

Probe of 'Plot' to Assassinate Nixon

New Orleans

The Secret Service announced yesterday that it had uncovered a "possible conspiracy" to assassinate President Nixon during his visit here.

The "conspiracy" announcement prompted the President to change the route of his motorcade. Mr. Nixon was in New Orleans to address a convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His brief stay in the city went without incident.

Later, when Mr. Nixon arrived home at San Clemente, he was greeted by his personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, who told him, "I was worried about you."

The President answered, "The whole thing was ridiculous . . . 'They called me last night and they canceled,' he said, apparently referring to the motorcade route. 'They'll never cancel another one.'"

PROBE

The Secret Service said it could provide no details of the conspiracy investigation upon which it based its warning to Mr. Nixon. Spokesmen would only say that the investigation is continuing.

In an apparently unrelated incident, federal agents tracked down a former New Orleans policeman, Edwin M. Gaudet, accused of making a threat against the President.

A federal warrant accused Gaudet of boasting in a New Orleans bar last Wednesday: "Somebody ought to kill President Nixon. If no one has the guts, I'll do it."

Last night the Secret Service said Gaudet has been trailed to a mountain commune in New Mexico by two agents, but had fled from them, firing two shots as he escaped. Agents said Gaudet has been living at the commune in Arroyo Hondo for about a year. The search for him was delayed until morning.

Spokesmen for the Secret

Service and New Orleans police superintendent Clarence Giarrusso indicated they consider the Gaudet case to be unrelated to the plot under investigation. "There is no evidence now of any relationship," Secret

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Service spokesman Jack Warner said.

Mr. Nixon was informed of the possible plot on Sunday through his chief of staff, Alexander Haig, who passed on the Secret Service information. Yesterday morning, the Secret Service recommended that the President change his route in New Orleans. The President promptly agreed to do so.

When asked the basis for the advice to change the President's motorcade route, the Secret Service said: "Over the past week we have received information on a possible conspiracy to assassinate the President during his visit to New Orleans this date."

It is highly unusual for the Secret Service to announce

publicly any suggestions it makes to the President on his security. Warner, the spokesman, said that in this case it was done to "anticipate inquiries" that were certain to be made if the route were changed.

Warner also said some inquiries were made even before the route was changed, apparently by a series of events in New Orleans which became known to newsmen there.

One of these was the police search for Gaudet. Another was the theft early yesterday morning of Superintendent Giarrusso's car. Still another was the theft of a policeman's uniform from another car. The three incidents were linked in early news accounts yesterday, but by late afternoon they appeared to be totally unre-

lated, either to each other or to the plot under investigation.

Warner said, "We knew we'd be inundated" with inquiries. A two-paragraph statement said Mr. Nixon had been urged not to make the motorcade trip.

Mr. Nixon had been scheduled to ride past a four-block section of historic Canal street on his way to the convention center. He took an alternate route.

Security was tight during Mr. Nixon's brief visit in New Orleans. On the trip from the airport into town, a car of security agents sped away from the motorcade and halted a bare-chested, tattooed youth who carried a bag along the road.

A spokesman for the FBI, after first declining to talk about the case, described it as "a very real threat" to the President's life. He refused to provide any details.

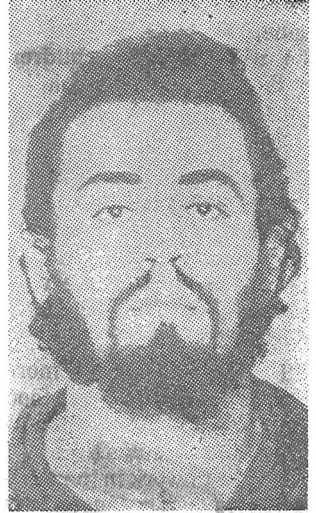
Gaudet, known as "Punchy" had been suspended from the police force in May 1967 after being in a fight in the French Quarter during which he illegally fired a gun. He was allowed to resign two months later.

In August 1970, Gaudet tried to burn a small flag during a peace demonstration on the City Hall steps here. He forfeited a cash bond.

In October, 1970, Gaudet was arrested for setting fire to an American flag and trying to throw it on Mr. Nixon's limousine during a presidential visit to New Orleans.

Last July 6, Gaudet was arrested on charges of possessing marijuana "with the intent to distribute." On this charge, the police records show, he again received a six-month suspended sentence.

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