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Mob might cause high prices

United Press International
President Carter recently complained about the great difference between wholesale food prices and the final cost to consumers. Many law enforcement officials believe part of the difference is the price being paid to the mob.

The payoff comes in many forms — kickbacks for labor peace; hijacking, which means higher insurance rates for the legitimate businesses,

and even mob control of some distribution points.

"Somebody is going to have to pay and you know as well as I do who's going to," says an FBI agent. "It's going to come out of the consumers' pocket."

A classic organized crime method of gaining control of a business is through loansharking.

A businessman who for some reason cannot get a loan through

legitimate means is approached by someone who offers to provide the money at interest rates of 2 to 3 percent per week.

Over a period of a year, the weekly interest payments — called the "vigorous" or "vig," from the Russian for winning or profit — exceed 100 percent.

"Some businessmen, particularly when money is tight, will borrow

money from loansharks believing that with a little boost they can grab the gold ring," says Special Agent John Morris of the FBI's Boston office. "But then they find they can't make their payments and soon the alternative is to let the mob in for a piece of the action."

Recently, 12 men — including John "Buster" Ardito, the reputed No. 2 man in the New York City Vito

Genovese crime family, and "The General" Tutino, said to be one of the top heroin suppliers in New York — were indicted in a scheme to take over legitimate businesses through loansharking.

Failure to pay a mob loan also can mean death.

There are many reasons why organized crime gets into legitimate businesses.

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POWs to testify against Marine

United Press International
CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — Marine Pfc. Robert R. Garwood emerged from Vietnam last March, 13½ years after disappearing outside Da Nang. Today he faces survivors of Vietnamese POW camps who have branded him a traitor.

The Marine Corps is opening the military equivalent of a grand jury hearing to determine if Garwood

should face a court-martial. Unlike a civilian hearing, however, military authorities generally allow reporters at the proceedings.

Fifteen witnesses, most of them former POWs, were expected to give testimony supporting charges that Garwood, 33, turned on his own countrymen and collaborated with the Vietnamese.

Garwood's side of the story re-

mains a secret. His attorney has not yet decided if Garwood will testify, but says his client is eager to tell his story.

"Bobby has an almost uncontrollable desire to give what he calls an accounting to the American people," said attorney Dermot Foley.

Word of Garwood first came out of Vietnam in 1968, three years after he disappeared, when freed POWs told of an American who helped interrogate and guard prisoners. One report said Garwood was once seen in the jungle, armed and walking a patrol with communist troops.

The formal charges against him include desertion, absence without authorization, soliciting American troops to throw down their weapons, accepting a position with an enemy army, attempting to cause insurrection, and attacking fellow POWs both verbally and physically.

If found guilty, he could receive the death penalty.

Garwood, who spends his time working as a clerk at this spring and isolated Marine base in eastern North Carolina, maintains his innocence.

Health official tries to stop Cajuns' Christmas bonfire

United Press International
NEW ORLEANS — Claiming his motive is health and not a desire to be a Christmas Scrooge, the state director of the American Lung Association vows to snuff out a French cajun tradition of lighting bonfires to illuminate a path for "Papa Noel."

Thousands of cajun children living along the Mississippi River and on the banks of bayous throughout South Louisiana believe the French Santa Claus rides a pirogue — a flatbottomed, shallow draft boat — pulled by magical alligators to deliver gifts, a local adaptation of the more traditional sleigh and reindeer.

To aid Papa Noel on his journey, children and their parents build huge bonfires along the river levee each year and light them after dark on Christmas Eve illuminating the

river's curves with thousands of lights.

But Finley W. Raymond, executive director of the American Lung Association of Louisiana, said tires, plastics and chemically treated wood burned in the bonfires were discharging poisonous chemicals into the air, and he said he would bring court action to forbid the lighting of fires this year unless local governments took steps to remove all paper and plastic items from the

"If necessary, I shall recommend to our board that we take legal action and obtain court injunctions to prevent the burning of the pyres unless immediate action is taken to eliminate the rubber, creosote and other materials centered in the stacks that are dangerous to human health," Raymond said Monday.

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