Five Tons Of Pot Seized In Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Drug agents seized more than five tons of marijuana apparently unloaded from a fishing boat at a campsite on Lake Catherine on the outskirts of New Orleans and arrested 10 men in the second big drug raid in Louisiana in three days.

The smuggler's 40-foot lobster boat slipped away during Wednesday's raid, officials said.

However, the Coast Guard later reported finding an apparently scuttled vessel in nearby Lake Borgne — with bails of marijuana floating nearby.

Most of the drug was seized from a rented truck that was stopped on U.S. 90 near the Rigolets Bridge in eastern New Orleans, said Richard H. Wright of the U.S. Customs Service.

The truck's driver, armed with a .357-magnum pistol, tried to flee but was captured along with a passenger, he said.

The rest of the drug, about 60 bails, was discovered in a second truck that was apparently being loaded when agents were spotted coming into the campsite on Lake Catherine, Wright said.

Three suspects were arrested at the alleged loading site, but the ship managed to slip away, he said.

"Presumably, they saw us coming and they pulled out," he said. "Or they got a radio warning that we were coming. They're pretty sophisticated these days."

The five other suspects caught fleeing in a pickup truck on U.S. 90 about five miles from the campsite. They were armed with a total of eight handguns, officials said.

The Coast Guard said it had not determined positively if the overturned boat found in Lake Borgne was the same vessel that got away from the camp.

Lake Catherine and Lake Borgne are connected by the intricate web of waterways that run along the coast of southeast Louisiana and into the Gulf of Mexico.

Officials said the lobster boat apparently brought in a load from a mother ship after a rendezvous in the Gulf. But they found no sign of the mother ship.

The arrested men were: Norman J. Naquin, 43, of Chauvin; Juan M. Robaina, 28, of Westwego; Dennis P. Howard, 31, of Arabi; Hugo R. Pina, 27, of Miami, Fla.; Morgan R. Tynes, 28; Phillip D. Pierce, 49; Domingo Garcia, 43; Sixty E. Quesado, 32; Carl M. Kimbler, all of Key West, Fla., and Harry M. Leflune, of Port Bolivar, Tex.

A similar raid Sunday night in Lafitte netted 40 tons of high-grade Colombian marijuana being unloaded from a shrimp boat.

Drug authorities have predicted that a bumper crop in Colombia will result in an increase of marijuana smuggling activity along the Gulf coast.

Meanwhile, two sisters were arrested Wednesday when Tangipahoa Parish deputies raided their house and confiscated $27,000 worth of marijuana, hashish, and LSD.

Susan Kain, 24, and her sister, Deborah, 30, were booked with possession with intent to distribute.

Seized in the raid in a rural area of the parish were 30 pounds of marijuana, a pound of hashish and 50 doses of LSD.