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# Hoffa was 'unstable, threat to associates'

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DETROIT — James Hoffa, according to a confidant, was abducted and possibly slain because he was considered unstable and a threat to the lives and freedom of his associates in the Teamsters Union and their sponsors in the crime syndicate.

According to one of his closest friends, Hoffa was ready to expose crooked loans from the Teamsters pension fund.

Hoffa's associates in the union and the crime syndicate had begun questioning his mental stability and, more important, his loyalty almost as soon as he left prison.

The onetime leader of the 2.2-million-member Teamsters Union sealed his fate with public comments about the bombing on July 10 of an auto belonging to Francis Richard Fitzsimmons, son of the current Teamsters president, Frank Fitzsimmons, Hoffa's friend said.

"The way he's been acting,

the questions he's been asking and his whole attitude," the confidant said, "you could tell was leading to something just like this. And when he started making speeches about the bombing, that did it — it was the final straw."

Hoffa, his friend continued, was trying to gather evidence that some Teamster cronies had made a deal with former President Nixon to have Hoffa pardoned in 1971 with the provision that barred Hoffa from union activity until 1980.

Since his release from federal prison in December, 1971, Hoffa had been trying to enlist the support of mob bosses in key cities in his bid to unseat his successor, Fitzsimmons, in an election next year.

The friend said Hoffa was also pressuring Teamster officials whom he had supported in locals across the country. These men had received favors from Hoffa, favors that the source said included arranging loans from the

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union's pension funds that amounted to millions of dollars.

For the last few years the Justice Department has been investigating some loans that produced kickbacks for the union officials.

Hoffa apparently approached his friends in the locals with the veiled threat that if they didn't help him, "he would have no loyalty to them as far as Uncle Sam was concerned," the friend said.

Hoffa had been making inquiries, which amounted to a full-scale investigation in recent weeks, into the way in which his pardon had been arranged with Nixon.

Hoffa believed that his friends in the union had double-crossed him by getting the President to add the restriction on his union activities, and he wanted to find out who was responsible.

The source said that, ironically, there was no deal with Nixon, "at least not in the truest sense of the word." Nixon was simply advised that no Teamster would vote for his re-election if Hoffa was still in jail.

Nixon added the restriction to relieve himself of some of the criticism he knew would come down on the White House because of the pardon.

Although the Teamsters did contribute heavily to the Nixon campaign, Hoffa's friend said, the money was not directly related to the release.

However, he added, "it sure didn't hurt."

Asked why Hoffa's Teamsters associates were so eager to get him out of prison, the source said, "They didn't spring him out of simple loyalty. There were reports that he was getting stir buggy in the can. They had to get him out because he was a man who knew too much and he was getting bitter behind bars."

These same associates believed Hoffa had been "acting bizarrely" since he was freed.

Starting with his campaign for prison reform, which was initially condoned by the men in the mob and the union, Hoffa engaged in a long line of activities that led to "what happened in the parking lot," Hoffa's confidant said. "They believed he was getting out of control."

Hoffa's car was found in the parking lot of a restaurant in Detroit's north suburbs after it was learned Thursday that he was missing.

One of the things that convinced the chiefs of the union that

Hoffa "was too flakey to run things," according to the source, was his effort to obtain the release of a 16-year-old — a millionaire's son — who had been kidnaped by a former Chicago racketeer.