

United Press International

New Orleans police peer into utility building atop Howard Johnson Hotel in search of sniper, but they found no one.

Police Storm Hotel, Fail to Find Sniper

7 Killed, 17 Hurt in 2-Day Battle

From News Dispatches

NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 8
—Police stormed the rooftop of a downtown hotel today and found the body

of a black sniper, but they searched in confusion for others who might have taken part in the marathon gun battle that killed six persons and wounded 17.

With covering fire from automatic weapons, the police rushed out on the rooftop of the 18-story Howard Johnson Hotel this afternoon, expecting to encounter one or possibly two live snipers, hiding in a concrete utility building.

Instead, they found only the body of a man slain by airborne police sharpshooters Sunday night as he dashed

across the open rooftop.

The dramatic mystery was watched by millions as the CBS and NBC television network broadcast live accounts of the showdown. By evening, however, the police were still searching the hotel for other assailants who might have slipped through the ring of police officers.

In the confusion, an initial statement by a police official that another gunman had been definitely sighted as he fled through the rooftop air-conditioning system was later discounted.

A police spokesman said it was possible but not probable that there had been only one

sniper.

When the officers first climbed to the hotel roof in mid-afternoon, they cautiously approached concrete structure which houses the hotel's elevator shafts. "The Downtown Howard Johnson's" is written in large orange letters cross one side.

Several policemen used axes to force open the door while others fired rounds from automatic weapons.

But there was no indication that anyone was firing back from within the building and three policemen who fell wounded apparently were hit in the legs by ricocheting police bullets.

The police climbed atop the elevator housing, forced open two hatches in the roof and fired more shots inside. But there was no response and, when they looked, there were no bodies.

"Where in the hell could he have gone?" asked Capt. Ed-

See SNIPERS, A10, Col. 1

SNIPERS, From A1

ward LaPorte. "They were there at 4 o'clock this morning."

About 10 feet from the elevator housing lay the body of the sniper who was killed Sunday night when a Marine helicopter swept over the embattled hotel, firing at the spot where police thought snipers were hiding.

In the all-night assault on the hotel sniper or snipers, police were convinced by voices and gunfire that at least one and perhaps two men were still hiding there.

While police did not release the identity of the slain gunman, or establish his motive for the gun battle which began at noon Sunday, there were immediate charges that it was part of a national conspiracy to shoot policemen. Three of the dead were police officers, including Deputy Superintendent Louis Sirgo, as well as many of the wounded.

All of the victims are white, according to United Press International which reported that a black maid working at the hotel had encountered the man or men when the trouble started on Sunday and they told her: "We only want to kill whites."

Louisiana Gov. Edwin W. Edwards said, "In my opinion it would certainly seem to be the work of a diseased mind." State Attorney General Wil-



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Two policemen assist wounded officer. Sniper's body is in foreground.

liam J. Guste Jr. called for a federal investigation and declared: "I am convinced that there is an underground, national suicidal group bent on creating terror in America."

Sen. James O. Eastland, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, expressed a similar view in Washington. "The evidence is unmistakable that this is a war on police-

of a police offices or fireman a federal offense.

Sen. Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.) said he would again push such a bill which passed the Senate last session, but died in efforts to reach a com-

men," the Mississippi Democrat said. "We face a crisis in law enforcement unless we act immediately."

Others in Congress reacted by proposing legislation to make assault or assassination

promise with the House.

In New Orleans, police spent hours in the cold and windy weather, stalking the rooftop position held by the gunman or gunmen since Sunday afternoon. At one point late in the

morning, one man yelled from his stronghold: "I'm here."

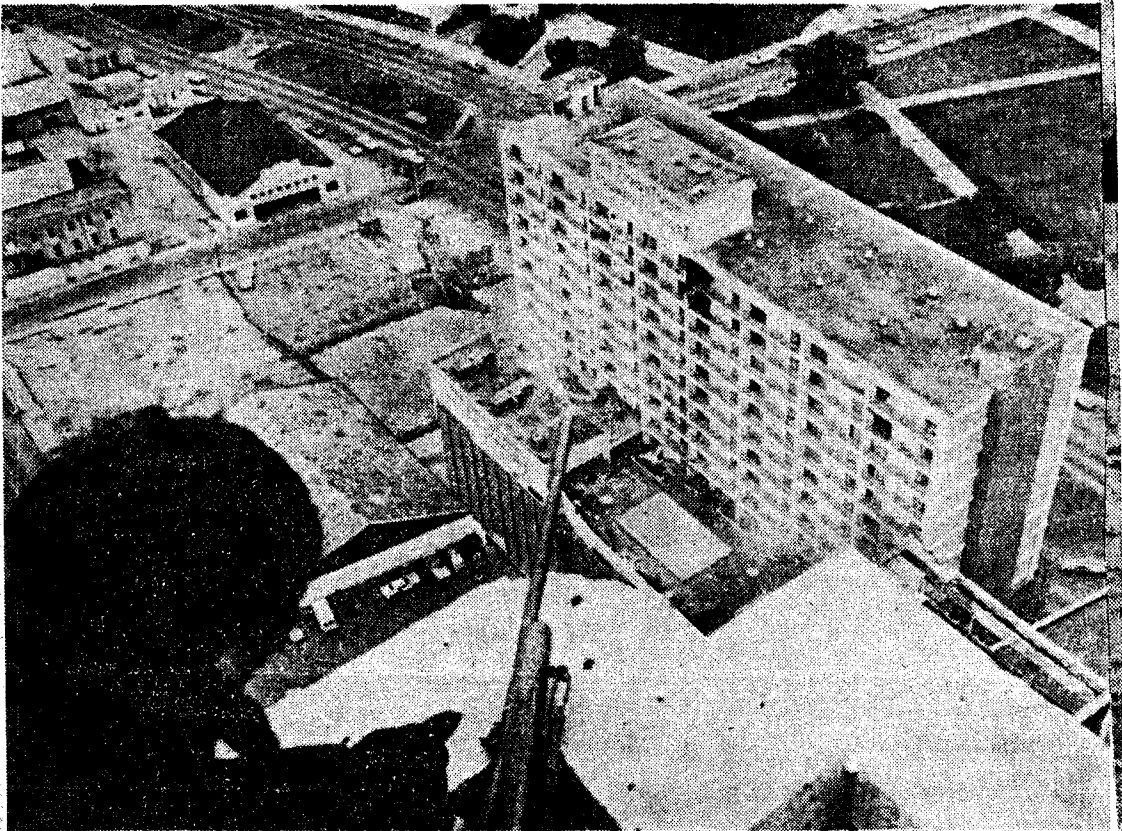
According to UPI, policemen within earshot called back to the man, using a nickname which they had given him, "Leroy."

"We hear you, Leroy," the officers yelled. "We want you. Come out where we can see you."

If that account was accurate, then at least one other man must have been hiding

there today—many hours after his companion was slain Sunday night.

After the police search of the elevator housing produced no results, the officers turned to an airconditioning unit



Associated Press

Police sharpshooter watches roof of Howard Johnson Hotel for signs of sniper who apparently eluded police.

which is also atop the roof. At one point, Police Superintendent Clarence Giarrusso announced to reporters that gunman had been spotted in the air-conditioning system. "He's moving and capable of shooting," Giarrusso said.

But, when police carefully pried their way into the oblong structure, with TV viewers looking on, they found nothing.

From there, the police turned to a methodical room-to-room search of the evacuated hotel, less certain that they would find any other participants in the long gun fight.

The Associated Press reported that New Orleans police sources had identified the "gunmen" as the men who killed a New Orleans police cadet on New Year's Eve. According to this account, which was not attributed by name, the men had killed a New Orleans grocer Sunday to prevent him from identifying them as the policeman's assassins.

Then, according to the AP, the men drove a stolen car to the Howard Johnson's hotel and set fires on the top floors to divert police from pursuing them.

However, the AP said the police caught up with the men and chased them back up a parking ramp at the hotel when they tried to retrieve their stolen car.

The police source, while he would not identify the gunmen by name's, said they were arrested in neighboring Jefferson Parish last week and in Dallas, a few days earlier, both times on gun charges.

The victims at the New Orleans shootout included people who were hotel guests there when fires were started in upper-floor rooms on Sunday.



Associated Press

Policemen lie injured from their own ricocheting bullets during assault on cubicle atop Howard Johnson Hotel where sniper was believed to be hiding.

Roanoke Couple La. Sniper Victims

ROANOKE, Va., Jan. 8 (AP)—A vacationing Roanoke doctor and his wife were among those killed in the gun battle at a New Orleans hotel.

They were Dr. Robert Vernon Steagall Jr., 28, and Elizabeth Day Steagall, 25.

According to reports from the New Orleans States-Item, the couple was found locked in an embrace in a hallway of the 18th floor of the embattled Howard Johnson Hotel.

Steagall had been shot in the head and arm and Mrs. Steagall was shot in the right eye.

Three snipers apparently set fires on the upper floors and then took up positions on the roof of the hotel.

The Steagalls left Roanoke on New Year's Day, according to Roanoke Memorial Hospital officials. Steagall, an intern at the hospital, worked Christmas and New Year's weekends to build up a few days to his vacation.

Mrs. Steagall, an audiologist, worked at the Roanoke Valley Speech and Hearing Center.

The couple was married in June and moved to Roanoke in July, when Steagall started his internship. Steagall was a son of Robert Steagall of Martinsville. His wife was from Roxboro, N. C.

In New Orleans, the Steagalls had spent some time with another intern from Roanoke Memorial, Willet J. Hickman III, whose parents live there.

After trying to call the hotel and trying to enter the cordoned-off area in downtown New Orleans, Hickman learned that police had found the burned bodies of two persons in the hotel.

Hickman was shown the bodies and identified them as his friends.

A memorial service for the couple was held today at Roanoke Memorial at 12:15 p.m.

Steagall had planned to go

into family practice, probably in the Martinsville area where he grew up, according to Dr. Charles L. Crockett, director of medical education at Roanoke Memorial.

Steagall was graduated from Martinsville High School in 1963 and then went to the University of Virginia. He received a B.A. degree in 1967 and an M.D. from the Univer-

sity of Virginia Medical School in 1972. He had worked briefly for the Martinsville Bulletin.

Steagall was born in Pensacola, Fla.

Mrs. Steagall, received an A.B. degree from Greensboro College in 1969 and an M.A. in audiology from the University of Virginia in 1972.

Steagall's record in school

and as an intern was "nothing but top-notch," according to William H. Flannagan, director of Roanoke Memorial.

Students who knew him called him dedicated and serious. "He and his wife were the sort of people you don't meet very often. They really cared about their patients," said another intern who lived next door to the couple.