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Probe results in alleged King plot withheld

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WASHINGTON — The House Select Committee on Assassinations will not reveal until next fall the results of the closed two-day hearing it just completed on an alleged plot to assassinate black leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., reportedly involving a number of past and present Louisville police officers.

G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel for the committee, declined to comment on any aspect of the hearing, which concluded yesterday.

Blakey said committee rules preclude any comment on either procedural or substantive aspects of the investigation.

Blakey said the results of this week's hearing will be part of a report on the committee's overall activities to be made public next September. The committee is required to report to the House by Jan. 3, 1979.

The committee was created this year to investigate the 1963 murder of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas and the 1968 assassination of King in Memphis, Tenn.

James Earl Ray has been convicted of King's murder.

Blakey specifically would not comment on a suggestion by two Louisville witnesses that the alleged plot may have been nothing more than a prank played on a Louisville police officer.

The committee's King subcommittee called the hearings after U.S. Rep. Gene Snyder, a Kentucky Republican whose 4th District includes much of suburban Jefferson County, reported that a police informant had told him of a plot involving FBI agents and Louisville police officers to kill King.

Snyder said he had received a letter from a former policeman who named three FBI agents and several policemen alleged to be involved in the plot.

Snyder's informant was later identified as Clifton E. Baird, a retired Louisville policeman. Baird reportedly has alleged he was offered \$500,000 on two occasions to kill King.

Baird appeared before the subcommittee Wednesday. He said before his testimony that he would make a public statement afterward. But when he emerged, he was instructed in front of reporters not to discuss the proceedings because he might be called back. Baird left Washington without making a statement.

Former Louisville Alderman James Bibb, a retired Louisville police lieutenant under whom Baird had served, said in an interview before his testimony that he had gathered from listening to other witnesses that the alleged plot may have been nothing other than a bad joke on a Louisville police officer.

Another witness, Bob Peters, a retired FBI agent who had been assigned to the Louisville office, said he was asked during the hearing if he knew anything about the possibility that the alleged plot was a prank.

He said he testified he knew nothing at all about it. "If it was said (as a joke,) it was sick humor," he said he told the subcommittee.

Lt. Col. Brent Hardin declined to comment on his appearance except to say, "The only thing I can tell you is I didn't have anything to do with any plot. I have (had) nothing to do with the assassination of anyone."

The subcommittee heard from Baird and William Duncan, an FBI agent formerly assigned to Louisville, on Wednesday. It spent all yesterday morning with Ollie Blair, identified as a former Louisville policeman who served with Baird. Duncan and Blair would not comment.

Yesterday afternoon, it heard the remaining Louisville witnesses, retired Lt. Col. Priest Fry and retired Capt. Robert Gregory Jr., both former Louisville police chiefs of detectives.

A committee aide said today it was undetermined whether further hearings would be conducted.