

Jackson State Shootings Called Justified by County Grand Jury

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JACKSON, Miss., July 29—The Hinds County grand jury said today that law officers "had a right and were justified" in shooting into a Jackson State College girls' dormitory during a campus disorder last May.

In its findings after a three-week investigation of the Jackson State shooting, in which two young men were killed, the grand jury for the first time reported publicly that Jackson city police officers as well as state highway patrolmen had fired their weapons.

Jackson's Mayor, Russell Davis, had said that no Jackson city policeman at the scene on the night of May 15 had fired his gun.

The grand jury called Mayor Davis's statement "reprehensible" and was also severely

critical of the Mayor for convening a citizens committee to look into the shooting.

Mr. Davis said that he would reserve his comments on the jury report until a Federal grand jury resumed its investigation in the next week or two and until an investigation was conducted by a special committee named by President Nixon and headed by William W.

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Scranton, former Pennsylvania Governor.

Alex Waites, state field director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, called the grand jury's report "the kind of whitewash we expected."

"It certainly is not going to do anything to improve race relations or make the black people feel that white people are going to work toward equality or justice," he said.

It was learned later today that the Hinds County grand jury had indicted two persons in the Jackson State disorder. Neither of them, however, was believed to be a law officer. Names were withheld until the arrests had been made.

The grand jury charged that senior officers of the highway patrol and the Jackson Police Department had been denied permission to use tear gas before the outbreak of gunfire. If tear gas had been used, the jury report said, the events "in all probability . . . would not have occurred."

Only Jackson City police officers at the scene carried tear gas. The state highway patrol according to its officers, do not carry tear gas as a matter of policy.

The grand jury upheld the

contention made previously by Gov. John Bell Williams that officers had opened fire only after they had been fired upon by a sniper in Alexander Hall, a girls' dormitory.

Testimony was given to the jury, the report said, that "at least two shots from a small caliber pistol" were fired from an upper window of Alexander Hall at the law enforcement officers in the street.

The jury said that it had also been given testimony that "a male was seen to break a window in Alexander Hall and fire a small caliber gun at the officers."

The report said "there was a complete breakdown of law and order which threatened serious injury or death to law enforcement officers and damage and destruction to much extremely valuable personal property and/or state property."

This dangerous and destructive situation had existed for two nights," the report added.

The grand jury said:

"We find that under the riot situation then existing, the officers of both the Jackson police and the highway patrol had a right and were justified in discharging their weapons."

The report added:

"When people, as the students and outsiders did at Jackson State on the night of May 13 and 14, take the law into their own hands and engage in civil disorders and riots, they must expect to be injured or killed when law enforcement officers are required to re-establish order."