

Blast, Fire Rip Ky Son BEQ in Saigon

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SAIGON — A 45-pound explosive ripped open a fuel tank outside the Ky Son enlisted men's quarters in downtown Saigon Friday night setting off a fire that swept through the bottom floor and caused the evacuation of the building.

No injuries were reported in the explosion or fire although a security guard standing near the

generator was reportedly knocked into the street by the blast.

Lights in several nearby U.S. buildings blinked out as the explosion destroyed a generator at the BEQ. The Plaza Hotel, Ky Son Annex and Dai Nam Theater also lost their electricity.

A civilian engineer setting up a new generator after the explosion explained that the charge had apparently been placed next to a 600-gallon fuel tank serving the generator.

When the bomb went off, it caused the fuel tank to explode — breaking windows on the first three floors of the building. The fire that followed swept the ground floor and caused some damage to the second floor.

Residents of the nine-story building said dense smoke poured into the upper floors forcing residents, some still in night clothes, to leap to the roofs of adjoining buildings or grope through the darkened halls to stairways leading to the roof.

Two automobiles in front of the building were gutted by fire, and a third was damaged.

Officials said the men would be housed in other billets until the damage could be repaired.

"Everybody acted pretty good," one man said. "Everybody kept their cool. The guys who were in charge really did a good job. They had gas masks and flashlights and helped everybody get out pretty smoothly."