

Garrison Will Probe Operation of Prison

District Attorney Jim Garrison today said he will conduct an in-depth investigation into the operations of the Orleans Parish Prison.

Garrison said his probe will be made in conjunction with the Orleans Parish Grand Jury. Grand juries for years have criticized facilities of the 42-year-old prison but it is believed this will be the first formal investigation aimed at the prison's administration.

Criminal Sheriff Louis A. Heyd is responsible for operating the prison.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of Garrison's probe came as a group of inmates at the prison filed a federal suit asking that the prison be closed and that Mayor Moon Landrieu and prison officials be held in contempt of court for not implementing improvements previously ordered by the courts.

U.S. District Judge Herbert W. Christenberry set for 10 a.m. Monday a hearing on the contempt plea and a motion for supplemental relief.

In announcing his prison investigation, Garrison said: "The escapes of numerous hardened criminals pose a serious threat to the security of this community. The latest exodus was Sept. 22, 1971, in which approximately a half dozen prisoners, including a convicted murderer facing the death penalty, were able to gain freedom with relative ease."

FIVE PRISONERS yesterday morning removed bars from their third floor cellblock and slid down the wall to freedom on a rope made of ripped-up mattress coverings. During their escape the prisoners passed close by an unmanned guard tower on the White Street side of the prison. Sheriff Heyd

fired a guard supervisor because of the incident.

One of those in the group of escapees was Gary Don Franklin, the confessed murderer of six persons. Franklin was captured minutes after the escape. Two of the escapees remained at large today.

Garrison said the purpose of his investigation "is to determine whether the physical condition of the prison is the sole cause for the many escapes or

whether there is neglect of duty on the part of any officials charged with the responsibility of administering the prison."

Garrison said his investigation is expected to last for several weeks and that it will be "comprehensive."

IN THEIR FEDERAL suit the in-

Turn to Page 4, Column 6

D.A. to Probe Prison

Continued from Front Page

inmates cited what they called "sordid and inhuman living conditions" at the prison. The suit said the conditions lead the inmates to believe "a complete breakdown will soon occur in Parish Prison and rioting, killing, arson and anarchy will occur and the closing of Parish Prison is a necessity in order to save innocent lives."

Judge Christenberry in June of 1970 ordered extensive improvements at the prison. Today's suit said these improvements have not been made and that Mayor Landrieu and prison offi-

cial should be held in contempt.

The judge also ordered removal of between 200 and 250 prisoners to the seventh and ninth floors of the Central Lockup.

The suit says failure to move the prisoners "displays a lack of reasonable effort by the defendants to submit to the court's order of June 25, 1970."

The suit, filed by attorney Luke Fontana, said the conditions at the prison are worse than when Judge Christenberry ordered the improvements and no reasonable attempt has been made to make the ordered improvements.