

2 Sniper Rifles? No Evidence Yet

There has been no evidence to indicate that anyone shot by a sniper at the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge was hit by anything other than a .44 magnum slug, police report.

Mark James Robert Essex, the 23-year-old sniper who died in a hail of bullets on the roof of the hotel Sunday night, was armed only with a .44 magnum carbine.

However, conflicting reports continue to cloud the issue of possible second or even third snipers. Mayor Moon Landrieu told a press conference yesterday that the issue may never be resolved.

ROBERT BEMISH, a hotel guest felled during the attack, said doctors at Charity Hospital who operated on him told him that he was shot with a 30.06 caliber rifle, leading to speculation that there was more than one sniper or more than one weapon.

However, Maj. Henry Morris, police chief of detectives, said yesterday the bullet that wounded Bemish was not recovered, making it impossible to prove he had been shot with a 30.06.

The only weapon recovered was the .44 magnum found next to Essex' body on the roof, Morris said. No suitcases, bags or cache of ammunition believed hidden by Essex were found on the roof or in the hotel, he said.

OTHER CONFLICTING evidence on the single sniper theory includes testimony from Jefferson Parish sheriff's Deputy David Munch, who said yesterday that a sniper accompanied by

a woman fired at him from the eighth floor patio of the hotel. Munch said he saw a black man with a woman shortly after 11 a.m. Sunday. Munch said he suffered shrapnel wounds from an exploding bullet, which ricocheted off a concrete pillar.

That was the last time he saw the sniper, Munch said. He said he spotted the woman about an hour

later, when he was on the street. "She was looking over the balcony," Munch said.

Another witness said yesterday that he saw a second sniper with Essex on the eighth floor. The witness asked to remain anonymous.

THE WITNESS, a hotel employee,

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No Evidence of 2nd Rifle

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said: "He (the second sniper) is still loose." The employe went to the 17th floor of the Rault Center and shouted across Gravier Street, warning guests about the area.

"I saw him first standing on the 10th floor of the hotel," the witness said. "He lay down and he must have heard me yelling. He rolled over and pointed his rifle at me and started shooting. "He shot three or four times."

Descriptions of various persons believed by witnesses to have been second or third snipers have varied greatly. Investigators are interviewing about 400 policemen and firemen

who battled the sniper and the fires Sunday and Monday.

In addition, tapes of all radio conversations between policemen and firemen are being reviewed by the police department.

THE BODY OF Essex was returned to his home town of Emporia, Kan., for burial tomorrow morning. The service will be held in the St. James Baptist Church, four years to the day after Essex enlisted in the Navy.

Landrieu likened the sniping incident to the assassination of President Kennedy in that questions about it might never be resolved.

"The picture is not much clearer now than it was two days ago," Landrieu said.