

Panel Told Ray Had a Contact After Murder

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The House Select Committee on Assassinations says it has received an uncorroborated report that James Earl Ray received "instructions" from a secret contact in Europe following the April, 1968, murder of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D. C.), chairman of the subcommittee investigating the King assassination, said the contact was supposed to have taken place in Portugal, one of several countries to which Ray fled before he was arrested at London's Heathrow Airport on June 8, 1968.

Fauntroy acknowledged in a telephone interview that the report was uncorroborated, but he said it came from someone he regards as "a reliable source" who has spoken with Ray.

Ray is serving a 99-year state prison term in Tennessee for King's murder, to which Ray pleaded guilty.

The information received by the committee is mentioned briefly in a 26 page report that the House committee has drafted to outline its plans for investigating the deaths of King and President Kennedy.

The committee says it has been told that "Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions to aid in his continuing flight out of the United States."

Fauntroy declined to add any more details, but committee investigators have reportedly been told that Ray was supposed to have received instructions for getting money to continue his trip from Portugal to Belgium.

According to Fauntroy, the committee's immediate source is someone "who has never previously been interviewed by any investigative agency" and is neither a Ray relative nor one of his attorneys.

One of Ray's most recent visitors at Brushy Mountain State Prison was

Mark Lane, an outspoken critic of the government's investigations of both the King and Kennedy assassinations, but he denied yesterday that he was the source.

In fact, Lane said, "I have some doubts about it. What he told me certainly contravenes it. He told me that when he fled the United States, he was fleeing from everyone."

Ray has contended since his imprisonment that he was just "a fall guy" in a conspiracy to murder King. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, recently refused to review his guilty plea.

Even by the House committee's admittedly incomplete account, "something happened in Portugal" that kept Ray from going to Belgium and ultimately Africa, his destination. Instead he returned to England where he was captured.

The House committee's report is expected to be made public shortly before Congress convenes Jan. 4. House investigators are seeking a \$6.5 million budget which they say is necessary for a thorough and independent investigation.

Ray escaped from prison in Missouri on April 23, 1967, almost a year before King's death.

"We suspect he had a number of contacts over that year," Fauntroy said. "These are among the leads we'll be able to pursue thoroughly if we succeed in getting the basic budget requested," he said.

Committee investigators do not claim to know the identity of Ray's supposed contact while he was in Portugal, but Fauntroy said the source of the story "is of such reliability that we feel confident the lead is worth following."