

6-1 6-20-68

Burbank Vows 'Developments' In Death Plot

BATON ROUGE (AP) — State Police Supt. Thomas D. Burbank promises "new developments" in three or four days on reports of a plot to assassinate Gov. John J. McKeithen for a \$5,000 fee.

McKeithen and other highly placed state officials confirmed yesterday reports that a "murder contract" had been put out for the governor, stemming from the state's tough probe into labor-management racketeering.

ASST. ATTY. Gen. Thomas McFerrin, chief counsel for the labor rackets agency, said information came to him that someone "was searching for a contract on the governor's life."

The governor tried to play down the reports, but Burbank said they were more than the usual crank telephone calls.

Burbank, who added more security guards to the governor, said two such threats were received by the FBI in New Orleans.

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"There have been two other threats other than the two reported by the FBI, and surveillance of persons is being conducted at this time," the state police commander added.

ONE REPORT received by authorities was that McKeithen was to have been killed by an ex-convict while the governor was in Mobile.

The governor visited Mobile June 10 for a meeting of the Interstate Oil Compact Commission, but there were no incidents.

Asked if the ex-convict was from Mobile, Burbank said:

"You're close, but I don't want to say anything else about it."

The FBI in New Orleans also confirmed that it passed on to state authorities reports of threats on the governor's life.

McKeithen's labor management rackets agency, after a year of investigation and public hearings, has begun a crackdown. It has already arrested several figures in the labor field in Baton Rouge.

"We're about to back those people against the wall," the governor commented.

After confirming he had received reports of an assassination, McKeithen appeared before the Senate Finance Committee had pledged "sensational developments in a short time" by the labor rackets agency.

M'KEITHEN defended salaries of commission officials.

"We are trying to rid ourselves of extortion and violence in the labor-management area," he said.

"We hope in a very short time to bring this thing to a head," he said, adding that public hearings have almost come to a close. "We're down to the nitty gritty."

McKeithen later told a news conference about the death reports. I didn't want to make any sensationalism out of it," he said.

Despite what Burbank said about his security, he said he is taking no extra precautions.

"Two times zero is zero and that's about the security we have," he said.

STATE POLICE were also investigating a number of anonymous telephone calls received at the governor's mansion.

The labor-management probe came in for criticism recently when McKeithen prevailed on the State Parole Board to release Billy Simpson, who had been sentenced to the state penitentiary for burglary.

He was freed after authorities reported there was an alleged plot to murder him at Angola.

Simpson was living at the Labor-Management Commission office near state police headquarters, McKeithen said he had given valuable information on racketeering in the labor-management field here.