

TUESDAY, JULY 25, 1967

Shortly After Midnight, Tuesday: Through Monday evening and Tuesday morning, the number of reports of snipers besieging fire houses and police stations increased. The FBI reported that shortly after midnight, sniper fire on the Seventh Precinct station ceased but that the Fifth Precinct was reporting machine gunfire.

It should be noted that most of the evidence available indicates that the actual number of confirmed sniping incidents was small. Major General Cecil L. Simmons, Commander of the Michigan National Guard, told an interviewer that he felt that there were few snipers actually involved in the disorders. He estimated that there were never more than seven snipers at work at one time. He said that it was possible for these men to shoot rapidly for four or five minutes in one place and then to run to another place and continue sniping from there. Although he implied that this may have been the pattern of the individual snipers, he did state that the sniping was not organized but entirely sporadic.

Early Morning, Tuesday: Early Tuesday morning, small units of the Michigan State Police and later 250 Michigan State policemen were detached from the Detroit force and sent to other Michigan cities as the first outbreaks of violence occurred in Grand Rapids, Pontiac, Saginaw and Flint.

Henry Denson was the first known fatality on Tuesday. Several versions of his death are given by witnesses, police and survivors of the confrontation between Guardsmen and the victim at a checkpoint. At about 1:00 a.m., Denson, age 27, and two companions drove up to a Guard-police checkpoint just east of East Grand Boulevard. Officers and Guardsmen stepped into the street and ordered the car to halt. The car stopped, then evidently lunged forward. Shots were fired by two Guardsmen who allege that Denson was trying to run over them. The car stopped 50 feet north of the checkpoint. Denson was slumped dead in the front seat with a single gunshot wound that had penetrated his shoulders and left side of his neck. According to the passengers in the car,

they were shot at as they were waiting for a red light after they had been cautioned by police at the checkpoint to keep their speed down because another checkpoint was ahead. As the light turned green, the car moved forward, the command to halt was given and as the driver tried to step on the brakes, the shot was fired. Other witnesses agreed with the occupants of the car that no attempt had been made to get away from or to run over the Guardsmen.

Shortly After 2:00 A.M., Tuesday: A Negro private guard was the victim of a tragedy of errors when looters threatened him if he didn't look the other way and allow them to loot the fruit market he was guarding. The guard, Julian Dorsey, fired three shots into the air to scare them away. These three shots set in motion the machinery which killed him. Because of his shots, neighbors believed and reported to the police that the looters were armed. As police came to the intersection, they spotted the looters and ordered them to halt. As the looters fled, a series of shots was fired. The looters escaped and Dorsey was dead. The prosecutor's office ruled that the shooting was accidental. A

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memorandum notes, however, that "perhaps further investigation should be made to find out who fired the other shots."

3:00 A.M., Tuesday: General Throckmorton reported in a radio broadcast that the federal troops were under his command and were augmenting the city and state police and National Guard forces in their attempt to quell the disorders. He noted that these forces were under orders to "utilize only that force necessary to restore law and order and to protect persons and property." At this same time, Mayor Cavanagh reported that the number of arrests had passed 5,000 and that the problem of providing ample detention facilities was critical. He noted that the court processes had broken down and that prisoners were being sent to facilities outside Detroit, such as Jackson and Milan Prisons.

The only police officer to die during the riot was killed at this hour. Patrolman Jerome Olshove was accidentally shot by a fellow officer's shotgun that went off during a scuffle with looters whom they were attempting to arrest.

Within an hour, as incidents of sniping, especially at precinct houses and fire stations, continued, two other looters lost their lives. Roland Evans and William Jones were killed after being caught in a grocery store carrying an armload of beer. Evans was shot as he attempted to run after being instructed to lie down on the sidewalk. Jones was killed as he ran through the front door of the store into a volley of fire from the 20 policemen and Guardsmen who were standing outside.

4:15 A.M., Tuesday: Shortly after 4:00 a.m., an appeal was made to the public to help get the situation back to normal by going back to work on Tuesday morning. During this hour, another victim was claimed by the riot. Roy Banks, who as a result of polio had lost his hearing at age 2, was shot by a National Guardsman at 4:00 a.m. and died three weeks later. Although a police report indicated that Banks was shot while looting a bar, witnesses contend that he was walking to work when he was mistaken for a looter and shot down. The police

report, which indicated that Banks failed to halt when ordered, did not indicate an awareness that Banks was deaf and dumb.

The strain under which the administration of justice was placed over the course of the riot was particularly evident on Tuesday morning. Cyrus Vance reported that:

"By Tuesday morning, the system as well as the facilities were severely strained. Long delays occurred in the processing of prisoners at the precinct stations where conditions were particularly bad. Further long delays occurred while the prisoners waited in bull pen or temporary facilities at the Recorder's Court, without food, water or latrine facilities while they were processed through the bond hearing. The temporary facilities included the police garage and a number of separate buses parked outside the Recorder's Court."

Vance further noted that:

"While there was no formal change in policy of high bail, however, beginning on Tuesday morning the Prosecutor's Office, at the urging of a number of persons including federal officials, began to think in terms of releasing prisoners on personal bond or on reasonable bond. Officials also considered whether a new policy should be adopted."

7:30 A.M., Tuesday: A joint statement by Governor Romney, Mayor Cavanagh and Cyrus Vance was issued urging businesses to resume operation where possible despite the continuing official curfew.

Midmorning, Tuesday: At this time Governor Romney and Mayor Cavanagh advised federal authorities in Washington that conditions in Detroit were not greatly improved but requested that Detroit should be considered to be a disaster area.

Noon, Tuesday: According to a FBI report, a large blackmarket in looted goods had developed. FBI sources reported later in the day that several cars with out-of-state license plates had been seen in the riot area and that the occupants had been observed participating in the breaking and entering and looting of stores. This development is consistent with the opinion of many observers of the disorder interviewed by the staff that after the first day or so of looting, professional

shoplifting teams did come into the area and the looting became more systematic. This FBI report also pointed out that local and federal officials had issued a statement that the number of riot-related incidents had declined since the commitment of federal troops and that troops would remain in Detroit until conditions were returned to normal.

Afternoon, Tuesday: On Tuesday afternoon, two more looters were killed. Arthur Johnson and Perry Williams were shot by police officers as they attempted to loot a pawnshop. The police alleged that the two were shot in self-defense after they had attempted to attack the officers with a club and a length of pipe. No club or pipe was retained to substantiate the police officer's story.

Evening, Tuesday: More Michigan state policemen were detailed to other areas of the state in order to avert further violence as reports of sniping and other acts



of violence directed toward police continued. Two alleged snipers were apprehended by police in the Tenth Precinct where the disorder had begun. According to the Detroit Free Press, at approximately 9:45 p.m. the only confirmed sniper among the 43 riot victims was killed. Jack Sydnor, a Negro, spent Tuesday afternoon drinking at his home. Later in the afternoon, his wife discovered him playing with a pistol that had long been kept around their apartment. After musing whether it would work, he started shooting into the street from his third floor apartment window. Frightened tenants called the police. Within 30 minutes, he was dead, having been shot as police riddled the apartment with gunfire.

10:00 P.M., Tuesday: According to a later statement by Mayor Cavanagh, sniper fire was reported to be so heavy at this time that the police were ordered to withdraw from the Grand River, Dexter, and Clairmont

Streets area. Guardsmen were ordered in to sweep the area, a tactic which had been attempted during the first day of the riot, but was not successful. About this time, Jack Sydnor, a Negro, returned to his home drunk and fired a shot into an alley with a pistol. After wounding a policeman responding to the shot, Sydnor was himself killed. Other shots were fired by police. Reports of "heavy sniper fire" came into police headquarters and tanks and National Guard troops responded. Over the next several hours, Guardsmen opened fire at several points in response to what they believed was sniper fire. One of the victims of this firing was four-year old Tonia Blanding. Tonia was shot as Guardsmen machine gunned an apartment in which they thought the flicker of a match lighting a cigarette was gunfire. A Detroit newspaper article pointed out that had the Guardsmen followed police procedure of using tear gas to flush out suspected snipers, Tonia might not have died.

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Shortly Before Midnight, Tuesday: A few minutes before midnight, Manuel Cosbey was one of four looters trapped by police as he attempted to loot a grocery store. When the looters failed to heed the warning of the police to halt, three shots were fired, one of which killed Cosbey.