

Justice Admits Error In Shaw-Bertrand Tie

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The Department of Justice acknowledged yesterday that it goofed in ever suggesting that Clay Shaw was the mysterious "Clay Bertrand" sought after the assassination of President Kennedy.

Attorney General Ramsey Clark took responsibility for the snafu in a statement issued by a Department spokesman. Clark, the spokesman said, felt that justice would best be served by the embarrassing admission.

Shaw, a 54-year-old New Orleans businessman, has been accused by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison of plotting to kill the late President under the alias of "Clay Bertrand."

Shaw has vehemently denied any role in the convoluted conspiracy that Garrison has alleged. He has also denied ever using "Clay Bertrand" as an alias.

Today after Shaw's March 1

arrest, however, Attorney General Clark told reporters in an impromptu news conference on Capitol Hill that Shaw had been "checked out and cleared" by the FBI in the weeks following the assassination in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

For Shaw, the statement caused only trouble. The FBI never investigated anyone named Clay Shaw in 1963. It did check into allegations surrounding a "Clay Bertrand" — who was said to have sought legal help for Lee Harvey Oswald, accused slayer, after the assassination — but decided without ever finding "Bertrand," that they were without substance.

For Clark to say that Shaw had been "checked out," consequently, amounted to saying that Shaw was Bertrand. "We think it's the same guy," one Department official said on March 2.

In recent weeks, Garrison has seized on this as proof of his claims.