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CIA LINKED TO JFK 'PLOT'

New Orleans (AP)- The New Orleans States-Item said today there is mounting evidence of Central Intelligence Agency links in District Attorney Jim Garrison's probe of the Kennedy assassination.

"At least one Garrison probe figure intends to use CIA connections as part of his defense," the newspaper said.

The CIA at Washington declined comment.

The copyrighted story said "still others linked to the Garrison investigation have been named as acting for the super-secret espionage organization -- as informers, as couriers and munitions carriers.

Gordon Novel, 29-year-old former French Quarter bar owner who is fighting extradition from Ohio to Louisiana, was named as having the strongest CIA ties.

The newspaper said Novel told intimates "he was a CIA operative and will use this role to battle Garrison's charges."

Novel is free on \$10,000 bond in Columbus, Ohio, after his arrest on a Louisiana warrant that he helped plan the burglary of an oilfield explosive bunker near Houma, 40 miles southwest of New Orleans, in 1961.

Novel has referred to the alleged bunker burglary as "the most patriotic burglary in history." He has told associates, the newspaper said, that the munitions burglary was "a war materials pickup made at the direction of his CIA contact."

But his Columbus attorney, Jerry Weiner, said of the CIA link report: "It's utterly ridiculous. Novel is not now and has never been a CIA agent."

The States-Item quoted Novel as saying he was working for the CIA in New Orleans. Part of his job, he contends, was to operate the Evergreen Advertising Agency as a front for CIA communications.

Novel prepared special radio commercials for use in the United States and Canada, the newspaper said, to alert agents to the date of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The key codes were "star Christmas trees," and "holiday trees." Novel's agency placed \$72,000 worth of radio time in 1960, the story said.

Novel said the late David W. Ferrie, mysterious aviator accused by Garrison, and several Cubans were involved in the explosives bunker incident.

Novel said the explosives were picked up and consolidated soon after the bunker incident. He said they were eventually taken by boat to Cuba for use in a diversionary operation in connection with the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Garrison's charges state the bunker incident took place Aug. 1, -- three months after the Cuban invasion. —