

# House Assassinations Committee: some are asking, 'Who needs it?'

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Assassinations Committee is a handy target for those who ask, "Who needs it?"

The committee has spent \$5 million in over a year and a half to investigate the killings of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. That's enough to cause a gasp.

What have taxpayers gotten for their money?

Certainly, the committee and its 115-member staff have found no one to post alongside Lee Harvey Oswald as accused assassin of Kennedy or James Earl Ray as King's accused killer.

Committee counsel G. Robert Blakey, an authority on organized crime, sent his investigators down conspiracy avenues never thought of by the FBI or by any other police agency or commission.

In all, the committee staff interviewed about 4,000 persons in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Great Britain.

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Many never were questioned by the FBI.

In addition, the committee issued 400 subpoenas for other testimony and for documents.

The investigation turned up no CIA or Cuban plot to kill Kennedy or no secret FBI plan to eliminate King. That, in fact, might be its value.

In the King case, the committee discovered evidence directly contradicting Ray's account of where he was on the day of the assassination, as well as on the days before and after.

With all its resources, the FBI never established a motive in the King killing, a failing which left skeptics free to speculate about what might have been behind it.

But committee investigators established a link, albeit circumstantial, between \$50,000 offered by two St. Louis businessmen and Ray, whose brother John ran a bar frequented by one of the businessmen.

The committee detailed a history of crime among the Ray brothers — James Earl, John and Jerry. It also examined an unsolved bank robbery in Alton, Ill., more thoroughly than the FBI.

The robbery investigation alone gave reason to believe that Ray financed his flight from such proceeds — and not from some payoff by a government agent, the Ku Klux Klan or anyone else.

The committee also compiled a list of 663 persons Ray might have contacted in the months before the April 4, 1968, assassination.

To explore any potential FBI connection to King's death, committee investigators compared the possible Ray associates with all known FBI informants, and in fact found three who appeared on both lists.

But none of the three provided any indication that the FBI played a direct or indirect role in King's murder.

Committee members hope the quality of their investigation will lessen skepticism about the origins of two of the nation's most frightening tragedies.