

FTN

Clerk's Office Hit on Sirhan Case Evidence

BY DOUG SHUIT
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The weekend disclosure that evidence in the Robert F. Kennedy slaying may have been altered led Monday to developments which focused attention on the Los Angeles County Clerk's Office.

The developments were:

—An order to County Clerk William Sharp to inspect his office for possible security breaches, to re-evaluate its control system and to inventory exhibits and transcripts from the Sirhan Bishara Sirhan trial.

—A statement by Sharp that a personal investigation has "failed to disclose any mishandling" of key exhibits, although there are "still some stones unturned."

Polygraph Tests

—The revelation by an aide to Dist. Atty. Joseph P. Busch Jr. that "some employes of the clerk's office are being given lie detector tests.

Busch said last week his office was "terribly concerned" over evidence that the fatal bullets and murder weapon in the assassination had been tampered with.

He also said he and his staff are investigating "evidence that exhibits have been directly handled by numerous persons," a violation of a court order sealing them.

The clerk's office was charged with maintaining the integrity of evidence

in the Sirhan trial pending an appeal.

The order to Sharp came from Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, who oversees the operation of the County Clerks Office.

Hahn also directed the county's chief administrative officer, Arthur G. Will, to determine if the clerk's office needs additional precautionary equipment.

Busch's aide, in revealing that some employes of Sharp were being asked to take polygraph examinations, declined to identify the employes or specify the number.

In his disclosure last week, the district attorney did not say whether he considered the possible tampering intentional or unintentional.

However, he stressed it complicates an earlier investigation into claims that ballistics work in the Kennedy case was improper and that a second gun may have been fired in the rear pantry of the Ambassador where the late President's brother was mortally wounded June 5, 1968.

Extensive tampering might make it impossible to either prove or disprove these contentions.

END