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Mystery army map shows capital city nuclear bomb damage

By RIC STEVENS

A MYSTERIOUS map has been discovered which suggests the army began a study of what would happen in a nuclear bombing of Wellington in the years following World War II.

It was found in a file of miscellaneous documents relating to what was then the Army Department deposited in the National Archives.

It is mysterious because the Ministry of Defence historian, John Crawford, was unable to find out anything about it after being contacted by The Dominion Sunday Times.

The map carries no date, no reference numbers which would help to link it with other documents and

was accompanied by no supporting material in the file.

Cartographers say it is also rather badly drawn (it has streets which have never been seen on the Wellington landscape), but would seem to date from the late 1940s.

It also presents an optimistic view of what would happen if a relatively small bomb exploded half a mile above Wellington railway station.

It says there would be "very heavy" damage along the length of Lambton Quay but most inner suburbs would

suffer only "moderate" damage. The size of the bomb is not specified.

More recently, in 1985, a royal society report predicted a one-megatonne warhead exploded in roughly the same position, but three times as high in the air, would kill 98 per cent of all people in the entire area covered by the 1940s map.

Last month, a Planning Council report said no contingency plans had been made in New Zealand to deal with nuclear war.

That report, however, dealt not with the effects of direct bomb blasts in New Zealand but the effects on New Zealand of nuclear war involving other countries.