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Experts Questioning Path Of Bullet in King Killing

BY MARGARET GENTRY

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three leading pathologists examined bullet fragments and tissue samples from the body of Martin Luther King Jr. in a search for fresh clues about his murder, the House assassinations committee reported today.

One of them, New York City's chief medical examiner, Dr. Michael Baden, was to present the panel's finding in the committee's second day of hearings on the civil rights leader's death in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968.

Working with Baden were Dr. John I. Coe, chief medical examiner of Hennepin County, Minn., and Dr. Joseph H. Davis, chief medical examiner of Dade County, Fla.

As the hearing opened, committee counsel Robert Blakey said the medical panel was asked to pin down the path of the bullet that felled King and to determine whether it could have been fired from some place other than the bathroom window of a rooming house across the street from

King's motel.

Previous evidence pointed to that window as the site of the shot. But Blakey noted, "from eyewitness accounts, there was disagreement over the point of origin of the fatal shot."

Who fired the bullet remained a matter of controversy after the committee's first session yesterday at the start of a week of public hearings on the case.

Mark Lane, a prominent exponent of an assassination conspiracy theory, said that "people associated with the FBI are prime suspects." Lane, an attorney, is representing James Earl Ray, who is serving a 99-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to the murder.

Ray, who soon recanted the plea, is scheduled to give his sworn account to the committee tomorrow. Under tight security, federal marshals brought Ray to Washington last night from Tennessee's Brushy Mountain State Prison, the prison warden said.

Lane charged today that a committee investigator eavesdropped

on telephone conversations an undercover agent had with Lane and with Jerry Ray, James Earl Ray's brother.

Lane said he also has his own tape recordings of the committee investigator, Conrad Baetz, instructing the undercover agent, Oliver Patterson, to make false statements to The New York Times.

The conspiracy theory also found support yesterday from the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, King's friend and successor as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

He noted that King distrusted the FBI and its director, J. Edgar Hoover.

Abernathy told the committee he believes King was forewarned of the assassination and told reporters later he believes the FBI gave King that information "both to warn him and to threaten him."

But again, Abernathy said he has nothing to support his conclusions but speculation and unspoken impressions from the man he called his dearest friend.



AP Wirephoto

The Rev. Ralph Abernathy, during opening testimony yesterday before the House Assassination Committee.
