

British Postal Haul May Reach Millions

By Reuters

Aylesbury, England — A 30-strong gang of armed and masked bandits has hijacked a mail train in the lonely countryside north of London and escaped with a fantastic sum of money estimated at nearly \$3 million.

The British Post Office announced, "The loss may well run into seven figures." This would mean it could exceed £1 million (\$2.8 million).

Already dubbed "the great train robbery" by the British press the crime, which occurred Thursday, was the biggest and boldest railroad ambush in British criminal history.

Exact size of the haul in 100 bags of registered mail will not be known for some time.

Signals Rigged

Early estimates said it was about £160,000 (\$488,000). A railroad spokesman later said around £200,000 (\$560,000). At present the figure stood at the staggering total of £1 million (\$2.8 million).

The crime was apparently planned in minute detail and executed with split-second timing.

The gang halted the Glas-

gow-London Post Office express at 3 a.m. Thursday with rigged signals near Leighton Buzzard about two miles north of Cheddington.

They covered the green signal with a glove and connected four dry cell batteries to the red light to keep it burning. They also cut the railroad telephone near the signal.

The robbers jumped onto the train and attacked the crew. After handcuffing the engineer and fireman they uncoupled the diesel locomotive and first two cars containing most of the mail. They tied up postal workers in the cars.

Unloaded at Bridge

They then forced the crew to drive one mile to a lonely bridge where they unloaded more than 100 registered mailbags into a truck waiting on the bridge above and made a clean getaway.

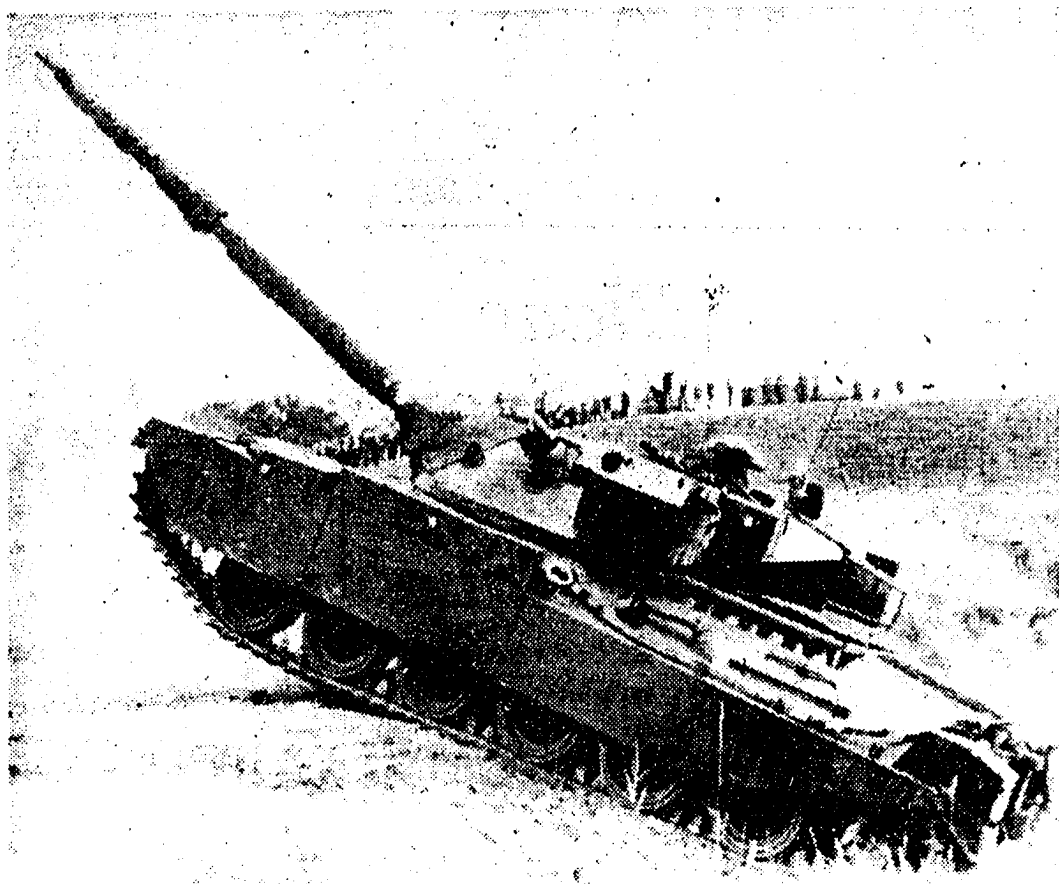
The train carried no passengers, but there were 75 postal workers working in the 12 coaches. The "traveling postoffices" have been running nightly on British railroads for 125 years.

Police Mobilized

As soon as the alarm was given, senior police officers from surrounding districts rushed to the scene and roadblocks were set up.

The police barriers were extended as far as northwest London in case the thieves tried to reach the capital.

It was thought possible the gang set up their own temporary "sorting office" in a remote building in a rural area to go through the contents of the plundered mailbags.



Associated Press Wirephoto

Latest Battle Tank Clatters Through Paces

Racing out of a ditch, the British Army's latest battle tank—the 50-ton Chieftain—is put through its paces at a testing ground at

Chertsey, England. The British Army says the tank, with newly developed 120-mm. gun, is hardest-hitting tank available to NATO.