

Soldiers liked soul music played at destroyed disco

BERLIN (AP) — Nearly 500 Berliners and American soldiers were crowded into La Belle discotheque Saturday when a bomb explosion buckled walls, collapsed part of the ceiling, and sent screaming patrons scrambling for the door.

Hundreds of patrons fled through shattered windows or a hole blasted through the building's rear wall, U.S. soldiers said.

The discotheque, located in West Berlin's American sector, was popular with U.S. soldiers. Authorities said that led them to believe the bombing was aimed against American personnel stationed in the city.

"This was an attack against American soldiers, soldiers who are here in this city to help preserve our freedom," West Berlin's mayor, Eberhard Diepgen, told West German television.

A U.S. soldier and a 28-year-old woman, believed to be Turkish, were killed in the attack, according to police. U.S. military authorities said at least 44 Americans were among 155 people injured.

"I was on duty that night at the (nearby) McNair barracks when one

injured guy turned up with his shirt and pants covered with blood," said Sgt. Dwane Thompson. "He said everybody was panicking and just scrambling to try and get out of the place."

The blast at 1:50 a.m. partly collapsed the ceiling and caved in walls in the nightclub. A small fire broke out after the explosion but was quickly extinguished, authorities said.

The explosion broke into smithereens the nightclub's mostly glass facade and blew out windows in surrounding stores. Scaffolding along the front of the five-story building was damaged, but did not collapse.

Rescue workers said the explosion was so strong that the building, built in the 1920s, was in danger of collapsing.

The 2-year-old nightclub was known for its vintage selection of U.S. soul music and relaxed atmosphere, American soldiers said.

"It's a good place to listen to music, to dance and meet nice girls," said Thompson. "A lot of soldiers liked to go there."

The discotheque was in a middle-class neighborhood about three miles from the U.S. military's Andrew and McNair barracks, the two main bar-

racks for about 6,000 American troops.

The club is also about three miles from the chic downtown Kurfurstendamm shopping area.

West Berliners interviewed at the scene condemned the attack.

"We Berliners have to thank the Americans for so much. This attack is a shame," said a woman of about 60 as she passed the site. She would not give her name.

In Bonn, Paul Laufs, a spokesman for the governing Christian Democratic parliamentary faction, called for thorough checks on all Arabs arriving in West Germany if the bombing proves to be the work of Arab terrorists.

"In such a case, we should conduct systematic checks of all persons from such (Arab) countries who live in West Germany," Laufs said in a statement released in the West German capital.

West Berlin, a Western enclave 110 miles inside Communist East Germany, is administered by U.S., British and French authorities under a postwar agreement that gave the Soviet Union control over the sector now known as East Berlin.



An estimated 500 people, many of them Americans, were inside La Belle night