

RFK Death Evidence Destruction Explained

By Robert Meyers

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LOS ANGELES, Aug. 21—Two ceiling panels taken from the Ambassador Hotel after the 1968 assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy have been destroyed by the Los Angeles Police Department, an official said today.

Assistant Chief Daryl F. Gates appeared before the Los Angeles City Council to explain news reports that certain pieces of physical evidence had been destroyed by his department.

Appearing with Gates was Dion Morrow, a lawyer on special assignment to Los Angeles city attorney's office, which represents the police.

Morrow told Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky, who has been raising questions about the police investigation of Kennedy's death, that not all material collected by the police was regarded as evidence.

Morrow explained that only material formally accepted by the court was, strictly speaking, evidence.

The two ceiling panels, X rays of the panels, and records of the X rays were all regarded as nonevidentiary material, Morrow said.

Gates added that such material was destroyed "because it had no evidentiary value. We would need a building bigger than Parker Center if we were to keep all such material," he said.

During the 1½-hour discussion of the issue, the councilman did not question Gates or Morrow about a sleeve from Kennedy's coat, and spectrographic bullet analysis, which were also reported to be missing.

Yaroslavsky, unsatisfied with today's hearing, said he will introduce a motion Friday calling for a special committee

to investigate the police department's handling of the assassination investigation.