

RAY'S BROTHERS TIED TO A POSSIBLE PLOT

House Unit Says F.B.I. Overlooked Hints of Role in King Slaying

WASHINGTON, Nov. 27 (AP) — The House Select Committee on Assassinations indicated yesterday that it has found evidence showing that James Earl Ray's two brothers may have been involved in the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The committee counsel, G. Robert Blakey, listed a series of circumstantial connections that he said add up to a "family-based association that points to a criminal relationship" involving Mr. Ray and his brothers, John and Jerry.

There are tentative plans to call John and Jerry Ray to testify before the committee.

Mr. Blakey said the Federal Bureau of Investigation had failed to mount an adequate investigation into the possibility of a conspiracy in the April 4, 1968, killing of the civil rights leader, although evidence was available that someone besides Mr. Ray was involved.

"The evidence indicates that the performance of the F.B.I., as well as the Justice Department, was flawed," Mr. Blakey said in releasing a 106-page report on the F.B.I. investigation.

Former Official Defends Bureau

Cartha DeLoach, a senior F.B.I. official at the time of the assassination, defended the bureau's investigation and

said he remained convinced that Dr. King was killed by one man acting alone.

Dr. King was killed by a rifleman as he stepped from his room at a Memphis, Tenn., motel. Mr. Ray was arrested two months later in London and is serving a 99-year prison term for the murder.

Mr. Ray first confessed, then recanted and said he had been framed by a mysterious figure named "Raoul."

Mr. Blakey said a two-year re-examination of the F.B.I. investigation had shown that there had been an intensive effort to identify the gunman and arrest him. Until Mr. Ray's capture, there also was a concerted effort to uncover any possible conspiracy, Mr. Blakey said.

But once Mr. Ray was in custody, Mr. Blakey said, the F.B.I.'s investigation tailed off dramatically, with only intermittent efforts to discover whether anyone else was involved.

Mr. Blakey said the bureau had passed over a number of items indicating the possibility of a conspiracy involving all three Ray brothers. The items included the following:

¶ Information that John and Jerry Ray had met with their brother before the assassination despite denials of such contacts.

¶ Indications of the probable involvement of John Ray in the 1967 escape of James Earl Ray from the Missouri State Prison, including records showing a prison visit by John on the day before Mr. Ray fled.

¶ Information that Jerry Ray twice admitted knowledge of a conspiracy in the assassination.