
Washington

WASHINGTON, D.C., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1978

Star

SATURDAY
MORNING
FINAL

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15 Cents

Conspiracy Evidence Developed

JFK, King Probe Leaves Questions

By Jeremiah O'Leary

Washington Star Staff Writer

New, serious questions of conspiracies in the killings of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. have been raised by the House Assassinations Committee.

The essence of the committee's findings was contained in Chairman Louis Stokes' comments when the public hearings came to an end yesterday.

Stokes, an Ohio Democrat, said the idea of a conspiracy to kill King is based on the committee's findings that there was a standing offer of \$50,000 in St. Louis for anyone who would do the killing, although he doubted that James Earl Ray ever received any money from anyone. Ray pleaded guilty to the charge that he assassinated King, but has since been trying to recant the plea.

Stokes said he based his opinion

primarily upon a minute tracing of Ray's finances through money he got from a bank robbery in Alton, Ill., and from a job he held in Winnetka, Ill.

STOKES SAID THE evidence that a fourth shot may have been fired by a second gunman from a grassy knoll in Dallas' Dealey Plaza at Kennedy's motorcade on Nov. 22, 1963, would point to a conspiracy to kill the president if the evidence were accepted.

Stokes said yesterday, "The committee has presented evidence clearly pointing to the identity of the assassins in both cases."

Stokes said he was referring to Ray and Lee Harvey Oswald, who was killed by Jack Ruby before he could be tried as the assassin of Kennedy.

In his summation of the committee's two-year, \$5 million investigation of both murders, Stokes said:

"The assessment of personal guilt

is something the Constitution has rightly allocated the Executive Branch to investigate and for the judicial process to weigh. I recognize, of course, there are still loose ends in both of these investigations that I had hoped our work might have tied down. I regret that these matters are still outstanding."

HE SAID THE committee's findings will be edited and released to the public Wednesday. The final report and the transcript of the hearings will be sent to the Government Printing Office for publication March 30.

Much of yesterday's testimony was devoted to the second gunman theory that has been offered by a group of acoustics experts. It is based on a recording of a Dallas police radio transmission.

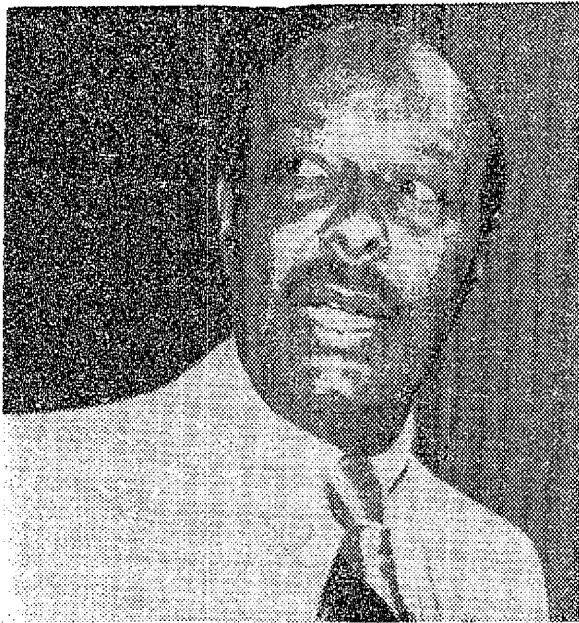
Witnesses yesterday explained how their experiments led them to assert that there is a 95 percent probability that a second gunman fired at

the Kennedy motorcade from the grassy knoll while Oswald was firing his rifle from the sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository building.

To reinforce their testimony, the experts showed the Abraham Zapruder film of Kennedy being struck by bullets synchronized with the sound-tracks of test firings made in Dallas.

THE FILM HAD the sound of four shots dubbed in two ways: once with the third or grassy knoll bullet striking Kennedy's head and once with the fourth shot — presumably the third shot fired by Oswald — causing the president's head to explode.

See PROBE, A-2



REP. LOUIS STOKES
'Presented evidence clearly'

PROBE

Continued From A-1

Those who saw the film in both reconstructions were unable to tell which version was a genuine rendition of the fatal shot striking Kennedy.

However, Chief Committee Counsel G. Robert Blakey said the films and X-rays have been examined by Dr. Michael Baden, chief medical examiner of New York City, and that Baden's opinion remains the same: that there is no medical evidence Kennedy was wounded by any shot fired from the right front of his limousine where the grassy knoll gunman is supposed to have been.

If Kennedy was shot at from the right front, the shot missed, Blakey quoted Baden as saying. Blakey said no one else in Dealey Plaza was hit by a shot fired from the grassy knoll.

In summary the committee's evidence says scientific indications that one of four shots fired at Kennedy came from the grassy knoll is at odds with testimony that the grassy knoll gunman, if he existed, fired a shot that struck nobody. This leaves the question of conspiracy open.

The committee produced no evidence as to who the grassy knoll rifleman might have been and no one who saw him fire a shot or flee with a rifle.

Similarly, there was no evidence to connect the mystery rifleman with Oswald, although Stokes said the mere fact that two individuals fired at the president from different directions at the same time indicates a possible conspiracy.

THE COMMITTEE never seriously challenged the Warren Commission's finding that Oswald fired three shots: from the window above and behind the president's motorcade. Medical and ballistics evidence presented by committee witnesses indicated that two of Oswald's three shots, probably the first and the third bullets, struck Kennedy and one of his shots missed.

Stokes laughed out loud at questions about whether he thought the committee should seek more funds and an extension of its existence from the House to tie up the loose ends of investigations. He and other committee members indicated they were glad to be at the end of the long and often troubled life of the assassinations committee.

THE VOTE THAT the committee was expected to take last night in secret session may settle the question of whether there was a second gunman stalking Kennedy in Dallas 15 years ago, at least officially.

If the committee, in its Wednesday report, accepts the fourth bullet theory, it will probably be up to the FBI to deal with that piece of unfinished business.