

...to witnesses and police, he also made references to possessing fertilizer, a bomb-making material, and to "blowing things up."

Police Commissioner Howard Safir said investigators are "discounting" nothing, including a theory that a rival construction crew was responsible. Techno Contracting won the job, outbidding two other companies, said officials with the city Department for Design and Construction.

Safir said the bomb was too small to damage the pipeline or injure bystanders. It was described as about the equivalent of an M-80 firecracker.

"If the person knew what they were doing, they weren't looking to hurt anyone," Safir said. "It was very low-tech."

device being activated by a radio signal.

About 75 cops, a dozen fire trucks, and several ambulances massed at the scene. Also on standby were federal agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and members of the NYPD/FBI Joint Terrorist Task Force. Police investigators from Island detective squads, the NYPD's Major Case Squad and the Arson and Explosion Squads were on hand. At least two police helicopters circled above the scene.

At the center of the tense operation was the Bomb Squad, which dispatched robots and, finally, a heavily armored officer, to get an up-close view of the bomb.

Police waited to remove the bomb until Transcontinental was

originates in Texas, Stockton said. Another pipeline several blocks away that carries jet fuel from New Jersey through Staten Island to Kennedy Airport in Queens, was shut down as a precaution, according to the Pennsylvania company that operates it, Buckeye Pipe Line. Airport operations were not affected. Police originally reported the jet-fuel pipe was underneath the bomb.

Experts later said the bomb posed no threat to the buried 26-inch main, or a nearby six-inch gas pipe. Even if the explosion did rupture the pipe, the likely result would have been a towering geyser of flame, not a deadly eruption, experts said.

After the pipe was declared empty, at 12:23 p.m., robots and an officer made several trips to the package. It eventually was disarmed and loaded by a robot into the back of a containment truck. The truck is equipped with a hammock-like device that offsets any bouncing or jostling during a bomb's transport. It was taken to the Police Department's Rodman's Neck range in the Bronx.

The device was found to contain a black powder, which police described as a weak explosive. It will be further analyzed by the Bomb Squad.

For seven hours, displaced residents — some in bare feet — milled about the perimeter. Some were enchanted by the novelty. They joked with reporters and some even videotaped and pho-



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"We're Israelis so we know about bombs. But in Jerusalem, not here in New York," says Sarah Rotenstein, who was