

Assassination Probes Over, U.S. Says

No Conspiracy Seen On Kennedy or King

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By Christopher Callahan
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The Justice Department has officially ended its inquiries into the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., finding "no persuasive evidence" to support conspiracy theories, according to department documents.

A department memorandum, obtained by a California ophthalmologist through the Freedom of Information Act, triggered the department's admittedly long-overdue response to the House Select Committee on Assassinations' recommendation 10 years ago for further investigation.

William F. Weld, who headed the department's Criminal Division until he resigned at the end of March, told Rep. Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, that all known leads have been checked.

"The Department of Justice has concluded that no persuasive evidence can be identified to support the theory of a conspiracy in either the assassination of President Kennedy or the assassination of Dr. King," Weld wrote in the undated memo.

"No further investigation appears to be warranted in either matter unless new information which is sufficient to support additional investigative activity becomes available," he said.

The Justice Department's response to the conspiracy theories comes as no surprise. It is, however, the first time the department has made a formal conclusion on the assassinations, Justice spokesman Dean St. Dennis said.

The House Assassinations Committee concluded in 1978 that Kennedy was "probably" assassinated as the result of a conspiracy involving



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a second gunman, a finding that broke with the Warren Commission's contention that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. The House panel also said there was a "likelihood" that King's slaying in April 1968 was part of a conspiracy.

The committee urged the Justice Department to investigate several areas of the assassinations, and one year later the department agreed to

conduct a limited inquiry focusing on an acoustical study of the Kennedy assassination presented to the committee by independent experts.

The acoustical experts had concluded after studying a Dictaphone recording of a Dallas policeman's open radio transmissions that there was a fourth shot fired by a second gunman from the grassy knoll near the Texas School Book Depository where Oswald fired the shots that hit the president. That evidence was the key to the committee's second-gunman theory.

Justice officials instructed the National Academy of Sciences to review that study and the Dictaphone recording. Academy scientists concluded in 1982 that the independent experts were wrong.

Weld said the Justice Department had completed "virtually all" of its inquiry by the end of 1983, but delayed its response to the House Judiciary Committee "pending a complete review of all public comment" on the National Academy study.

The Justice Department conceded that the report to Rodino's committee was "long overdue."

"One of the interesting features of employment with a large governmental organization is that matters occasionally come bubbling to the surface from the depths of the bureaucracy," acting Assistant Attorney General Thomas M. Boyd wrote in a letter to Rodino. "An example of this phenomenon is the enclosed report which relates back to the activities of the Select Committee on Assassinations."

Boyd's letter to Rodino was dated March 28 and accompanied the memo from Weld.

The documents were sent to Louis P. Kartsonis, a San Diego ophthalmologist, on a Freedom of Information Act request he made through Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) and Rep. Bill Lowery (R-Calif.).