Hotel Sniper Identified

TERROR SHOOTINGS

THE STATES-ITEM

Tuesday, January 9, 1973 New Orleans, La. 10 Cents

LINKED

Bullets from the same weapon used by the sniper in the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge incident killed Police Cadet Alfred Harrell and wounded Patrolman Edwin S. Hosli Sr. New Year's Eve, Police Superintendent Clarence B. Giarrusso said today.

Giarrusso's statement at an afternoon news conference was the first official word linking the sniper incident with the earlier shootings.

The superintendent said the sniper killed Sunday night on the roof of the hotel has been identified from fingerprints as Mark James Robert Essex, 23, a Navy veteran from Emporia, Kan. Essex had been living in the New Orleans area about six months, Giarrusso said.

BALLISTICS TESTS showed the bullets that killed Deputy Police Supt. Louis Sirgo and a Virginia couple in the hotel Sunday were fired from the same rifle used to kill Harrell and wound Hosli, the superintendent said.

The Essex family, which includes

the dead man's father, mother, an older sister and two younger brothers, resides at 902 Cottonwood in Emporia.

A neighbor, Morris Dell, who has known the family for a long time, said he thinks young Essex was "like any other normal boy." He described his father and mother as "beyond reproach."

Dell said he had seen the boy "only once" since he enlisted in the Navy in 1969. A recruiter in Emporia said Essex had been discharged, but he did not know the date.

Dell said Essex's father is employed by an Emporia meat packing company and his mother at a day care center.

"He never did give me the impression that he was that kind of a kid," Dell said.

The investigation of the incident in which seven persons died and 19 were wounded yesterday and Sunday was otherwise centering on an automobile impounded from the hotel garage.

Ballistics tests and fingerprint studies were made at federal crime labs in Washington, D. C., and the results were made public today by Giarrusso.

Orleans Parish Coroner Dr. Carl H. Rabin said the dead sniper was five-feet, four-inches tall and weighed 130 pounds. He died of multiple gunshot wounds of the head, body and extremities. An autopsy was performed by pathologist Dr. Monroe Samuels.

The fingerprints will be compared with those taken from an auto police found in the hotel garage.

Police said it is a stolen vehicle believed to have been driven into the garage Sunday after the shooting of a

Turn to Page 6

Terror Shootings Linked

Continued from Front Page

New Orleans grocer whose identity police would not reveal.

MEANWHILE, POLICE, at least officially, still were seeking a second sniper believed to have been firing from the hotel roof, though many now think he never existed.

Police Supt. Carence B. Giarrusso said last night he remains convinced more than one sniper was involved.

But, pressed by newsmen, he admitted there could have been just one sniper, the man killed by police Sunday night.

Giarrusso said he believes the shooting spree was part of a national conspiracy of black militants, but he declined comment when asked what evidence he had. "It's my cop's intuition," he said.

Asked at his joint news conference with Mayor Moon Landrieu how a second sniper could have gotten away, Giarrusso said: "There's a gamut of possibilities, ranging from police negligence to a superbrain sniper."

The theory of two or more snipers was based on evidence which included reports of gunfire coming from the roof and the wounding of three policemen in a stairwell between the 18th floor and the roof, long after the first sniper had been slain.

HOWEVER, GIARRUSSO admitted the possibility that the three policemen were wounded by gunfire from fellow officers stationed in surrounding buildings.

The sniper, shot by police from a helicopter, was announced dead at 5 p.m. yesterday by Dr. Waldo Bernard of the Orleans Parish coroner's office. The sniper was 18 to 25 years old, a coroner's spokesman said.

Yesterday afternoon, there were reports of shootings, new snipers and bomb scares throughout the city. They were generally unfounded.

The Central Business District, much of which was cordoned off by police yesterday, reopened to normal activity today except for the immediate area of the hotel.

Police barricades around the 50-block area were taken down last night.

LANDRIEU SAID the police operation has now "moved from the hectic action at the hotel to the painstaking investigation into all circumstances involved." This will include sifting through the myriad of reports and rumors, connecting the sniper or snipers to other incidents in the city, he said.

The weapon found near the body of the slain sniper will be checked to trace ownership, Giarrusso said. He declined to describe the weapon, but several policemen said it was a .44 magnum, a semi-automatic carbine.

The superintendent said some ammunition for the rifle was also found, but he would not say how much or where it was located. No other weapons were found, he added.

A long day of police activity yesterday ended in anti-climax when officers rushed the rooftop area and found nothing except the body of the sniper killed Sunday night.

Three officers were wo unded by ricocheting bullets as police fired at a concrete elevator shaft in which they believed the sniper was hiding. None was seriously hurt.

Later, polce believed they cornered a sniper in a huge air conditioning unit on the roof of the parking garage area, on the eighth floor.

ONE OFFICER said he saw someone moving around in the unit, but when police moved in, they found no one.

After the final check of the 300 rooms in the hotel turned up no sniper, Giarrusso said:

"Something went wrong."