

Video: The 1985 Bombing of West Philly

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Global Research, June 24, 2018

[fzappa711](#) 9 January 2014

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

On May 13, 1985, after complaints from neighbors, as well as indictments of numerous MOVE members for crimes including parole violation, contempt of court, illegal possession of firearms, and making terrorist threats, the Philadelphia Police Department attempted to clear MOVE Headquarters at 6221 Osage Avenue and arrest the indicted MOVE members. This led to an armed standoff with police. The police lobbed tear gas canisters at the building. MOVE members fired at the police, and the police returned fire with semiautomatic weapons.

A Pennsylvania State Police helicopter then dropped two one-pound bombs made of FBI-supplied water gel explosive, a dynamite substitute, targeting a fortified, bunker-like cubicle on the roof of the house. The resulting fire ignited a massive blaze that eventually destroyed approximately 60 houses nearby.

Eleven people, including John Africa, five other adults and five children, died in the resulting fire. Ramona Africa, one of the two survivors, claimed that police fired at those trying to escape the burning house, while the police stated that MOVE members had been firing at police.

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