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Some Information on Sniping Is Being Withheld--Giarrusso

Some official information about the Howard Johnson's sniper investigation is being withheld in order to preserve evidence and protect the rights of persons who may be charged with crimes, Police Supt. Clarence B. Giarrusso said today.

"Whatever you should know, we will periodically report to you," Giarrusso said in a speech to the Kiwanis Club of New Orleans.

He expressed chagrin that some of his men have apparently disclosed information about the investigation to the press. "Some of the men are making statements they shouldn't make," he said, thereby hampering the investigation and fueling speculation by the press.

GIARRUSSO SAID he has seen some stories about the investigation that have been "a little off."

On a related matter, Giarrusso said he believes the families of policemen killed by sniper fire should be aided financially, but he criticized solicitations for this purpose by police organizations. He said he has always "strongly disapproved" of such solicitations because people can be "deceived" by them.

GIARRUSSO SAID that in retrospect he would not change the "basic strategy" implemented by police in dealing with the sniping. "We did those things that were best under the conditions," he said.

However, he said that if the wide exposure of police operations by television had been known to him during the incident he may have changed

the deployment of some of his men. He did not elaborate.

Fire Supt. Louis San Salvador today said fires were set on five floors of the hotel during the Jan. 7 sniper incident and that he "can't believe we've caught all the gunmen."

San Salvador said his men found fires on the eighth, ninth, 15th, 16th and 17th floors of the hotel, in the front and back.

Seven persons died in the hotel shootout. Six were killed by sniper fire and 23-year-old Mark Essex was shot to death by police in a helicopter hovering over the hotel roof.

Police have said there is no evidence of any sniper other than Essex. San Salvador disagrees.

"There is at least one more and he just walked away from it," he said. "I have to respect Supt. Giarrusso's statement that he has no conclusive evidence of any other sniper. But I have to disagree with the superintendent. For one man to move around like that setting fires and shooting—it would be very, very hard to do.

San Salvador said he saw two gunflashes from the hotel at the same instant while the sniping was going on. "One gunman can't make two muzzle flashes that way," he said.

State Fire Marshal Raymond Oliver said Dennis Lacey, manager of the hotel, told him 42 rooms were involved in the fire. But he said it was hard to tell the rooms in which fires had been set and the ones to which flames had spread.

A police spokesman said firecrackers were found on

Essex' body after he was killed. But Oliver discounted a report that draperies in the hotel rooms had been ignited with firecrackers. The draperies, rugs and wallpaper were fire-retardant, Oliver said.

The fires could have been started by someone throwing flaming newspaper onto bedding, or with a butane cigarette lighter cartridge found by a hotel employe on the eighth floor, he said.

"They have a way of doing things over there, that whenever maids clean a room after a checkout they leave the door open for a while to air it out," he said. This would have given an arsonist easy access to several rooms, he said.

Police today declined comment on a report that a marked map found in Essex' apartment indicates he methodically planned four attacks, including the Howard Johnson's gunfight.

Police reportedly found the map in the Dryades Street apartment where Essex lived and daubed the walls with racial slogans.

Lines and circles on the map pinpoint Central Lockup, where police cadet Alfred Harrell Jr. was killed New Year's Eve; a warehouse where Patrolman Edwin Hosli was critically wounded the same night; where grocer Joseph S. Perniciaro was shot and wounded the morning of the Howard Johnson's attack; and the route from Essex' apartment to the Howard Johnson's.

Giarrusso has ordered a tight lid on information concerning the police investigation of the sniping.