

DOCUMENTS MISSING IN DR. KING INQUIRY

Aide Says Data Were Apparently Destroyed After House Action

WASHINGTON, Nov. 16 (AP) —Documents relating to the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. apparently have been destroyed since the creation of a House committee to investigate the slaying, committee staff members said today.

Richard A. Sprague, chief counsel of the House Committee on Assassinations, said that the documents were "relevant to our investigation" and "would have been in the possession of law enforcement authorities."

Mr. Sprague added, "I have been advised that the destruction has been since it was announced [in September] that this committee would be investigating" the murders of Dr. King and President Kennedy.

The chief counsel cautioned that he had not received official notification that the documents had been destroyed, but, in an apparent reference to a member of his staff, said he had learned of their destruction "from an individual who has interviewed other people."

Mr. Sprague refused to discuss which law enforcement agency had possessed the documents. However, Representative Henry B. Gonzalez, Democrat of Texas, a committee member, said that he believed the documents had been in the possession of the authorities in Tennessee where Dr. King was killed in 1968.

During an unexpected public session of the committee, Mr. Gonzalez asked a staff attorney, Robert Ozer, if he had any reason to believe that documents relating to the King assassination had been destroyed "since the constitution of this committee."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Ozer replied. "I believe there are some documents that have been destroyed."

Mr. Ozer is a former member of a Justice Department strike force against organized crime in Detroit.

The hearing, originally expected to be held in closed session, was open to the public after a motion to go into executive session failed on a 6-to-6 tie vote.

On Monday, Mr. Sprague said the committee would hire 170 investigators to investigate the Kennedy and King assassinations. He said the size of the investigative team was not excessive and said that by comparison, the Warren Commission had 83 aides of its own, 150 Federal Bureau of Investigation agents, 60 Secret Service agents and the help of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Internal Revenue Service in its inquiry.