PROBE OF RAID TO OPEN TODAY

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Shootings of 2 Panthers Sparked Controversy

CHICAGO (AP) — The first public investigation of the fatal shootings of two Black Panther leaders will begin Tuesday with a specially named deputy coroner presiding.

The shootings have aroused widespread controversy, and Coroner Andrew J. Toman, a physician, named a lawyer, Martin Gerber, 62, to replace him at the inquest.

The Chicago Bar Association, Black Panther party lawyers and others had called on Toman to step aside in favor of someone not part of the elected county government.

SEVEN ARRESTED

Fred Hampton, 21, chairman of the Illinois Black Panther party, and Mark Clark, 22, a party leader from Peoria, Ill., were killed in a raid on their apartment Dec. 4 by state's attorney's police.

Seven other Black Panthers were arrested and charged with attempted murder and other crimes.

The police said the Panthers fired first when they went with warrants to the apartment to search for illegal firearms. They reported finding 18 weapons.

The Panthers' lawyers say the police fired first and without provocation.

PANTHER LEADERS

Black Panther leaders throughout the country have said police raids such as the ones in Chicago and in Los Angeles Dec 8 are part of a plan to systematically eliminate the party.

Panther lawyer Charles Garry of San Francisco says raids add up to a campaign of "genocide on the Black Panther party."

"Poppycock," replied a Justice Department spokesman to charges by Garry and others that the Nixon administration is leading an elaborate and planned police crackdown on the Panthers.

CONDUCT OF INQUEST

The conduct of the inquest itself has aroused controversy. Radio and television equipment have been banned, along with still cameras.

Such equipment is not normally allowed at inquests.

The Illinois News Broadcasters Association issued a statement Monday saying it "is greatly disappointed" with Toman's ban.

U.S. Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell also has ordered a special investigation of the shootings. He announced that a seven-man team of government lawyers and a special federal grand jury in Chicago will conduct the probe.

The coroner's jury does not rule on guilt or innocence but fixes medical cause of death and can recommend criminal prosecution if the testimony so indicates.

Toman has named six leading Chicagoans, black and white, as jurors to hear the evidence.

The state's attorney's office has said the 14 police raiders involved in the Panthers deaths will testify at the inquest.

Attorneys for the seven Panthers allegedly in the apartment at the time of the shootings said they may not testify because of possible self-incrimination.