bombing was connected with the "Salazar incident" of Monday night, or that it had something to do with revenge by a former home economics professor here who was arrested Saturday.

Manning's eyes widened at the latter hypothesis and he refused to comment.

The news didn't seem to travel very rapidly among UConn students. By evening many students who knew about a hoax bomb scare at the Business Administration Building didn't know about the actual fire-bombing at the Hangar.

But two attitudes seemed dominant among students questioned informally: that the bombing had some kind of political motive and "tsk! tsk! ROTC finally got it."

As one student said, "It was announced this morning in the dorm, and we thought the Hangar had been completely destroyed. I never heard such spontaneous cheering in my whole life."



The gutted interior of AROTC Commander Colonel Richard F. DeKay's office where the fire bombs apparently exploded.

Or the comment, "What a jerk! Trying to set fire to a cinder block building."

A bearded political science major said, "I've never credited the SDS here with much brains, but I just don't think they're stupid enough to pull something like this."

"I don't think SDS would be dumb enough to do this during Sober's trial, because it would really hurt him," said a journalism student.

Lunch at Commons found very few persons even discussing the incident, if they knew about it at all.

When questioned, a chemistry major said the gasoline-filled bottles used was a "crude" technique.

A history graduate student talked to one of his professors over coffee. The professor was appalled; he said he didn't want ROTC on campus, "but is this the way to get rid of it?"

"Bombs kill people. Johnson proved that," said the grad assistant. "Vietnam seems to have hardened people to killing. Even Wisconsin where an innocent bystander was killed didn't affect people."

Another student commented that he thought the bombing was terrible. "Then you must be against the Vietnam war," the grad countered. All discussions initiated or overheard yesterday by this reporter brought the left and anti-war movements into the incident somehow.

Some students thought that the left on campus was an innocent victim of a right-wing plot to discredit it. "It would simply be too stupid for SDS to do this. It had to be somebody trying to build a conservative reaction," as one woman thought.

But others were not so sure. "I wouldn't put anything past those Commies," was another reaction, and not an uncommon one.

At the Hangar, life was continuing more or less normally. The telephone company was there in the morning, starting to replace burned out wires and melted phones.

DeKay, his hands covered with soot, rummaged through piles of rubble. "Well, I've been trying to get this place remodeled," he said, "I guess now it'll be easier," he joked.

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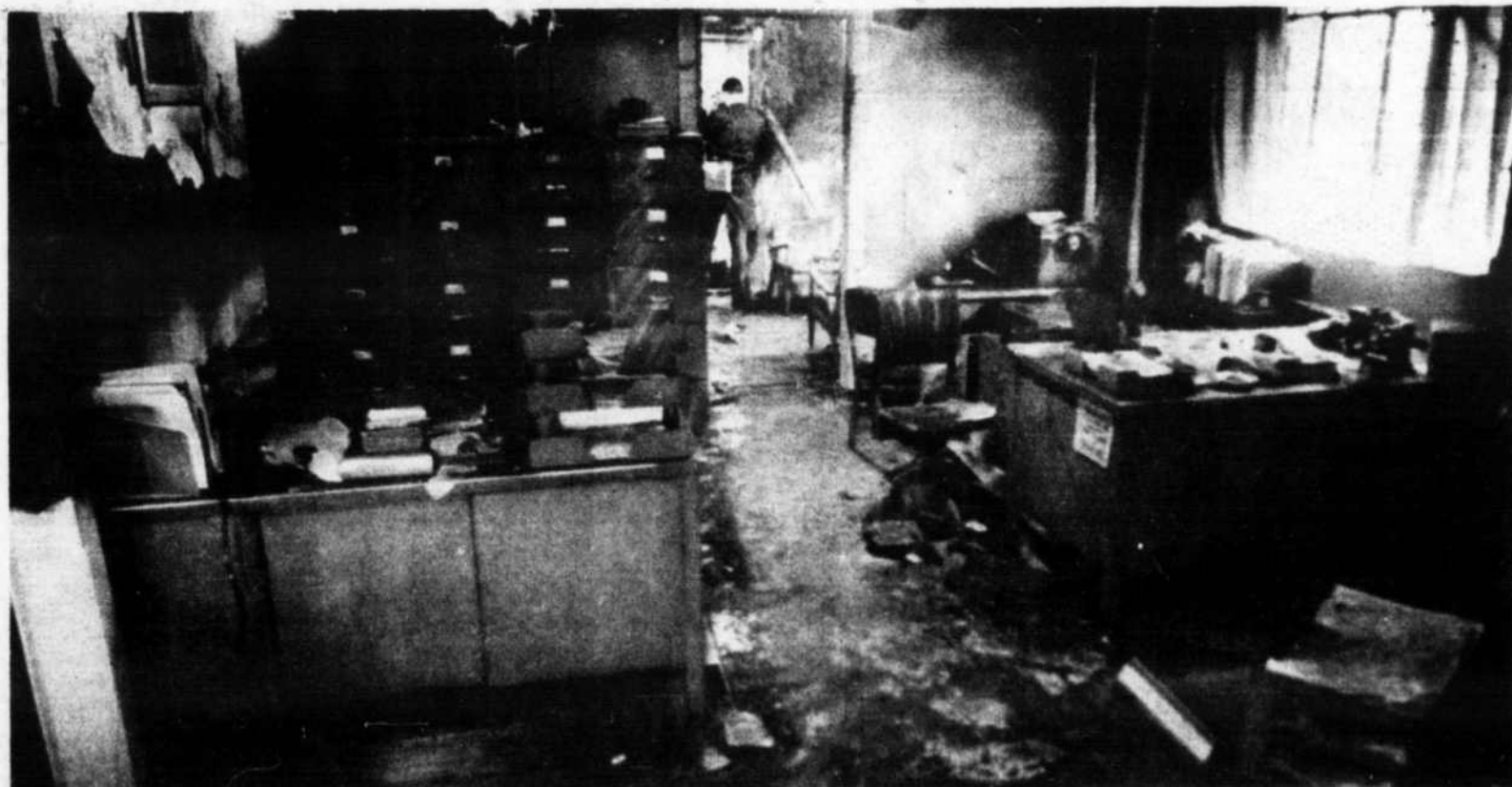
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Wall of the smoldering AROTC Hangar as UConn Engine 22 pumps



The AROTC administrative office wall clock stopped at 1:46 a.m. Tuesday. Files against the south wall were undamaged by the blaze.



# redmen scalp huskies, 74-68

By FRANK WALDRON

The University of Connecticut basketball team's hope of repeating as Yankee Conference champions suffered a setback when the University of Massachusetts, led by star forward Julius Erving's 27 points and 20 rebounds, defeated the Huskies 74-68 before a capacity Field House crowd of 4,447 persons Tuesday night.

With 2:03 remaining in the game the Huskies trailed the Redmen by two points 66-64 before the roof caved in on them.

Ken Mathais of UMass converted the first shot of a one and one situation and Erving coolly sunk both ends of a one and one attempt to give UMass a 69-64 bulge with 1:01 showing on the clock.

The Huskies are now 1-1 in the YanCon while UMass, the Conference leader has a 4-0 Conference record.

Staak led UConn in scoring with 32 points on a 14-28 floor performance and 4-5 foul line

average. Guard Bob Boyd netted 23 points while Phil Hoagland and Ron Hurbala each had five points. Doug Melody scored one point and Bob Parsons scored two to close out the scoring for the Huskies.

Following Erving in the UMass scoring were Mathais with

15 points and Mike Pagliara with 14 points.

UConn, which was outrebounded 40-22, plays Oklahoma State Friday in the Bayou Classic at Lafayette, La. at 7 p.m. CST.

The UConn freshmen lost the preliminary game to the UMass freshmen 78-65.

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