

Monday, January 1, 1979



United Press International

CHAIRMAN LOUIS STOKES

"...very difficult... to pick up the leads"

JFK, King Killings

Conspirators' Trails Now Cold

By Warren Brown
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The chairman of the House Assassinations Committee said yesterday it will be hard to find conspirators in the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. because the killings occurred so many years ago.

"I think it's going to be very difficult for the Justice Department or anyone else to pick up the leads and develop what should've and could've been developed 15 years ago," Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) said yesterday on "Face the Nation" (CBS, WDVN).

"I think we just have to have some good faith that they—the Justice Department and the FBI—would go back into the matter... I think they have an obligation to go back and conduct the kind of investigation they should have conducted in the first place."

Stokes' comments came one day after his committee announced its conclusion that Kennedy "was probably assassinated [in 1963] as the result of a conspiracy."

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 [in 1968] as a result of a conspiracy."

The statements were made in a summary of the committee's recommendations and findings, issued at the end of its two-year, \$5.8 million investigation into the two assassinations.

Despite the probability of conspiracies in the two deaths, Stokes said yesterday that his committee's forthcoming full report admits "very candidly" that the panel could not determine the extent of the conspiracies, nor the identity of anyone who may have been involved.

And though the committee believes there was a second gunman in the Kennedy slaying, the panel was "unable to reveal" who that gunman was, Stokes said.

The chairman said his committee has run out of money and time, and will cease to exist on Wednesday. It will be up to the Justice Department to fill in the blanks, he said.

"What we have done now is to come out with certain conclusions that sort of vindicated what the American people have suspected all along—and that was, in both cases, there was a conspiracy," Stokes said.

Among other things, he said his committee's final report will include findings that:

- Ray can be circumstantially connected to a \$50,000 bounty conspiracy to assassinate King.

- Lee Harvey Oswald was not a "loner," as alleged in the 1964 Warren Commission report on the Kennedy assassination. Stokes said his committee's report "will reveal Oswald's association with many other people," including some in New Orleans, where former district attorney Jim Garrison conducted a Kennedy assassination conspiracy probe.

- The FBI helped to create "the kind of atmosphere in which" the assassination of King could take place.

Reaction to the committee's findings was predictable. In New Orleans, Garrison said he feels he has been vindicated in his probe.

"I was faced with being discredited for more than 10 years, but I would not compromise because I felt the conspiracy theory was right all along," Garrison, now a state appeals court judge, told United Press International.

In Atlanta, the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, president emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a former top King aide, said he thought the committee "did not go far enough and has brought us very little new information."

"I feel it is most unfortunate that the committee did not find out the other conspirators, which I firmly believe included the FBI, the Memphis police and some other individuals," Abernathy said in an Associated Press interview.

But the committee stated flatly in its summary that "no federal, state or local government agency was involved in the assassination of Dr. King."