

Tapes of JFK shooting inconclusive on shots

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WASHINGTON — An "acoustical" analysis that suggests additional gunshots in the murder of President John F. Kennedy is still considered inconclusive at this time by the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

While the panel is continuing its testing of a Dallas police tape recording for evidence that more than three shots were fired at the presidential motorcade, no determination has been made of the origin of noises that indicate addi-

tional gunfire, according to sources with direct knowledge of the analysis.

Moreover, these sources said the technician who is performing the sophisticated test has declined to definitely identify a sound on the tape as a fourth shot — one more than the Warren Commission said Lee Harvey Oswald fired on Nov. 22, 1963.

"He won't state categorically that it is a gunshot," said one person with knowledge of the committee's actions. "He doesn't know what it was for sure. It could have been a backfire from a mo-

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torcycle, it could have been anything."

The analysis of the tape, the only known recording of the Dallas assassination, is being conducted by Bolt, Beranek & Newman of Cambridge, Mass., in an effort to determine whether more than one assassin took part in the killing.

The firm's preliminary findings were that the tape may have disclosed the sounds of four gunshots, with the last coming only 1.4 seconds after the third. Commission tests of the rifle fired by Oswald showed 2.3 seconds, at minimum, were needed between shots.

In requesting an additional \$60,000 this week for more "acoustical" analyses of the tape, G. Robert Blakey, the committee's chief counsel, reportedly stated the timing of the sounds suggested a second gunman may have been firing at the same time as Oswald.

However, one qualified source said that reports that additional shots had been definitely established by the technical investigation were premature, and that the reason for continued testing is

the uncertainty of the analysis so far.

This official said the Boston consulting firm, which also performed tests on the 18½-minute gap in President Nixon's White House tapes, may not ever be able to reach a definite conclusion about the sound.

"There was so much else going on at noon in a major city, during a presidential motorcade, that to say somebody didn't do something that would make that sound is just about impossible," he said.

Bolt, Beranek & Newman has scheduled a partial re-enactment of the shooting Aug. 20 from the Texas School Book Depository to try to confirm and explore the initial results by comparisons, he said.

The physical scene, however, is certain to differ substantially from that of the shooting 15 years ago since the test will take place in the early morning hours, rather than noon, and all vehicles and bystanders will be cordoned off. Moreover, certain nearby buildings have been altered.

Dallas police have agreed to aid the House Assassinations Committee in re-enacting the Kennedy assassination to determine the reliability of acoustical evidence that four shots — not three — were fired at the presidential motorcade 15 years ago.

"The Dallas police department will provide the fullest level of cooperation possible (at 5:30 a.m.) on the 20th, including sealing off of the area and providing marksmen if requested," Dallas Police Chief Don Byrd said Thursday.

"We have always cooperated with agencies of the federal government and will continue to do so.

"However, our role on the morning of the 20th will be primarily supportive in terms of providing security. Specifics on

the re-creation and details on what the government hopes to prove or disprove will have to come from the Select Committee on Assassinations, U.S. House of Representatives," he said.

Police spokesman Ed Spencer said, "We'll keep the people out, but what

goes on in there is their business."

Dallas City Councilman Willie Cothrum said the Dallas council has not been asked to approve blocking off the area for the committee or to cooperate with the committee's activities in Dallas.

Cothrum said he, personally, did not approve of the planned re-enactment.

"I can't speak for the city but I have reservations about discharging live bullets down there," said Cothrum. "I suppose the danger could be very minimal but there could be some people who don't read the papers or watch TV and not know what's going on and go down there."

Cothrum said, "As a federal taxpayer, I resent them wasting my money running around all over the country not proving anything. There's some sort of weird mystique about this whole thing that's got people caught up that I've never understood."

Samuel Labate, chairman of the board of the acoustical company performing the tests, would not comment on whether a company representative was in Dallas at this time.

"The U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations has retained (the firm) as a consultant," he said. "Our work is presently incomplete. The committee will make public a report of our completed work at its hearing in September."

The acoustical company spokesman said, "That is all the committee has authorized us to say at this time."

Reports that the committee, created in 1976 to review lingering questions about the slaying of Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1963, had uncovered evidence of hitherto undisclosed shots caused a stir of interest in the panel's activities.

Almost from the day Oswald was pointed to as the President's lone assassin, critics have repeatedly suggested the involvement of more than one person in the shooting. The source, timing and number of shots have been subjects of intense controversy.