

(ZNS) LOS ANGELES POLICE OFFICIALS ADMIT THAT A NUMBER OF PIECES OF EVIDENCE RELATING TO THE ASSASSINATION OF SENATOR ROBERT KENNEDY HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY THAT DEPARTMENT.

ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF DARRYL GATES SAYS THAT NOT ONLY WERE CEILING PANELS WITH BULLET HOLES DESTROYED, BUT SO WERE SEVERAL DOOR JAMS AND CHEMICAL TEST RESULTS.

THE DOOR JAMS IN QUESTION WERE REMOVED FROM THE PANTRY OF THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL WHERE THE ASSASSINATION OCCURRED. THEY WERE REMOVED BECAUSE AT LEAST ONE HOLE IN ONE OF THE JAMS REPORTEDLY RESEMBLED A BULLET HOLE.

CRITICS HAVE CONTENDED THAT THE PRESENCE OF A BULLET HOLE IN THE DOOR JAM WOULD BE ADDITIONAL PROOF THAT AT LEAST NINE SHOTS WERE FIRED DURING THE ASSASSINATION. SINCE SIRHAN'S GUN HELD ONLY EIGHT BULLETS, NINE SHOTS WOULD PROVE THAT AT LEAST TWO GUNS WERE FIRED DURING THE ASSASSINATION.

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT SAYS IT TESTED THE DOOR JAMS IN QUESTION, FOUND THEY CONTAINED NO BULLET HOLES, AND THEN DESTROYED THE JAMS.

THE MISSING CHEMICAL TESTS ARE KNOWN AS "SPECTROGRAPHIC ANALYSIS" TESTS. THE TESTS WERE CONDUCTED BY POLICE ON THE BULLET SLUGS COLLECTED AT THE ASSASSINATION SCENE TO DETERMINE IF ALL THE BULLET SLUGS CAME FROM THE SAME BOX OF AMUNITION. THESE TESTS WOULD ALSO HELP INDICATE IF MORE THAN ONE GUN WAS FIRED DURING THE ASSASSINATION.

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT THOSE CHEMICAL TESTS HAVE ALSO TURNED UP MISSING. THE DEPARTMENT SAYS IT BELIEVES THOSE TEST RESULTS WERE ALSO DESTROYED.

A GROUP OF RESEARCHERS AND NEWS AGENCIES -- INCLUDING JOURNALIST TED CHARACH AND ZODIAC NEWS SERVICE -- HAS FILED SUIT IN LOS ANGELES, ASKING THAT ALL THE REMAINING EVIDENCE BE REMOVED FROM POLICE AND COUNTY CUSTODY, AND BE PLACED UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE SUPERIOR COURT. A HEARING ON THAT SUIT IS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT FRIDAY (AUGUST 29TH) -- ZODIAC