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Kennedy Bjt 3rd NL

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and

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LOS ANGELES AP - Sen. Robert F. Kennedy lay in extremely critical condition, Wednesday after surgeons removed from his brain all but a fragment of a bullet police said was fired by a mysterious young gunman with a Jordanian heritage.

Kennedy underwent a series of medical tests at Good Samaritan Hospital, but they did not show measureable improvement, his press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz, said. "His life forces, pulse, temperature, blood pressure, heart, remain good," Mankiewicz said, "and he continues to show the ability to breathe on his own, although his breathing remains assisted by a resuscitator."

The tests included X-rays and an electroencephalogram.

"His condition as of 1:30 p.m. PDT remains extremely critical," Mankiewicz said.

The man accused of the shooting was captured on the spot, and identified hours later as Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, 24, a Jordanian native of Jerusalem, who has lived in nearby Pasadena, Calif., since boyhood.

A team of brain surgeons operated for 3 hours and 40 minutes, striving to save the life of the New York senator, brother of the assassinated President John F. Kennedy. Robert was gunned down at the moment of his greatest victory in the California primary as he campaigned for the White House.

His wife, Ethel, kept vigil in a hospital room near that in which her wounded 42-year-old husband was under intensive care at Good Samaritan Hospital.

The accused assailant was hospitalized, too. Police said he was under maximum security in a hospital ward at Los Angeles County Central Jail.

Sirhan was treated for a broken index finger and a sprained left ankle, suffered in the shooting melee at the Ambassador Hotel early Wednesday.

Police said his identity was traced through the .22 caliber pistol the assailant turned on Kennedy moments after the senator had thanked cheering supporters for his victory in the presidential primary.

In New York, the secretary general of the Action Committee on American-Arab Relations said the accused assailant "may have been inflamed" by a statement Kennedy made in a televised campaign debate Saturday night, advocating support of Israel in the Middle East crisis.

Kennedy said during that appearance, in which he faced rival candidate Eugene J. McCarthy, that the United States should supply jets to Israel.

"It is this disrespect for the human Arab person which brings about this kind of violence," Dr. Mohammed T. Mehdi said in New York.

Mehdi said Sirhan had been a student at Pasadena College and was active in the Organization of Arab Students.

McCarthy, too, had said in the televised joint appearance that the United States has a commitment to support Israel.

Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark said in Washington at mid-morning that he had no evidence of a conspiracy in the Kennedy shooting.

John Shear, a trainer at Los Angeles area race tracks, said Sirhan worked for him as a groom four years ago, and became inflamed whenever trouble broke out between Jordan and Israel.

Shear made the statement in a report to the Thoroughbred Racing Protective Association at Hollywood Park. "When trouble broke out between Jordan and Israel, Sirhan would become inflamed," he said. "He was very pro-Jordan and anti-Israel."

Marcus McBroom, who witnessed the shooting, reported that the gunman cried:

"I did it for my country. I love my country."

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