La Bomba

A TNT/3TC combo

April 1, 1998

Bombs Rock BioChem Pharma," blared Canada's *Globe and Mail* headline in late November. The first reported violent attack on a Canadian drug company, the bombing of BioChem Pharma Inc. -- discoverer of 3TC, North America's most-prescribed AIDS drug -- triggered a flood of rumors but no leads. Four blasts exploded outside the company headquarters in Laval, Quebec, and at a plant in Montreal, forcing evacuation of more than 250 employees, and causing minor building damage but no injuries or product destruction. Police deactivated two other bombs before they exploded. The next day, an anonymous call to Laval police forced an evacuation of BioChem's Montreal and Ste-Foy plants, but no more bombs boomed. The firm has since heightened security.

Speculation that militant AIDS activists lit the fuse in protest of the high cost of anti-HIV drugs was dismissed by Tim McKaskell, of Toronto's AIDS Action Now! "I don't think it has any connection with AIDS at all," he said. And the Canadian AIDS Society's Russell Armstrong told the *Globe*, "Even in the United States, where the tone of AIDS activism has been much harsher than here, I don't recall seeing anything of this nature." ACT UP/New York's James Wentzy denied that his group was responsible, terming its actions "always nonviolent, public and in the finest tradition of civil disobedience."

While suspects range from U.S. animal-rights groups to the mob, at presstime authorities were scratching their heads over the unsolved crime. "There is nothing new and we prefer not to speculate," said BioChem Pharma's Michele Roy.

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