

Cover Story

Bomb makers shock neighbors - Woodhaven teens found instructions on Internet

BY KAREN JAMES

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PHOTO BY JOEL CAIRO

Woodhaven teens arrested - say they found bomb instructions on the Internet.

Police evacuated the shocked residents of a Woodhaven block last Friday, Oct. 27, after two teens, both with aspirations to join the military, detonated a nerve-rattling smoke bomb that left neighbors stranded from their homes for several hours and wary of how easy it is to find dangerous information on the Internet.

Jackson Lam, 18, of 85-30 75th Street, and Raul Cano, 18, of 90-33 75th Street, set off a homemade smoke bomb outside of Lam's home at approximately 3:15 p.m., according to court documents.

Lam told police that he got the information he needed to build the bomb from the Internet. He was aided by Cano in purchasing, mixing and assembling the materials.

Although the explosion caused no reported injuries or damage, after arriving at the scene police ordered frightened neighbors to leave the area. Access to the surrounding homes was restricted until approximately 9:00 p.m., according to area residents.

In the meantime, a search performed inside Lam's house by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) Bomb Squad found additional bomb-making materials including metal pipes with fuses, explosive materials, potassium nitrate powder and Sterno alcohol burners.

Neighbors expressed surprise that the incident took place in this serene, working class neighborhood of brick-fronted, two family homes - much less that it involved Lam and Cano, whom they described as "good kids" who stayed out of trouble. Some attributed it to the lure of the Internet's darker side and its potential to disseminate all types of information, for good or bad.

"It's surprising, knowing a kid could be next door doing that," said Raphael Cruz, 24, whose parents live a few doors away from Lam. Cruz added that while he saw Lam with a potato launcher - a recreational launching device for non-destructive projectiles - over the summer, he has never caused any problems in the neighborhood. "That's like the Internet right there. It's crazy."



"They're good kids, they're quiet kids, they don't bother nobody," said a 30-year-old woman who would not give her name but identified herself as a three-year resident of the neighborhood. "You go on the Internet and as long as you know how to read and do math," anyone can build a bomb, she continued.

Lam and Cano were both arrested and charged with criminal possession of a dangerous weapon and reckless endangerment. However, Lam's attorney, Thomas Johnson of the Legal Aid Society, said that he expects the Queens County district attorney's office to drop the charges against the two.

Johnson described his client as a student at John Jay College in Manhattan with no criminal record, whom he said, "appears to have been tinkering around with a smoke bomb," without intention of harming anyone or anything. James J. Galleshaw, who represents Cano, described the incident as involving good kids using poor judgment. "It's just stupid kids, more like a science experiment," he said.

"These young men were charged accordingly based on the information we had at the time," said NYPD spokesperson Sgt. Carlos Nieves. While the district attorney's office declined to comment on the case, citing a pending criminal investigation, according to a spokeswoman there, Lam and Cano could face up to 25 years in prison if found guilty of the charges.