

The Law Shot First

--Louisiana Panel

BATON ROUGE — (AP) — The official state committee investigating the student-police confrontation that left two students dead on the Southern University campus here has determined that officers fired the first tear gas canister.

The 12-member panel headed by Louisiana Attorney General William Guste made the conclusion in a statement issued yesterday after the first week of its probe of the Nov. 16 disturbance.

The committee reported: "After viewing motion picture film frame by frame, still photographs, hearing witnesses and reviewing interviews taken by the attorney general's staff, the evidence is clear that the first object thrown was a tear gas canister and came from the law enforcement units and not from the students."

Several officials, including Gov. Edwin Edwards, had insisted earlier that films of the violence showed the first tear gas coming from the

ranks of students outside the administration building on the predominantly black campus. They contended that officers merely responded to the provocation.

The inquiry panel said it issued its report in the "hope that this statement will clarify this specific question . . ."

It was the first substantial report from the committee as a whole.

The two students were killed as sheriff's deputies and state police flushed students from the building.