

Informants Give Mafia Reaction to Colombo Shooting

By NICHOLAS GAGE

Dozens of underworld informants gave Federal law enforcement officials information yesterday about the Mafia's reaction to the shooting of Joseph A. Colombo Sr.

Among points the informants made that officials considered significant were the following:

Some leaders of organized crime have become apprehensive since the shooting that they may be future targets of assassins and have stayed close to their homes.

The crime leaders are reserving judgment about Joseph Gallo, who was questioned by the police after the shooting Monday. Gallo himself was said to fear that he would be killed.

Mindful of the history of underworld betrayals, Mafia members would not be surprised if even someone close to Colombo were involved in his shooting.

There is little suspicion in the underworld that Carlo Gambino, reputed leader of one of the five Mafia families in the metropolitan area who was also questioned by the police, knew anything in advance about the shooting.

Most of the talk about the shooting in the underworld focused on Gallo, the informants said, but there was no

haste to rush to an opinion about him.

Gallo was known to have been defying Colombo, the head of the family to which Gallo reputedly belongs. Prior to the rally of the Italian-American Civil Rights League Monday, Gallo went to several South Brooklyn merchants accompanied by two black bodyguards and told them not to attend the rally and not to pay dues to the league.

But, the informants say, underworld leaders recognize that a lot of people knew Gallo was challenging Colombo and was close to black gangsters, so the shooting could have been engineered to point to Gallo. So there is a reluctance in the Mafia to rush to a judgment of Gallo.

Fears for Life

Gallo is said by the informants to have expressed fear that he himself will be shot and has spent much time holed up in his lower Manhattan apartment.

Mafia leaders are analyzing the background of Johnson and his handling of himself at the shooting for signs on whether he was put up for the job.

Though his background shows no indication that he was a professional killer, according to the informants, his behavior at the shooting was highly professional, indicating that he

might have been picked out and coached for the assignment.

Favoring the theory that someone in the Colombo Mafia family had a role in the shooting, the organized-crime leaders are suspicious not only of men hostile to Colombo such as Gallo and Carmine Persico, leader of a powerful faction in the family, but also of his most trusted lieutenants.

The informants say that Mafia members do not think that Gambino had any prior knowledge of the assassination attempt.

Gambino, they say, was not happy that the publicity Co-

lombo was getting as a result of his involvement with the Italian-American Civil Rights League brought increased attention on the Mafia. But he was not upset enough to take drastic action.

Knowing Gambino, who likes to operate quietly, Mafia members feel that the dramatic shooting of Colombo would have been stopped by him if he had known it was to happen.

"The boys feel it's not Gambino's style and it's not something he would have wanted done," a Federal official quoted one informant as having told him.

VICTIM DESCRIBES BEATING AT RALLY

The man who was beaten by some of the people attending the Unity Day rally in Columbus Circle on Monday said yesterday that he was a musician and had volunteered to play at the rally and that his offer had been accepted.

Leon Hewitt, 42 years old, whose group is called Dutch-umba and his Warriors, said he was making his way through the crowd near Central Park South, followed by his drummer and bass player, when he was

stopped by people in the crowd. Mr. Hewitt shaves his head, leaving a comb of hair resembling that of a Mohawk Indian.

He was asked what he was carrying in two cases. He said, "My organ and my music." Then, he said "they asked if I had a contract, and when I asked what they meant they yelled, 'Get that nigger?'"

In the ensuing mêle Mr. Hewitt was beaten by the crowd and, he said, by a dozen policeman. He was charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest, and "I still don't know what happened to my instruments," he said.

6130171 NY TIMES

File FBI-II

29 Jun 71

See this file 2 May 70.