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Hotel Search a Case of Frustrated Heroics

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NEW ORLEANS — It could have been a scene out of the year's most exciting adventure movie. But it was terrifyingly real.

Throughout the morning, shrouded by heavy clouds, marine helicopters circled the roof of the Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge here, firing bullets and riot gas at a large concrete elevator shaft and boiler room believed shielding at least one of the snipers that since Sunday morning have thrown this city into panic.

On the ground floor of the 18-story hotel, Police Superintendent Clarence B. Giarrusso, who Sunday lost his deputy, Louis Sirgo, to a sniper's bullet, planned strategy for the attack on the roof.

SHORTLY AFTER 2 P. M. Monday, a band of about 40 volunteer policemen edged up stairways to the top of the tall hotel.

The first man gingerly pushed open a large steel trap door in the top of the elevator shaft, and lifted his helmeted head up for a quick look.

Then, from the right hand side of the roof, six men burst through the stairwell door and ran for the protection of a protruding elevator shaft and boiler room.

Three of them inched cautiously across the front of the shaft, 45 perilous feet along a ledge no more than 18 inches wide. One false step would mean sure death.

BEHIND THEM came other officers, their high-powered rifles ready for action. Then, from the other stairwell door, having made their way from the ground floor, more officers poured onto the flat roof.

Atop the elevator shaft,

men tried once more to blow the lock with bullets. But it held.

The ax was thrown to the men atop the elevator shaft, and they went after the hatch. It bounced off with each frustrating blow, but finally through sheer force the hatch

was sprung.

Two men carefully pried it open, as five others surrounded the three-foot opening with rifles. They moved forward cautiously once the hatch was fully opened, peering into the boiler room, across a steel I-beam, down

the sights of their powerful rifles.

"We see a lot of boilers down there," one officer reported to his commander. "He could be hiding behind them."

But he was not. There was no trace, no leads, no nothing. Only frustrated heroics.

more men crawled onto that roof. They closed in on a trap door leading to the boiler room. If their prey was anywhere — and he had to be — the boiler room was all that remained.

Suddenly there was a volley of fire as the policemen attacked the locked metal door with bullets. Some of the bullets ricocheted off the 6-inch-thick concrete block walls and struck three men down.

They were removed to Charity Hospital immediately, one was shot in the arm and two were wounded in the leg.

Once they had been dragged to safety, the remaining officers resumed their hunt. One-picked up a large red fire ax and attacked the heavy, spring-loaded door.

HE FAILED, and hurled the ax to the roof in disgust. There was more firing, as the

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