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**Secret Service Calls Plot
Against Nixon 'Serious'**

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 21—The Secret Service continued today to press its investigation of what was described as a "very serious, very large" conspiracy by "nonmentals" to assassinate President Nixon during his visit to New Orleans yesterday.

Sources familiar with the investigation said that they used the term "nonmentals" to distinguish the reported assassination plot from the more common threats of harm from mentally unbalanced individuals that the President receives when he travels outside the capital. Most such threats prove empty.

The Secret Service, in an unprecedented move, announced early yesterday that the agency had "strongly recommended" to the White House that the route of Mr. Nixon's motorcade through a short section of downtown New Orleans be changed.

White House aides said later that the President himself had ordered that the motorcade be canceled, but in San Clemente, Calif., where Mr. Nixon flew after his brief, uneventful visit to New Orleans, reporters overheard him say to Rose Mary

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Woods, his personal secretary: "They called me last night. They canceled. They'll never cancel another time."

The observers said that the President appeared to be disappointed and that he seemed to be speaking of the motorcade cancellation. However, today Gerald L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, said Mr. Nixon had been alluding to another matter that Miss Woods was working on with the President.

Meanwhile, Secret Service agents and a score of heavily armed state and local officers searched through rugged territory near Taos, N. M., today for Edwin M. Gaudet, a bearded, 29-year-old former New Orleans policeman who has been charged with making a separate threat against Mr. Nixon's life.

Shots Exchanged

John Paul Jones, chief of the Secret Service in New Mexico, said today that local officers exchanged gunfire yesterday afternoon with a man they believed to be Mr. Gaudet, who disappeared into a nearby arroyo after firing two shots from a high-powered rifle.

An arrest warrant issued by the Secret Service yesterday alleged that Mr. Gaudet, a sometime resident of the Morning Star commune in Taos, said in a New Orleans bar last week, "Somebody ought to kill President Nixon. If no one has the guts, I'll do it."

Secret Service officials said that they had found no evidence to connect Mr. Gaudet to the reported assassination conspiracy, but would not preclude the possibility that a connection might turn up.

The Federal authorities here and in New Orleans were close-mouthed about the details of the reported plot against the President, which apparently came to light from intelligence information gathered by the New Orleans Police Department.

Officials of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose New Orleans field office is working on the case, referred questions to the Secret Service, which is coordinating the in-

vestigation. The Secret Service would say publicly only that the matter was being "aggressively" pursued.

Broad and Serious

But officials of both agencies, all of whom asked not to be named, insisted that the alleged conspiracy was both broad and intensely serious and that its threat had not been "blown out of proportion," as some New Orleans police officers reportedly complained today.

Officials of the New Orleans police said today they were unable to explain why the change in the route of the President's motorcade had been publicly disclosed in advance of Mr. Nixon's arrival, a move that presumably would have alerted any conspirators that their plot had been uncovered and providing them time to flee.

The police officials said that the decision to make the announcement had been that of the Secret Service, which said yesterday that the move was a response to expected inquiries from reporters about the change in the President's plans.

One former high-ranking Secret Service officer noted today that it was not uncommon for the agency to recommend such changes for security reasons. "We did it all the time," he said. "But it's unusual that it made the papers."

The official, and others familiar with Secret Service procedures, noting the President's remarks to Miss Woods, said they believed that the announcement might have been prompted by initial resistance in the White House to canceling the parade.

It was to have taken place along a five-block section of Canal Street and was expected to be lined with demonstrators friendly to the President.

"The security function is almost in direct conflict with the political function," said the former officer, who served as a member of the President's bodyguard. "The public relations people [in the White House] naturally want all the exposure they can get."

Another indication of displeasure in the White House over the change was a comment yesterday by a Presidential aide that "we have never faced a situation in which the Secret Service recommended a diversion of route because they were unable to resolve the situation before a Presidential arrival."