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STUDENTS SHOT EDWARDS SAYS

New Orleans States-Item

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BY POLICE? 'MAYBE'

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BATON ROUGE—Gov. Edwin W. Edwards today acknowledged that two young blacks killed yesterday at Southern University may have been shot accidentally by state police shotguns.

The youths were killed during a confrontation between police and protesters who had taken over the school's administration building.

Edwards announced he will make a thorough investigation into the deaths.

Also today, the Justice Department ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate the deaths.

STATE POLICE and sheriff's deputies who clashed with the protesters have maintained they fired no live ammunition during the confrontation.

There are reports the two young men died of buckshot wounds to the head, and students at the scene insist

they saw state police firing shotguns into the crowd.

"It's perfectly logical and reasonable," Edwards said, "that one of the officers could have, in all the excitement, fired the wrong kind of ammunition. He may know of it now, and not be willing to tell."

Edwards said the officers' buckshot cartridges look the same as cartridges containing tear gas pellets, and that it is possible an officer could have loaded the wrong ammunition into his shotgun.

Deputy Atty. Gen. Ralph E. Erickson said in Washington the FBI will "develop all the facts relating to this unfortunate incident to determine whether there was any violation of federal

law during the confrontation.

"The investigation does not imply that any violation of federal law occurred. We will determine that once we have assembled all the information available."

Erickson said the violence at Southern "once again underscores the fact that the first order of business in all such situations should be a thorough exploration of the issues by all concerned."

"VIOLENCE DOES not solve problems," he said. "Defying the law is not the answer. But neither is an excessive use of force by the authorities."

The FBI entered the case as Southern's 9,000 students headed home, their school closed and its future in doubt.

Tension erupted into tragedy yesterday, leaving the two youths dead, three injured and the nation's largest black university out of business at least until Nov. 27.

The violence that wracked the long-troubled campus solved none of its problems, but left it in its wake a number of unanswered questions:

1. Who fired the shots—if indeed they were gunshots—that killed two students during yesterday morning's confrontation with the law officers?

2. What will happen when the governor's "state of emergency" expires and the campus is reopened after the Thanksgiving holiday?

3. What effect will the killings have on the equally troubled sister campus, Southern University in New Orleans?

4. Can the problems of the Southern system, already delicate, ever be worked out rationally now that bloodshed has been added to the accumulation of racial tensions, hatred and

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Gov. Edwin Edwards
adjusts his gas mask as he visits
the campus of Southern University in
New Orleans today. (AP Wirephoto)

neglect that brought about the situation in the first place?

5. Will the final result be the absorption of the Southern system by the LSU system, a step being advocated by many, both black and white?

THE MAN who ultimately must carry the brunt of the responsibility for answering these questions, Gov. Edwin W. Edwards, struggled with them at yesterday's lengthy news conference in his office and made it clear he knows there are no easy answers.

After huddling with law enforcement officials and repeatedly viewing a film of the action in front of the Southern administration building yesterday, the governor emerged to give this official account of what happened:

Administration officials were informed Wednesday night by intelligence agents that students would try to take over the campus the next morning. Preventative action was not taken, the governor said, because of a feeling it might backfire and bring charges of provocation and "overreacting."

Yesterday morning, a large crowd of students—Sheriff Al Amiss estimated it at 2,000—milled in and around the administration building, seizing control of it. Squads of sheriff's deputies and state police formed in front of them.

When the sheriff ordered them to disperse, about two-thirds of the crowd obeyed. The rest defiantly stayed. The sheriff gave them five minutes to clear the building.

(Some students interviewed later said they were not aware of the sheriff's ultimatum.)

WHEN THE TIME expired, the lawmen advanced on the crowd. Edwards said the film clearly showed that objects—presumed to be tear gas or grenade simulators—were thrown from the crowd of students toward the officers.

The officers fell back to don gas masks, then moved in, firing tear gas themselves. There was a scuffle and when it was over two young black men lay dead in a pool of blood on the steps of the building and the officers were in control.

They did not control all of the sprawling campus, however. Fires broke out in two buildings, damaging them extensively.

Milling students harassed firemen battling the blazes.

Commanders of both the sheriff's deputies and State Police steadfastly

Students Shot by Police?

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insisted none of their men fired any weapons other than tear gas launchers.

The autopsies, said the governor, showed the youths were killed by No. 3 buckshot. All of the lawmen's ammunition, he said was 00 buckshot.

Coroner Hypolite Landry's story was slightly different. He said the metal fragments found in the bodies could have been shrapnel from exploding tear gas canisters. Ballistic tests have been ordered.

At the outset of the news conference, Gov. Edwards declared a state of emergency on the Southern campus and ordered it closed until after Thanksgiving. Before the meeting was over, he was handed information that there was an upsurge in sales of guns and ammunition in the area and he extended the state of emergency to all of East Baton Rouge Parish.

THIS HE SAID, gave the mayor the authority to impose a curfew, but none was declared last night.

Edwards said he hopes that students will return after Thanksgiving and resume normal classes. He said many of the students' demands are justified and can be worked out by January 1, if the students will give officials a chance to work on them.

But two sets of demands, he insisted, can never be met. One is the removal of Southern President Dr. Leon Netterville (and the companion one from SUNO for removal of Dean Dr. Emmett Bashful).

The other is to give effective control of administration and curriculum on both campuses to student-dominated committees. Edwards ruled this out.

The governor's insistence on retaining Dr. Bashful was something of a turnabout, revealed earlier in the day coincidentally at the same time the Southern incident was breaking out. Earlier, Dr. Bashful had offered his resignation in return for SUNO students relinquishing control of the administration building on campus.

Edwards made it clear that Southern students hold the future of the school in their hands.

"It is my opinion that 90 per cent of the students, if they were left alone and not intimidated, would prefer to return to their classes," he said.

The governor left a clear implication that if they do not, the state board of education will not long keep spending money for Southern facilities. But he said he doubted that any merger of the Southern and LSU systems could be accomplished "in this atmosphere."

The NAACP, among other groups, has called for such a merger.

Plans were to keep SUNO open, pending developments. And that was about the state of all plans for the Southern system. No one knows what the future holds.

NETTERVILLE SAID today he was "deeply saddened over the tragic death" of two young men.

"I am grieved and saddened when the lives of young people are taken, especially in such a tragic manner, for who knows that these young people were not two of our great leaders of the future.

"The events of yesterday were the most appalling in the history of Southern University. This is a sad day for the Southern University system and all of Louisiana. To the families of the deceased young men I offer my prayers and personal condolences."

In New Orleans, City Hall was evacuated for about 45 minutes when a caller who said he was in sympathy with the students at Southern told officials he had planted a bomb in the building.

Pete Sanchez, head of the city's property management department, said the call came in at 11:53 a.m. Sanchez said the caller told him, "There is a bomb in City Hall and it will go off in 30 minutes." Sanchez said the caller said he planted the bomb because of the Southern deaths.

The 1,500 City Hall employees were evacuated while authorities searched for a bomb. None was found and the workers returned to their jobs.

IN OTHER developments related to the Southern unrest:

—Sheriff Amiss announced eight persons have been arrested on complaints issued by the school's administration. All eight were booked with disturbing the peace.

Four of the eight were arrested on campus yesterday, Amiss said, and the others were picked up earlier.

—A memorial service for the two dead youths was scheduled for this morning at predominately-white Louisiana State University, about 10 miles from the Southern campus.

About 20 LSU students maintained an overnight vigil at the flagpole of the school. The candlelight demonstration followed an impromptu memorial service yesterday afternoon by about 200 LSU students, about 20 per cent of them black.

—Tomorrow night's football game between Southern and Grambling, scheduled for the Southern campus, has been canceled.