

Gov. Mandel Asks Life In Maryland Blast Law

NYT
3/13/70

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Special to The New York Times

ANNAPOLIS, Md., March 12—Gov. Marvin Mandel of Maryland, where two bomb explosions in two days have interrupted the state's effort to begin the delayed trial of H. Rap Brown, the black military leader, asked the Legislature today for emergency passage of a tightened explosives control law providing life imprisonment for violators.

Maryland law now requires a permit for the detonation of dynamite or other explosives but penalties for ignoring the law are scant. The destruction of property by bombs is punishable by imprisonment of up to 20 years.

Governor Mandel's proposed revision would tighten the permit and permit enforcement provisions, bring the possession and transportation of explosives under permit regulation, and extend the penalty for destroying property with explosives from a maximum of 20 years in prison to a life term.

The whereabouts of Mr. Brown, 26 years old, remained as deep a mystery as the identity and motive of those responsible for the blasts.

Mr. Brown's presence has not as yet been required at his trial in Bel Air, Md., where he is charged with arson and incitement to riot. The trial recessed Tuesday and will resume next Monday.

But he must be present in court, probably by midweek. His lawyers continued to insist today that they were so bereft of clues as to his whereabouts that they had no way of notifying him even of important court dates.

A scheduled news conference in Washington this afternoon, at which Mr. Brown's associates said yesterday that his whereabouts might be disclosed, was canceled today without explanation.

7,000 Caps Stolen

The Governor's legislative request is expected to receive unusually fast and favorable action here because during the day—hours after he announced his proposal at a morning news conference—the Maryland state police disclosed the theft of 7,000 dynamite blasting caps from an ordnance plant near the Delaware border.

The missing detonators — "enough to fuse two bombs at every courthouse in the country," one official here said—were not linked directly by the police with either of the two powerful explosions that have

alarmed and angered this Border State since Monday night. But a police spokesman said "the coincidence" of the theft during the night on Monday was "certainly part of our investigation."

The detonator caps were reported stolen between 4:45 P.M. Monday and 8 A.M. Tuesday by someone with access to a key to storage facilities at the plant of Ordnance Products, Inc., at North East, Md.

Such caps are commonly used to trigger bundles of dynamite sticks, and are considered far more volatile and dangerous to handle than dynamite itself.

The ordnance plant in North East, is about 35 miles from Bel Air, the Hartford County seat where Mr. Brown's long-delayed trial was to begin Monday for inciting arson in the 1967 burning of two blocks of the Eastern Shore Maryland community of Cambridge.

The courthouse at Cambridge, about 75 miles from the ordnance plant, was shattered by a time bomb around midnight Tuesday. Mr. Brown's trial was moved from Cambridge to Bel Air at the state's request, over his protest.

Bel Air was also the scene of a violent explosion in a moving automobile about midnight Monday that killed two of Mr. Brown's friends and supporters; Ralph E. Featherstone, 30, and William Herman Payne, 26.

Both men, like Mr. Brown, were former officials of the Student National Coordinating Committee, formerly called the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

Despite charges by black militants that the two men were "murdered" by a bomb secreted in their car, and perhaps meant state police said today that they were reinforcing their own theory. This was that Mr. Payne, in the front passenger seat of the totally demolished 1964 Dodge Dart, had been leaning over a quantity of explosives on the floor in front of him when an explosion was accidentally triggered.

The police said, for example, that in an autopsy of Mr. Payne's dismembered body, a portion of an electric battery had been found embedded inside his skull as though lodged there like a bullet fired from a gun at floor level if he had been bent over in his seat grappling for it. They said this further discredited speculation that the explosives might have been concealed under the front seat.