2 Held at Hotel of McGovern; Guns Seized

From News Dispatches

MIAMI BEACH, July 12 —Two members of a black separatist group were arrested today at the hotel where Sen. George McGovern is staying and were charged with possession of concealed weapons, police said.

One was taken into custody while sitting in a car on the hotel entrance ramp; the other while inside the lobby, Secret Service agents said. Two pistols were found under the front seat of the car, they reported.

Secret Service agents said the arrests were based on information received from the FBI.

Both men were taken into custody shortly after McGovern concluded a morning meeting with six Democratic governors in the 17th-floor penthouse suite of the Doral Hotel.

A spokesman for the Miami Beach Police Department said both men were members of the Republic of New Africa.

A police spokesman said the men were identified as John Cox, 25, of Colea, Miss., and Malik Sonebeyatt, 32, of Jackson, Miss.

They were taken to the city jail where they were interrogated by Secret Service agents, authorities said.

The two men arrived in a small sports car with Michigan license plates, police said.

Inside the car were several scraps of note paper and literature dealing with black nationalism, authorities said.

There was no immediate word from police on what the men's intention might have been.

McGovern canceled his plan to leave the hotel about a half hour after the noontime arrests to appear before a group of Spanish-speaking delegates. His press secretary, Kirby Jones, said he did not know whether there was a direct connection with the arrests.

"I suspect there were people who might have suggested he not go because of that," Jones said.

The Republic of New Africa has found itself on a rocky road of violence and encounters with law officers since it was founded in Detroit in 1968 with the goal of building a new nation in five Southern states.

Many top leaders of the RNA have been in jail in Jackson, Miss., since last August when a police lieutenant was shot to death in a raid by police and FBI agents.

A jury convicted the first man to go on trial, 27-year-old Thomas Norman of Milwaukee, Wis., in May on a murder charge in the death of detective Lt. William Louis Skinner. Norman, who uses the Swahili name of Hekima Ana, claimed he was acting in self-defense.

He was sentenced to life in prison. Six other RNA members, including RNA President Richard Henry of the Detroit area, face murder charges.

RNA members were involved in a shooting outside the New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit in March 1969 which left one policeman dead. Police arrested about 140 persons who were inside the church for the RNA's one-year anniversary celebration, but most were released the following morning.

Authorities filed a few charges in the case, but there were no convictions. Police said that RNA members who were carrying rifles outside the church fired the shots.

Henry, who prefers being called Imari Obadele, was a founder of the RNA along with his brother, Milton Henry, a Pontiac, Mich., lawyer.

Robert Williams, who fled from the United States to escape kidnap charges stemming from an incident in North Carolina during a demonstration, was selected the first RNA president.

Williams had spent his self-imposed exile in Cuba, mainland China and parts of Africa. He later returned to Detroit, was arrested, and put up a strong fight against extradition to North Carolina.

Associated Press

Two black separatists, John Cox, second from left, and Malik Sonebeyatt, right, are arrested at the Doral Hotel.