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Editorials

The RFK report

The murder of Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles 17 years ago has been generally accepted as the work of a lone assassin. Yet an earnest group of RFK's associates have questioned the official police version of events, raising the possibility that a mysterious second gunman was in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel the night Sirhan B. Sirhan took aim at Kennedy with a .22 caliber pistol. That speculation was discounted in a 1,500-page summary of the investigation released by the Los Angeles Police Commission Tuesday. The report concluded that Sirhan fired the fatal shots and that there was no evidence to support a conspiracy theory.

If the summary report was intended to clear the air, it failed. The doubters persist. Yet the Police Commission took an action that ultimately should answer

most of the remaining questions by handing over the complete 50,000-page file to Mayor Tom Bradley. Bradley has agreed to appoint an independent committee to review the massive file and to set a timetable for its release.

While the second-gun theories are hazy and lack solid evidence, the best thing that can happen now is for Bradley's committee to release the remaining documents as quickly as is practicable. Conspiracy theories thrive on any suggestion that information is being kept secret.

Some critics probably never will be satisfied, even when the entire file is made public. But the release of the complete record should go a long way toward satisfying reasonable observers. It's been almost two decades since the assassination, and it's time the matter was laid to rest.