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FBI disputes House's JFK conclusion

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WASHINGTON — The FBI says a House committee's conclusion that two gunmen probably took part in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy 17 years ago "is invalid."

The FBI yesterday said the House assassinations committee's acoustical experts "did not scientifically prove that a gunshot was fired by a second gunman from the grassy knoll area of Dealey Plaza" during the slaying in Dallas.

"Therefore, the House Select Committee on Assassinations' finding that 'scientific acoustical evidence establishes a high probability that two gunmen fired at President John F. Kennedy' is invalid," the FBI said in a 22-page report.

The Warren Commission determined that Kennedy was killed by shots fired only by Lee Harvey Oswald, who was killed two days later.

Based on acoustical tests conducted in 1978, the House committee said it was probable that four shots were fired at the president in Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22, 1963.

Since only three of those could have been fired

by Oswald, President Kennedy "was probably assassinated as the result of a conspiracy," the now-defunct committee concluded.

The House committee report in 1979 was the first official study of the assassination to dispute the conclusion of the Warren Commission that

House experts did not 'scientifically prove' second gunman theory

Oswald acted alone in the killing of Kennedy during a motorcade.

The FBI has consistently maintained that it found no evidence of a conspiracy.

When it published its conclusions, the House committee asked the FBI to study the tests by

Bolt Beranek and Newman Inc., Mark R. Weiss and Ernest Ashkenasy.

On Dec. 29, 1978, Weiss, an acoustics expert, testified there was a 95-percent chance — evidence "beyond a reasonable doubt" — that Kennedy was assassinated in a crossfire by two riflemen acting in concert.

He based that conclusion on sounds recorded on a Dictabelt, thought to have originated from a motorcycle policeman's radio, and those produced by a test firing of a rifle on the scene.

The committee's consultants concluded that four gunshots were probably recorded on the Dallas police department tape in the space of 8.3 seconds. The firm of Bolt Beranek and Newman Inc., said it was probable that the first, second and fourth shots came from a nearby book depository and that shot No. 3 was probably fired from behind a fence on a grassy knoll across Dealey Plaza.

In addition to disputing the firm's analysis about the sound pattern, the FBI also disputed the contention that the motorcycle police radio was near Dealey Plaza.