

B.R. Plot to Kill HHH Revealed

By BILL LYNCH 7/24/67
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BATON ROUGE—Federal agents who had been tipped to an assassination plot quietly surrounded an armed man and hustled him out of a hotel ballroom where Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey spoke during a labor convention here in 1965.

The States-Item has learned about the incident, which remained secret until today.

U.S. Secret Service agents had learned about the plans and urged Humphrey not to attend the convention.

The federal agents and special sergeants-at-arms at the convention had been alerted to watch for the man, who was a member of an extremist organization.

He was spotted as he entered the convention area of the hotel and guided to a seat in the rear of

the auditorium where agents already had been strategically placed.

HUMPHREY WAS IN BATON ROUGE to address a convention of the Louisiana AFL-CIO.

As Humphrey, accompanied by Gov. John J. McKeithen, entered the main ballroom through an entrance at the front of the ballroom the man rose from his seat.

The federal agents rose with him and quickly ushered him away. They took a pistol from him.



HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

(Turn to Page 10, Column 1)

Continued from Front Page

No charges were filed against the man and no plot or suspected plot was revealed. The federal agents apparently felt they lacked adequate evidence. The man was later released.

Secret Service agents doing advance preparations for the vice-president's appearance were informed that an attempt was being planned on Humphrey's life.

THE INFORMATION CAME FROM an informant who was a member of an extremist organization.

The vice-president's appearance at the convention on April 9, 1965, came at a time during racial turmoil in Bogalusa and Jonesboro.

Questioned about the incident when he returned to Washington today from a weekend in Minnesota, Humphrey said:

"I knew nothing about it until I got off the plane here. I was not aware of it at the time.

"I didn't notice any disturbance in the hall and I had a perfectly wonderful time there. It's news to me—I'll just have to keep reading the newspapers."

Norman Sherman of Humphrey's office had this to say:

"There was no threat to the Vice-President's life in Louisiana in 1965. We learned today that local police did pick up for questioning two men thought to be associated with the (Ku Klux) Klan. The men were not armed and were released immediately by police when it was clear they had nothing illegal or dangerous in mind.

"The Secret Service men assigned to the Vice-President were in no way involved but were informed after the fact. The Vice-President himself was not aware of the questioning at that time, and knew nothing of it until informed this morning of a reporter's inquiry."

Secret Service agents advised the vice-president that he should cancel his trip to Baton Rouge.

The vice-president asked the agents if Gov. McKeithen would be with him at all times during his visit.

The agents asked the governor who assured them that he would stick with the vice-president.

Humphrey said that in that case he would come to Louisiana.

The vice-president had other events scheduled on his visit. He also was to receive an honorary doctor of law degree at Louisiana State University, attend a reception and hold a press conference.

THE SECRET SERVICE THEN ASKED the cooperation of Victor Bussie, president of the state AFL-CIO and a friend of Humphrey.

Bussie told the Secret Service that he could not advise the vice-president to come or not come. He said that was a decision the vice-president and Secret Service would have to make. He added that if you are afraid to go one place,

though, you will never be able to go any place.

Bussie himself was the target of extremists last week when his home in Baton Rouge was bombed.

The Secret Service revealed to Bussie, who later advised selected union men who acted as sergeants-at-arms, that they had penetrated an extremist organization. They did not identify the organization.

The federal agents said they believed the organization had designated one of its members to assassinate the vice-president. They said they knew the man's identity.

BUSSIE SUGGESTED THAT THE agents arrest the man before the vice-president came to Baton Rouge.

The Secret Service said that they knew who this man was but if they arrested him before the convention they might not know who would be sent in his place.

Photographs of the suspect were provided by the Secret Service and placed at registration desks set up for delegates attending the convention.

The desks were purposely arranged in a narrow corridor leading to the ballroom so that everyone attending could be observed. A side entrance to the hotel was sealed off.

The suspect was a union man who had an invitation to the convention. He was in his 20s and about six feet tall.

When he registered, the man who processed him notified the Secret Service by a radio transmitter. The agents saw to it that he was conducted to a seat in the rear of the ballroom where other agents already were seated.

THERE WERE TWO SECRET SERVICE agents on either side of him, two in back and two FBI agents in front.

Bussie also was asked to provide 40 trusted lieutenants to serve as sergeants-at-arms in the ballroom where no one was permitted to arrive or leave 15 minutes before the vice-president made his appearance.

The sergeants-at-arms were taken into confidence and prepared to look over the crowd for any other possible sources of trouble.

The vice-president flew into Baton Rouge, accompanied by his wife, aboard a small jet plane. About 300 persons, including the governor, Bussie and other dignitaries were at the airport.

Most of the welcoming party was located behind a roped off area, but Humphrey quickly disregarded security precautions and mingled with the reception group.

HE AND HIS PARTY WERE WHISKED to the governor's mansion where they refreshed themselves. The route from the airport was lined with both uniformed and plainclothes personnel.

Police were scattered about downtown and uniformed police with rifles stood atop buildings. It was also reported that the Secret Service occupied the entire front section of rooms of a hotel across the street from the Jack Tar Capitol House Hotel where Humphrey spoke.

Humphrey rode with the governor in the executive limousine to the hotel.

No traffic was allowed to enter the block in front of the hotel as the governor's car approached. People on the sidewalks were not stopped.

The governor's car drove swiftly past the spectators and into the hotel parking area where they could enter the hotel in privacy.

HUMPHREY, THE GOVERNOR AND an escort party,

including Camille Gravel, prominent in Louisiana politics and national Democratic Party circles, strode toward the speakers platform at one end of the large ballroom.

There was very little commotion as the man in the rear of the room was swept out through kitchen doors. Few people were aware that anything had happened.

There was no explanation as to what happened during the next few hours to the man, except that he was later released.

There was one other unreported incident that occurred about the same time. Another man, believed to be associated with extremists, was taken into custody by the FBI. He was released when he was identified as a police agent

who had been brought in to identify extremists he might see.

THE FBI DID NOT KNOW THE second man was a police agent at the time.

Outwardly, Humphrey's entire visit to Baton Rouge appeared to go off without incident. This was duly noted along with the tight security arrangements that were being enforced.

The vice-president attended a reception at LSU given by a Young Democrats group and held a 20-minute press conference.

He was awarded the honorary doctor of law degree at a convocation in the LSU Coliseum, attended by a large number of students, faculty and visitors. Humphrey had received a masters degree in political science from LSU as a young man.

The Humphreys left Baton Rouge about 6 p. m. for Minnesota.