

# TERROR ALERT: 1970

When the Domestic Bombing Craze Came to Minnesota



Illustration by Jeff R. Lonto

On the balmy, summer night of Tuesday, August 25, 1970, a crowd of 17,697 filled the stands of Metropolitan Stadium in the Minneapolis suburb of Bloomington as the Boston Red Sox were in town playing the Minnesota Twins in Major League Baseball action.

With no score in the fourth inning, the big Longines clock above the scoreboard reading 9:15, stadium announcer Bob Casey suddenly came over the loudspeakers, and informed the crowd, "The Twins have been advised by the Bloomington police that there will be an explosion here at the Met at 9:30. Please leave the stadium in an orderly fashion."

There was plenty of reason to be afraid. There had been a rash of bombings in the Twin Cities and surrounding areas recently. Three days earlier, a homemade bomb exploded in a women's rest room at the Dayton's department store in downtown St. Paul, seriously injuring one woman and causing extensive damage. Several days before that, a dynamite blast demolished a section of the downtown Minneapolis Federal Building, in the wee hours of the morning. There were also blasts at a used car dealership, a Burlington-Northern Railway building and a Gulf Oil Company storage yard locally. In addition, hundreds of bomb threats had been recently made. An explosion in a crowded stadium would have been catastrophic.

1970 was the height of the Vietnam War, the draft, the Kent State shootings, the events that defined the *Sixties*, and while there wasn't the intensity in Minneapolis-St. Paul that there was in places such as Chicago, Los Angeles or Detroit, the Midwestern community was by no means immune from action and reaction of a country gone mad.



The protest season that year began in the spring, around the same time as the baseball season as a number of rallies and student strikes were organized

at the University of Minnesota and other state colleges, as well as around the country, to protest the escalation of U.S. military presence in Cambodia and Vietnam. Some high school students joined in the student strikes and even renegade grade school kids from Pratt Elementary near the U of M campus got in on the act.



Most of the Minnesota protests were relatively low key, but there were incidents, some of which happened around campuses outside the Twin Cities area. At Mankato State University, located in southern Minnesota, an Army recruiter's car was set on fire and a main intersection was blocked in a melee involving some 300-400 students. In St. Cloud, located in the west-central part of the state, students from St. Benedict's College and St. John's University joined St. Cloud State students in blocking traffic and disarming a police officer.

Back at the University of Minnesota, things turned violent as students attempted to block the demolition of historic buildings near campus so a Red Barn hamburger restaurant could be built. Students who attempted to occupy the buildings were forcefully removed by police in riot gear. The buildings were bulldozed immediately afterward to prevent any further unauthorized occupation.

Hours later, other Red Barn outlets in the area were attacked by vandals in retaliation, with broken windows, graffiti and a car being driven through the front entrance of one of the restaurants by someone who declared himself a "student of life." A commercial from the time inviting people with "the hungries" to "hit the Red Barn" was taken all too literally.

As a hot, sweltering summer rolled in, tensions mounted. Mainstream public opinion was turning