A Phantom On the Roof?

Dome Bond Refinancing Postponed

The Louisiana Bond Commission today delayed action on a request to refinance $106.9 million worth of Louisiana Superdome construction bonds.

The commission, meeting in Baton Rouge, acted after being told the resale would let the state take advantage of a better bond market and spread out the schedule of bond repayments.

"We have plenty of time on this," said state Sen. B. B. Rayburn of Bogalusa, a bond commission member. "The bond market might get even better."

Herman Kohlmeyer Sr. of New Orleans, financial adviser to the Superdome Commission, said he doesn't expect the market to improve soon, but added: "This is only my opinion, and Sen. Rayburn could be right."

Kohlmeyer said he feels the stadium

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By ALLAN KATZ

Was there more than one sniper at the Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge? If not, why were there so many reports he had been sighted?

If he did exist, how could he escape from a building filled with policemen? And why were there so many reports of snipers elsewhere in the city yesterday that later turned out to be false?

If there was only one sniper, how can the shooting of three policemen yesterday morning—long after the man on the roof was dead—be explained? Sgt. Frederick O'Sullivan, one of those wounded, said the officers exchanged fire with a sniper in the stairwell leading to the roof. Is it possible that the fire the officers thought they were drawing from a sniper came from a hovering helicopter or some other source and that the officers were hit with their own ricocheting bullets?

In the wake of the 48-hour ordeal at the motor lodge that left seven dead—including a bullet-riddled sniper—the answer to those questions well may lie in the confusion, tension, communications failures and the exhaustion from long hours under pressure produced by what in effect was a combat situation.

No one who was there could question the courage under fire of the New Orleans police and firemen who time and again exposed themselves to danger. Those who were there also could understand how the conditions and the uncertainties of the situation could lead to total confusion.

On Sunday night, about 11:30 p.m. after having killed one sniper at 9:30 p.m. with a burst of machinegun fire, a helicopter returned for another pass over the motel. After spraying the rooftop with bullets, the copter landed near City Hall and the pilots came to the command post in the hotel's lobby.

QUESTIONED BY newsmen, one of the copter's crew said, "We saw him (the second sniper). He was curled around a drain pipe, using it for a shield and we could not get our fire at him from our angle. We took fire from him."

Later, Mayor Moon Landrieu and official police spokesmen expanded on the statement. They told newsmen in-

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Phantom on Rooftop?

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formally that the second sniper was using a thick standpipe in the blockhouse for protection against machine-gun fire and could not be blasted out by the helicopter.

About 1 a.m., yesterday, police in a nearby building opened up on the blockhouse with heavy weapons, trying to blow holes in its six-inch concrete sides. The heavy weapons made a distinctive "whoom" each time they fired. A few moments later, a sharp "crack" as might be made by a handgun was heard repeatedly.

Unidentified voices on the police radio reported the police marksmen were under fire. Police officials came into the lobby to meet with hotel officials familiar with the design of the roof. In a conversation overheard by newsmen, the police said a sniper had crawled across the roof and was firing at police from a ledge and was a difficult target because he was moving frequently. This was supposed to be the "second sniper."

POLICE ON THE roof of the Supreme Court Building in Duncan Plaza said on the radio they could see the sniper. They tried to direct fire at him from police marksmen on other buildings.

From the radio came such comments as, "You're about two feet above him. Now you're on him. He's moving, he's moving. Your ricochets are missing him by inches."

What did those police spotters see? Was there a man there? Were they being fooled by shadows? After being on their feet for almost 24 hours, and under great pressure, were they seeing what they desperately wanted to see? Or did they have it right? Did police narrowly miss the sniper Sunday night, only to have him slip from their grasp yesterday afternoon by slipping through their cordon?

About that time, it was discovered some police officers on or above Loyola Avenue were firing at the roof without authorization. Some of their fire was going in 16th and 18th floor windows of the hotel, where other officers were stationed below the sniper's blockhouse.

A RANKING police officer went out onto Loyola Avenue wiht a bullhorn, because the officers who were shooting without authorization were believed lacking a radio and, bellowing into the device, ordered "any officers firing without authorization to cease firing immediately."

Is it possible the fire police on some buildings thought they were taking from the sniper actually was coming from other policemen firing at the Howard Johnson's rooftop?

Supt. Clarence B. Giarrusso admitted at a press conference last night it is "possible."

Yesterday, as the affair drew to a close, reports of snipers elsewhere in the city flew thick and fast. A sniper was reported at Julia and O'Keefe. A woman was reported shot there. A sniper was reported first on the roof of Charity Hospital, then in the vicinity of the hospital. In the afternoon, after the "second sniper" could not be found, it was reported widely a black man had been seen on Melpomene Street discarding a police jacket and running away.

ALL THE reports turned out to be false. The closest to the truth was that a woman was injured at Julia and O'Keefe, possibly by a police richochet. She was not hurt seriously.

As it turned out, most of the verbal reports and visual sightings of the "second sniper" and other snipers elsewhere were based on second, third and fourth-hand versions of what "someone" had told "someone."

The trend has continued with statements by a number of persons, ranging from police patrolmen to Louisiana Atty. Gen. William J. Guste, that the entire affair was part of a black militant urban guerrilla warfare campaign.

While many signs point in that direction, other observers cautioned that as of this morning, no one has come forward with any hard proof that would stand up in court.

AS MAYOR Landrieu cautioned at a press conference last night, "We are trying to be very cautious about what we say until we have the kind of evidence you can go to court with. Up until that point, everything is speculation."

It is certain the speculation will continue. Was the battle part of a black insurrectionist movement? Was there a second sniper? If so, how could he have slipped out of the hotel and past the police cordon?

In the end, the trail that begins with questions ends the same way as efforts continue to separate the facts from the apparently endless speculation that always seems to attend disasters such as the one in Downtown New Orleans that for 36 hours captured the attention of the world.