

HOMER'S MAYOR HITS 'PANTHERS'

Troops Sent Home After Racial Confrontation

HOMER, La. (AP) — A company of about 100 National Guard troops were ordered home Friday while Mayor Roy E. Lowe blamed "Black Panthers" for a racial confrontation that prompted the troop call-out.

A spokesman for the National Guard said the troops were withdrawn from the Homer Armory, where they had remained since being called to duty Thursday, at 2 p.m.

The town has been without incident since Wednesday when 27 blacks were arrested during a violent confrontation with police.

Paul Kidd, attorney for those arrested, said the mayor's reference to Black Panthers was "ridiculous."

GUARD ORDERED

The guard was ordered into this small Claiborne Parish town by Gov. John J. McKeithen at the recommendation of U.S. Dist. Judge Ben C. Dawkins.

Dawkins said he based the recommendation on "threats" by Kidd and a Negro minister that "blood would be running in the town" Thursday night.

Kidd called Dawkin's statement a "categorical lie."

City officials said the 27 blacks were arrested on charges ranging from attempted murder to assault following an "unprovoked attack" on police at the parish jail. Several policemen and Negroes were injured in the melee.

HERDED TO JAIL

Negroes said they were marching from a school to the school board offices when confronted by police, who herded them to the jail. Once there, Negro spokesman said, a shouting match began and police attacked the crowd with cattle prods, night sticks, tear gas and fire hoses.

Lowe said the incident was not prompted by any legitimate Negro grievances. Blacks said the demonstration was called to protest alleged mistreatment of Negro students at a formerly all-white high school.

The mayor also criticized newsmen for publishing the Negro version of the incident.

'PRESERVE PEACE'

"There is only one side to this," Lowe said. "All we hope to do is preserve peace for all the people. These protests are not coming from responsible groups. They just want to disrupt the community."

"You've heard of the Black Panthers. We have several here who are Black Panthers. They have told me that their aim is to kill, burn or run off white people. At least they call themselves Black Panthers. I don't know."

Negroes contend they have many grievances in the parish, including a total lack of representation on public bodies.

Lowe said the population of the parish is about 50 per cent black, but the school board, city council, police jury and elected law enforcement posts are composed of all white men.