

Philadelphia Inquirer

1976, The Philadelphia Inquirer

Saturday, December 25, 1976

Conspiracy Reported in King death

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A report of the House Committee on Assassinations says its investigators have obtained uncorroborated testimony that James Earl Ray received instructions from a conspirator during his escape after the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Walter Fauntroy, the House delegate from the District of Columbia and one of the chairmen of the inquiry into the slayings of Mr. King and President John F. Kennedy, said the information came from "a very reliable source" who had talked with Ray, who is serving a 99-year prison term for the King murder.

Fauntroy said yesterday that the source had told investigators "that there was someone with whom he (Ray) was to get in touch in Portugal."

The testimony is cited in a 26-page report approved by the full 12-member committee as one of two examples of leads that the panel believes must be pursued in its investigation, Fauntroy said.

The other example is the previously reported recollection of former CIA employes regarding the agency's surveillance of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City less than two months before the Kennedy assassination.

The report, which has not been made public, will be presented to the full house in January as justification for the committee's proposed first-year \$6.3 million budget.

Speaking of the new lead in the King case, Fauntroy told a reporter, "The heart of the matter (is) we have corroborated this, and we have not." But, he insisted, "the source is of such reliability we feel confident the lead is worth following."

Fauntroy said the report identified the source as "a witness who had never previously been interviewed by any investigative agency." Fauntroy said the source was an American who was neither a relative nor an attorney of Ray, but he refused to give further information.

The report described the lead as follows:

"Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions . . . out of the United States."

Fauntroy confirmed that the location was Portugal but said that investigators did not know the identity of the other person nor whether a meeting took place.

Ray's ability to evade law-enforcement authorities for two months after the April 4, 1968, slaying of Mr. King has often been cited as an indication that he had help from conspirators. In particular, his ability to obtain three false passports and pay for trips to England and Portugal has been cited as actions beyond his intellectual or financial means.

In March 1969, when Ray pleaded guilty to killing Mr. King, he told the court he did not agree with a statement by the prosecution and by his

attorney that there was no conspiracy. However, Ray has never explained what he meant.

The new lead involving the Kennedy assassination involves the CIA's electronic surveillance of the Soviet embassy in Mexico City.

The CIA tape-recorded a phone call between Oswald and the Soviet embassy, and turned transcripts of that
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recording over to the Warren Commission.

Reliable sources have said the transcripts show that Oswald was asking for information about obtaining a visa to travel to the Soviet Union. However, three CIA employes stationed in Mexico City at the time have been quoted as saying that the recordings showed that Oswald had offered information to the Soviets in return for a free trip to the USSR.