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JFK, King Probably Died in Plots, Panel Concludes

Washington, D. C. —AP—The House Assassinations Committee announced Saturday that it had concluded that President John F. Kennedy "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy" but could not determine any participants in it other than Lee Harvey Oswald.

The committee also said it "believes, on the basis of the circumstantial evidence available to it, that there is a likelihood that James Earl Ray assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King as a result of a conspiracy."

The statements came in a summary of preliminary findings and recommendations by the committee at the conclusion of its two year, \$5.8 million investigation of the two assassinations.

The committee recommended that the Justice Department review the findings and "analyze whether further official investigation is warranted in either case."

The panel did not state its reason for concluding that a conspiracy was behind the murder of King. Chairman Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) indicated Saturday that the committee would give its reasons when it issues its full report, likely in the next week, and in a compilation of evidence, probably in March. (Stokes will appear Sunday on "Face the Nation," 10:30 a.m., Channel 6.)

Stokes said he believed the committee had painted "the outlines of a conspiracy" involving

\$50,000 allegedly offered by now dead St. Louis lawyer John Sutherland for King's murder.

Kennedy was shot to death Nov. 22, 1963, as his motorcade was passing through Dallas. Oswald was arrested for the slaying but was himself slain by nightclub owner Jack Ruby before he could be tried.

King, the Baptist minister who won a Nobel Prize for peace, was shot to death in Memphis, Tenn., April 4, 1968. At first, Ray pleaded guilty, but later recanted, saying he had been framed. Ray, who was brought to Washington to testify before the committee, is serving a 99

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year term at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee.

The committee's findings were issued only one day after its final public hearing, at which a pair of acoustics experts presented evidence that they said indicated with 95% certainty that a fourth shot was fired at Kennedy. They said a second gunman likely was stationed near the so-called grassy knoll in Dealey Plaza.

Conclusion in Doubt

The new acoustical evidence, involving scientific tests on a tape recording made from a Dallas policeman's motorcycle radio during the time of the assassination, seemed to contradict the Warren Commission's conclusion that Oswald alone was responsible for the president's slaying, and that three shots fired at Kennedy all came from Oswald's perch in the Texas School Book Depository.

The new evidence, however, asserted that a fourth shot was fired, and that the shot missed the Kennedy limousine.

Details on the panel's dual findings and recommendations:

Kennedy Slaying

"The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy," said the panel, known officially as the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

"The committee is unable to identify the other gunman or the extent of the conspiracy," the panel said, adding that it believed that neither the Soviet nor Cuban governments was involved in Kennedy's death.

It also said that it did not believe Cuban groups opposed to the government of Fidel Castro were involved, "but the available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved."

Similarly, the committee said it did not believe that "the national syndicate of organized crime" was involved as a group, although individual members might have been.

Source Add Details

Sources said Saturday that the panel's final report to be released in March concludes that extensive FBI wiretapping would have detected any organized crime conspiracy.

But the report also will say that it cannot resolve questions raised by indications that Oswald and Ruby were somehow linked to associates of reputed New Orleans crime chief Carlos Marcello. The panel, however, "has no direct evidence to link Marcello to the assassination," the sources added.

But the sources said the report would assert that a number of respected citizens of Clinton, La., told the committee that Oswald traveled there with David Ferrie, who worked for Marcello, several months before Kennedy was assassinated.

The committee presented evidence earlier that another Marcello associate was among crime figures to whom Ruby placed phone calls in the months before the assassination.

But before he died of cancer, Ruby testified — and a

number of his telephone contacts have asserted since — that the calls concerned a labor problem he was having with strippers at his nightclub.

Agencies Cleared

The panel stated flatly that the Secret Service, FBI and CIA were not involved, although it said the Secret Service "was deficient in the performance of its duties."

Specifically, the committee said the Secret Service failed to analyze information available to it properly in connection with Kennedy's trip to Dallas. It also said that Secret Service agents in the motorcade "were inadequately prepared to protect the president from a sniper."

The committee also said the Justice Department "failed to exercise initiative" in directing the FBI investigation and should re-examine its own procedures and technological capabilities for dealing with assassinations.

It said the FBI "performed with varying degrees of competency" — adequately investigating Oswald both before and after the assassination, but "failing to investigate adequately the possibility of a conspiracy to assassinate the president." It also said the FBI did not sufficiently share information with other agencies.

Commission Chastised

The panel charged that the CIA was deficient in both collecting and sharing information before and after the assassination.

The committee said the Warren Commission, appointed by President Lyndon Johnson and headed by the late Chief Justice Earl Warren, also conducted a thorough investigation of Oswald but failed to adequately investigate the possibility of a conspiracy.

"This deficiency was attributable, in part, to the failure of the commission to receive all the relevant information that was in the possession of other agencies and departments of the government," the panel said. This was an apparent reference to indications that the CIA had been aware that Oswald once visited the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City.

King Slaying

The panel said Ray killed the civil rights leader with a single shot and that "it is highly probable" that he "stalked Dr. King for a period

immediately preceding the assassination."

The panel made no mention of any other gunman being involved in King's death. Its suggestion of conspiracy apparently was based on information that others may have abetted Ray in the killing and that Ray acted in hopes of receiving money offered by some unidentified person for King's death.

The panel said Ray's testimony in his efforts to clear himself was "not worthy of belief."

It said it believed that no federal, state or local govern-

ment agency was involved in the assassination.

However, it did not elaborate on its conspiracy finding, indicating it would cite the reasons for its conclusion when it issues its full report, probably in March.

Since retracting his guilty plea, Ray has insisted that he thought he was involved only in a gun smuggling scheme with a mystery man he identified as "Raoul." Ray said he was set up to take the blame for King's killing.

In the King case, too, the committee said, the Justice Department failed to ade-

quately supervise the FBI's investigation. It also concluded that the FBI, in the course of what it called a "campaign against Dr. King" by the bureau's Domestic Intelligence Division, "grossly abused and exceeded its legal authority and failed to consider the possibility that actions threatening bodily harm to Dr. King might be encouraged by the program."

Recommendations

The panel urged the House Judiciary Committee to:

Prepare legislation making

the assassination of a chief of state of any country a federal offense if the offender is a US citizen, acts on behalf of a US citizen or can be located in the United States.

Prepare a comprehensive revision of the federal homicide law, paying special attention to assassinations and considering whether the death penalty should be invoked.

Consider extending the protection of federal law to Supreme Court justices, cabinet officers and others in high judicial and executive positions.