

'1-Bullet' Theory Backed

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Washington — With three days of intensive hearings behind it, the House Assassinations Committee appears headed for the same conclusions the Warren Commission came to 14 years ago when it investigated the slaying of President John F. Kennedy.

Although the committee has not yet broached any conspiracy theories, the testimony from panels of distinguished medical, pathology and ballistics experts who appeared during the first week of a scheduled month of public sessions backed up the often-disputed Warren Commission conclusions.

The commission reported that Kennedy was shot from behind in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963 by two bullets, one of which also badly wounded Texas Governor John Connally who was seated in front of Kennedy in the White House limousine.

The experts commissioned by the committee drew their conclusions from often bizarre and intricate experiments of their own, starting out fresh as if they were investigating a crime just committed.

Committee members will learn the results tomorrow of acoustics tests performed in Dallas last month to determine the number and timing of the shots fired at Kennedy.

The acoustics experts who conducted the tests planned to meet privately with committee members to report their findings for the first time, said a knowledgeable source who requested anonymity. The results then will be presented in public testimony Monday.

Friday's session was devoted to ballistics, including starkly vivid motion pictures of gunfire tests involving gelatine-filled human skulls and a live goat to simulate the wounds suffered by Kennedy and Connally and their physical reactions to them.

Arrayed before the witnesses on a long table were the actual weapons



AP Photo

Firearms expert George Lutz holds Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle during yesterday's hearing.

said to have been used in the Kennedy assassination, the murder of Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit shortly after and in the Jack Ruby killing of Lee Harvey Oswald two days later.

A four-man panel of ballistic experts commissioned by the committee testified that Kennedy would not have been a difficult target for someone familiar with Oswald's 6.5 mm Mannlicher-Carcano Italian army rifle at about 60 yards range and at the 11 MPH speed at which Kennedy was traveling.

George Lutz, a firearms analyst, testified, "I believe it would not appear to be a difficult shot with or without the (scope) device by a person familiar with the firearm."

"At that speed?" Rep. Floyd Fithian (D-Ind) asked.

Lutz said, "It would not be difficult."

Ballistics expert Larry Sturdivan

showed films of ballistic experiments he performed for the Warren Commission, including shooting low and high velocity bullets through blocks of gelatin.

He told the committee "no bullet goes straight when it enters a solid mass," which could account for the missile's change of trajectory in hitting both Kennedy and Connally.

Other scientists who testified Friday supported the Warren Commission's "single-bullet theory," which concluded that one bullet struck both men.

It is hotly disputed by critics who say no one bullet could have passed through Kennedy's neck and then struck Connally in the back, chest, wrist and thigh. Discrediting it would strongly suggest that two gunmen were involved, some say.

But the scientists said there is probably no way to prove its validity to a

mathematical certainty.

Dr. Vincent P. Guinn, a chemistry professor at the University of California at Irvine and a specialist for 20 years in neutron activation analysis, described his tests on bullet fragments recovered from the limousine and from Connally's wrist and a nearly whole bullet found on Connally's hospital stretcher.

The tests, ordered by the House panel, showed the fragments came from only two bullets, Guinn testified.

And the tests demonstrated for the first time that the fragment taken from Connally's wrist matched the bullet found on the stretcher, Guinn said.

This is the so-called "near-pristine bullet" or "magic bullet" said to have caused the wounds in both men. Critics question how this missile could remain so nearly intact after causing so many wounds.