

Sniper Atop New Orleans Hotel Kills 10 and Wounds 9

Sets Upper-Floor Fires Before Police Corner Him at a Stairwell

By United Press International

NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 7—A sniper set fire to the upper floors of a high-rise hotel today, then sprayed the streets below with gunfire, killing 10 persons—four of them policemen—before the police cornered him on the roof in a gun battle that went on for hours. Nine other persons were wounded and hospitalized.

At sundown, following six hours of rifle fusillades in the downtown section, the sniper, thought to be wounded, was still huddled in a concrete bunker atop a stairwell of the 17-story downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge.

The police could not reach the rifleman with bullets from above because of the concrete walls surrounding him. They could not reach him from the stairwell because the sniper held a commanding position over the stairs.

"He has an automatic weapon and could kill a dozen of us coming up the stairwell," said one police spokesman.

Police Official Dies

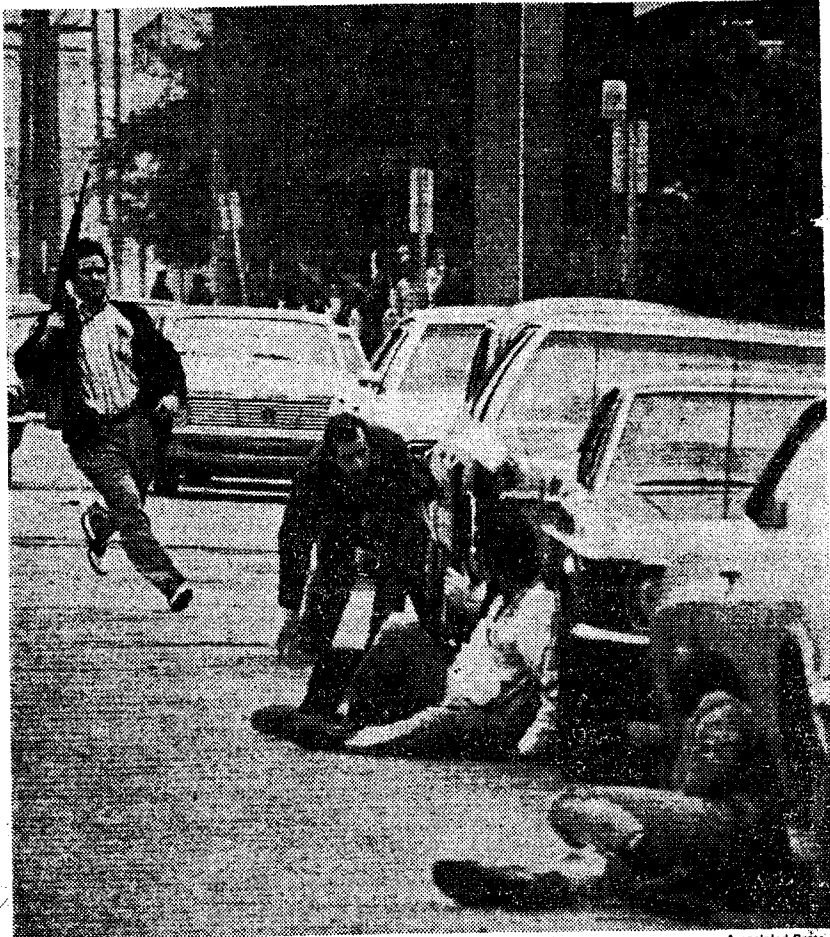
Among the dead was Louis Sergo, deputy police superintendent. Among the wounded were four policemen and two firemen.

"It's unbelievable, diabolical, maniacal," said the Rev. Peter Rogers, New Orleans Police Chaplain. "It looks like he was shooting at anybody in uniform."

The gunman began setting fires in the hotel about 10:30 A.M. Once firemen and policemen began arriving, he ran to the roof and began firing at policemen and bystanders on the ground.

The police at first thought there was more than one sniper and also thought that he was holding a group of hostages. But as the ordeal wore on they said they were "working on the theory that there is only one man."

A spokesman said the fear



Associated Press

A policeman in street clothes rushing for cover outside the hotel in New Orleans

that the sniper had taken hostages had come from a momentary confrontation between the gunman and 15 hotel guests. The guests scrambled to the roof to avoid the smoke, only to confront a man carrying a rifle. The guests turned and scurried back into the smoke without being fired upon.

'Only at Whites'

"He was only shooting at whites," said a black maid who fled from the hotel soon after the shooting began. She said the sniper was a light-complexioned black man with long hair.

The fires set by the sniper, although sending thick smoke through the downtown area, were never in danger of spreading to the rest of the hotel.

The incident was the culmination of more than a week of periodic sniping at New Orleans policemen, which started

Continued on Page 26, Column 3



Associated Press

A New Orleans policeman who was hit by the sniper being aided near the hotel

NYTimes
Sniper Atop New Orleans Hotel Kills 10

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

on New Year's Eve with the death of a police cadet who was gunned down in front of police headquarters. At the time, Police Chief Clarence Giarrusso said there was a militant conspiracy to kill policemen in the city.

Joe Grijalva, an eyewitness to today's gun battle, said he saw one of the policemen apparently shot during heavy fire from the hotel.

"I was looking from a window and on the left from me there was a man—one of the policemen, I think—and he was firing when they were shooting all the shots and he screamed and he fell down behind the car he was leaning against," Mr. Grijalva said.

Asked what type of weapons were firing down from the hotel, Mr. Grijalva said, "there were machine guns and all sorts of rifles from all sides of the building"

With the first reports of trouble at the hotel, squads of policemen began circling the building. A tank was brought in and helicopters circled overhead. But there was no easy route to the gunman.

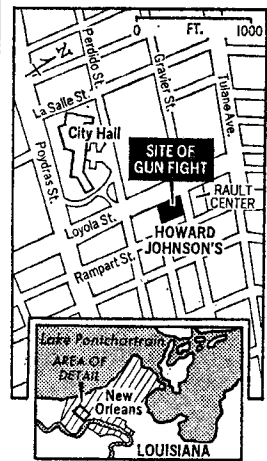
Finally, the policemen began to move from one floor to the next in an attempt to secure the hotel. On reaching the stairwell that leads to the roof, policemen wearing bulletproof vests fired volley after volley up the stairwell.

They said they believed they had wounded the man, but the gunman remained in his lair.

Besides Mr. Sergio, the other dead policemen were identified by Father Rogers as Phil Coleman and Paul Persigo.

Firemen said no one jumped from the building, and the fire was in little danger of getting out of control.

When the fire broke out, the hotel sent out a general alarm across the street from the Rault Center. The hotel was the scene of a fire in July, 1971, that killed six persons. The hotel is



The New York Times/Jan. 8, 1973

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