

Police Frustrated

Still No Leads in Stennis Attack

Washington

After following hundreds of leads into dead-ends, a special police task force investigating the shooting of Senator John C. Stennis is relying heavily on the lure of money to extract information from informants.

More than 700 persons have been interviewed by metropolitan policemen and FBI agents in one of the most intensive manhunts in Washington's history. But no substantive leads have been developed that could prompt investigators to say that they have a clue to the identity of Stennis' assailants.

The two or three young men who accosted Stennis in front of his home in the early evening of January 30 and shot him twice at point-blank range remain nameless and faceless, Deputy Police Chief Mahlon E. Pitts said in an interview yesterday.

Grasping for any relevant information, police have ordered all detectives in the city's seven districts to inquire about the Stennis case during all field interviews and offer an exchange of money for information, if necessary.

Sources close to the investigation said that several factors have combined to frustrate the search for Stennis' assailants. They are:

- The absence of any kind of a description other than a vague statement by Stennis the night of the shooting that two of the as-

sailants are between 16 and 18 years of age. Police have no facial descriptions and have not attempted to make composite drawings, authorities said.

- An inability of police to interview Stennis, who remains in "very serious" condition at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and who is limited to brief visits by his wife, his son and his administrative assistant. Stennis was questioned briefly by police the night of the shooting, and an FBI agent is standing by at the hospital waiting for an opportunity to talk with the Senator, Pitts said.

- Lack of ballistics evidence. One bullet disintegrated when it struck Stennis' left thigh, and the other — which passed through the Senator's stomach, pancreas and colon — remains lodged in the fleshy part of the right side.

Walter Reed surgeons said they have made no plans to remove the bullet because it is not affecting Stennis' condition. Pitts said, "We'd like to have the bullet."

- A surprisingly small number of unsolicited tips telephoned to police, considering the publicity attending the case. Pitts appealed for persons having any knowledge of the shooting, no matter how remote it

might seem, to call anonymously.

The probe by the FBI-police task force has been mainly tedious searching of records of youthful offenders known to have carried guns, modus operandi files, the movements of parolees and probationers, and questioning of youths who have been arrested in the neighborhood in which Stennis was robbed and shot.

Additionally, Pitts said, second-hand shops along the eastern seaboard have been alerted to look for the billfold, gold pocket watch and Phi Beta Kappa key taken from Stennis during the holdup.

Stennis was robbed as he

stepped out of his car in front of his house. Two youths demanded money and Stennis, offering no resistance, handed over his billfold, watch, key and a 25-cent piece.

Police said Stennis quoted the youths as saying: "Now we're going to shoot you anyway," or, "We ought to shoot you anyway."

Washington Post Service