

Houston Policeman Accused of Burnings

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HOUSTON, March 6 — A Houston police officer has been charged in Louisiana with being part of a gang of night riders that burned two homes of Negroes and an elementary school near Lake Charles, La., in November, 1970, and January, 1971.

Several of the night riders contended at the time that the burnings were Ku Klux Klan raids, a Louisiana official said.

The charges against the Houston patrolman, Joseph L. Sullivan, 32 years old, follow a denial by Police Chief Herman Short of a published report that many Houston police officers were Klansmen.

Chief Short said that an investigation by his intelligence unit had not disclosed any evidence of Klan activity within the Houston Police Department.

In an article published in Paris in The International Herald Tribune of Feb. 17, a freelance author, Ron Laytner, wrote that he was told by Klansmen that many Houston policemen and sheriff's deputies were joining a new-look Klan that was no longer fighting racial integration but was concentrating instead on preventing a Communist takeover of the United States.

Mr. Laytner's report was accompanied by a photograph of a man in a police uniform with a white hood over his head sitting in a Houston police car.

Mr. Laytner said that he was provided information by several men who claimed to be Klansmen. One was Louis Beam, a young Vietnam veteran who was charged two years ago with dynamiting Pacifica radio station KPFT in Houston. Mr.

Beam was never tried on the charge.

Houston's small Socialist Workers party and a black militant have demanded investigations of the situation. The Socialist Workers party candidate for Mayor, Dan Fein, said that a coalition of antiwar activists and minority groups should hold the investigation. A Negro critic of the Houston Police Department, Ovide Duncantell, said that Congress should investigate.

Chief Short, who decreed years ago that Houston policemen could not belong to the Klan, said that his intelligence officers investigated for two weeks without finding any evidence that Mr. Laytner's allegation was true. The photograph of a hooded policeman in a squad car was called a fake.