

HOUMA

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~~Secret~~

What is the real story of the 1961 raid on the Houma Munitions ~~dump~~ bunker?

That raid, made by a group of men from New Orleans, either in itself or because of the people on the raid, is somehow inextricably entwined with Dist. Atty: ~~xx~~ Jim Garrison's investigation of a plot to kill President John F. Kennedy. ~~The facts~~

The facts concerning the raid have been foggy at best, due to a ~~short~~ ^{secret} of information from Garrison's office and a frequently unsought flood of it from other sources.

There has been some question about the date of the raid. Garrison has placed it sometime in ~~September~~ ^{August} of 1961, but Gordon Novel, charged by the ~~xx~~ Grand Jury with plotting the raid, has said it occurred before the summer of '61, probably prior to ~~the~~ ^{the} April ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~1961~~ ¹⁹⁶¹ ~~invasion~~ ^{invasion}.

The importance of the exact date is that if ~~it~~ the raid did occur before April, then, under the six-year statute of limitations, the crime has proscribed and the case is legally closed.

All Houma records of the raid -- which culminated in the burglary of a bunker rented by the Schlumberger Wells Co. for storing explosives -- have been seized by the Terrebonne Parish District Attorney.

However, a reporter looked at a copy of the report filed by the Houma Police Department. According to the police report, the burglary was reported by T. E. Benson, Houma manager for Schlumberger, at 10:10 p.m., Aug. 22, 1961.

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Benson had reportedly visited the bunker less than a week prior to the 22nd and had found nothing amiss.

Few ~~many~~ things concerning the Houma case are certain, but one thing has been determined. ~~nothing~~

Toward the end of February, Gordon Novel and others who had been on the 1961 raid appeared in Garrison's office for questioning. ~~Although both Novel and the others~~

During the questioning -- by several members of the DA's staff -- one of the witnesses gave a detailed account of the raid.

The trip began after dark, the witness stated, on a night between July and September.

Among those in the group, he said, were Novel, David W. Ferrie, Sergio Arcocha-Smith, Layton Patrick Martens, himself, several Cubans and another, unidentified man.

Two vehicles made the trip, he related. One was a 1956 Lincoln owned by Novel, and the other an old, dark-painted van truck.

The auto started out first, the witness alleged, and the van truck ~~next~~ followed, leaving New Orleans between 7 and 8 p.m., ~~with Novel~~ with Novel driving the Lincoln.

It was a short trip, he went on, and Novel made his way directly to ~~the~~ an old airfield on the outskirts of Houma, used as a blimp base in World War II. The witness and Novel had both been to the field before, he said "for the drag races."

more

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The purpose of the trip, he stated, was to "secure ammunition and other explosives" from the bunker, ~~which~~ for purposes unknown to the witness.

He told the investigators that ~~in~~ the party ~~had~~ gained entrance to the bunker by breaking a padlock with a boltcutter - a long-handled, scissors-like tool -- which had been carried in the truck.

There was a large number of crates in the bunker, he recalled, and among those marked "Schlumberger" were some bearing military stencils.

A few were open, he said, but the only ~~was~~ objects in them he could identify were artillery stimulators -- powder charges without shells.

After loading the crates into the truck, the man continued, the two vehicles made a quick return trip to New Orleans. It was after midnight, he said, when they pulled up outside of David Ferrie's house on Atherton dr. in Metairie.

There they unloaded the ~~boxes~~ boxes, he stated, and the group broke up.

The district attorney's staff learned from the man that he and Novel were to have been paid by Arcacha. The money for this, he said, was to have come from proceeds of a telethon produced allegedly for the benefit of Cuban refugees.

He concluded that neither he nor, as far as he knew, Novel had ever been paid by Arcacha.