

# **THE STATES-ITEM**

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# **CONTROLS OUT**

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*Reflections on a  
day of terror*

MAYOR MOON LANDRIEU peers from his City Hall office toward the Downtown Howard Johnson's Hotel where a sniper paralyzed downtown New Orleans for over a day. Landrieu, at a press conference, said that the controversy over how many snipers were involved may never be ended. (AP photo by Jack Thornell.)

# Mayor Fears 'Sniper 2' Will Remain Mystery

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By ANGUS LIND

Mystery and controversy surrounding the possibility of a second sniper being involved in the Howard Johnson Motor Hotel shootout may "never be resolved," Mayor Moon Landrieu said today.

Landrieu likened the situation to the murder and conspiracy investigation after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and said he hopes "we can make a careful analysis of it."

The mayor said he spoke to Police Supt. Clarence B. Giarrusso this morning and there was "nothing further" in the way of new evidence concerning a second sniper.

"The evidence is very conflicting," Landrieu said. "I am sorry we can't give them (the people) more definite information, but we are pursuing every conceivable avenue and lead."

HE SAID the incident was similar to the Kennedy tragedy in that there was "similar confusion — the shooting came from a hidden place." He said he hopes the investigation here will not drag on as long as that of the JFK incident. But he said he is "placing no timetable" on the police report.

Landrieu said evidence, as it looks today, indicates there were "not three, but possibly two" snipers involved. He said police are taking statements and reviewing tapes of radio reports which hopefully will clear up the situation.

The mayor declined to answer specific questions about the investigation, saying, "We have one of the best-

trained police departments in the United States. I am continuing my policy of letting the police department do its work. I do not call the police chief every five minutes to ask whether he is doing his job."

Landrieu was asked about the possibility of a national conspiracy behind the incident. "I don't feel it is a nationally-guided effort, but there is a

common thread that runs through these incidents in which a person decides to rip off police and fire departments."

ASKED IF THE incident would affect race relations in New Orleans, Landrieu said he feels it will have "a

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salutary effect on it. This city enjoys the best race relations in the United States."

He said the shooting "certainly wasn't a black-white issue. He cited as evidence the fact that police cadet Alfred Harrell, who was shot on New Year's Eve, was black.

Landrieu said he believes slain sniper Mark Essex was "demented, with suicidal tendencies. Whatever motivated him, caused him to do this no matter what. The shooting of the officers New Year's Eve was just a prelude to something bigger which could have happened anytime."

The mayor was asked about the charge by the sniper's mother that white racism was responsible for his actions.

"I'm not a philosopher. I'm regretful that she has to live the experience of her son's death. I just don't know, but I can't accept or reject her theory," he said.

HE SAID HE thinks the mood of the city is that of "terrible sadness, a hurt," but added that tragedy "always makes people work together closer as a community after the initial shock is over."

Landrieu said he was saddened especially by the loss of deputy Police Supt. Louis J. Sirgo, whom he described as an "extremely close friend I persuaded to come back to the police department after he had retired

from Traffic Court. He was an extraordinarily courageous man."

He said there is "no hard evidence to link the fire at the Rault Center and the Howard Johnson's shootings. He said it has not yet been established if arsonists were responsible for the fire at the Rault Center."

Yesterday, police questioned and released without charge the roommate of Essex.

Police located the roommate, identified as Rodney Frank, as part of the continuing investigation of the incident in which seven persons, including Essex, were killed and 19 wounded.

"It appears Frank has no connection with the incident," a police spokesman said.

Investigators are seeking to establish whether Essex was part of a conspiracy to murder policemen.

**FRIENDS REPORTED** Frank, who roomed with Essex at 1035 Paillet St. in Harvey, is a Black Muslim who spent a lot of time in Muhammad's Mosque No. 36 conferring with his minister, George 4X, and associates. The religion forbids any wrongdoing by its members.

Friends said Frank served with Essex in the Navy. Both were dental technicians. Essex came to New Orleans with Frank in February, 1971, after their discharge and returned to stay last summer, friends said.

Police said yesterday they have obtained the Howard Johnson's registry and are checking guests, raising the question whether Essex might have had someone with him who had taken a room at the hotel.

The spokesman also said nothing had changed since Police Supt. Clarence Giarrusso declared Tuesday that he wasn't "satisfied" there was any connection between the sniping and the Sunday morning shooting of a New Orleans grocer.

A **POLICE** source close to the investigation said at the time that the grocer was shot by someone who feared the grocer might identify him as the

slayer of a policeman on New Year's Eve.

The same person who shot the grocer, the source said, drove a stolen car to the hotel and began the rooftop siege.

In all, three addresses have turned up for Essex in New Orleans.

Dan Vincent, who heads Total Community Action, a federal antipoverty program in which Essex enrolled as a vending machine repairman trainee,

said Essex gave his address as 1449 Sere St., in a housing project.

"**HE WAS** a very good student," said Vincent. Essex earned \$49 a week in the program and got \$1.50 a week for transportation. "He was well liked by his instructor and the students."

Records in the parish coroner's office, where Essex's body was taken, show his address as 1935 Paillet St. in suburban Harvey.

A few blocks down the street, Mrs. Ruth Brown said Essex rented a room from her for \$12 a week. She remembers him as a fine young man, "with nice manners and quiet."

Lydia Williams, however, who said she was Essex's girlfriend, described him as someone who couldn't take orders.

"**WHENEVER** I tried to order him around or told him what to do," she said, "he would wait for a while and then tell me clearly, 'Don't give me any orders. I can't stand for anyone to give me any orders.'"

Sometimes, she said, he acted like he was in another world.

"You could ask him a question, and you would have to repeat it over and over to get an answer, because he would forget the question just that quick."

An acquaintance, Michael Williams, said Essex would sometimes give the black power salute.

"**BUT HE WAS** no more of a black power militant than any sensible black person is," Williams said.

The Patrolman's Association of New Orleans (PANO) urged the police department to put two men in every patrol car and to supply all cars with carbines "at least until this crisis has passed."

PANO said it would seek state capital punishment legislation and asked President Nixon and Atty. Gen. Richard Kleindienst for an investigation into the sniping.

In a news conference today, PANO president Irving Magri announced establishment of a relief fund for widows and orphans of the slain policemen.

Oilman Louis J. Roussel Sr. kicked off the fund drive with a \$5,000 donation and agreed to become chairman.

Magri criticized leaders of the black community for not being more outspoken in denouncing the sniper.

Dr. Guy Gipson, director of the New Orleans branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, canceled plans for a city-wide memorial service today for the

sniping victims.

HE SAID his office had gotten bomb threats and that he and an NAACP field representative had received threats against their lives. The cancellation, he said, was a "result of the numerous threats."

Clarence Barney, director of the Urban League, urged the community "to exercise restraint." Blacks, he said, "are as outraged and hurt over the actions that paralyzed the city as the whites."

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