

Campus Killings Report

Jackson Shots 'Unwarranted'

WASHINGTON — (AP) —The President's Commission on Campus Unrest concluded today that the deadly hail of shotgun, rifle and submachine gun fire against a crowd of Jackson State College students was an "unreasonable, unjustified overreaction" by police.

Two students were killed and 12 wounded in the May 14 incident in Jackson, Miss.

The commission said it could find no substantiation for police claims that they fired only in response to sniper fire from a women's dormitory.

"Even if we were to assume two shots were fired from a window in the west wing of Alexander Hall," the commission said, "the 28-second fusillade in response was clearly unwarranted."

Police View

The commission added that "a significant cause of the deaths and injuries at Jackson State College is the confidence of white officers that if they fire weapons during a black campus disturbance they will face neither stern departmental discipline nor criminal prosecution or conviction."

Moreover, the panel said some city police officers "established a pattern of deceit" by denying they had discharged their weapons.

FBI tests later confirmed the weapons had been fired, the commission said.

Every officer who admitted firing claimed he fired into the air or toward a third and fifth floor window where snipers allegedly were hiding.

Jury Criticized

"The physical evidence and the positions of the victims, however, indicate that the officers were firing indiscriminantly into the crowd at ground level on both sides of Lynch Street," the commission said.

The commission also criticized the Hinds County grand jury for its investigation of the shooting.

The commission concluded that a crowd of 75 to 200 persons gathered in front of Alexander Hall. There were incidents of rock and bottle throwing at police officers, the commission said, and many students yelled ob-

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scene and derogatory remarks to the officers.

"But the commission dismissed reports by some Mississippi State highway patrolmen that the crowd was advancing on peace officers just prior to the shooting.

No Evidence

As for reports of sniper fire, the commission said it was "unable to determine positively whether there was, or was not, gunfire from Alexander Hall prior to the fusillade."

"It is significant to note," the commission said, "that special agents of the FBI examined each of the rooms and stairs and stairwell landings behind the 24 windows and 18 metal panels into which shots were fired and found no evidence of shooting from any of those locations.

"The bureau's agents reported that every bullet mark which they could identify in every broken window and in every defaced panel was made by a bullet or pellet fired from outside the building.

"The most favorable reading of the evidence tending to support a finding that there was such a gunfire indicates that at most two shots were fired from one window," the commission said.

150 Rounds

More than 150 rounds were fired in the fusillade, the commission said.

"Most were fired into the air, but FBI investigation showed that nearly 400 bullets or pieces of buckshot struck Alexander Hall."

"Of the 65 law officers in front of the dormitory, two were black — they did not shoot. Racial animosity on the part of white police officers was a substantial contributing factor in the deaths and injuries," the commission concluded.

It criticized the Jackson City Police Department and State Highway Patrol for lack of adequate planning, training, communications and discipline when they entered the campus.

The Hinds County grand jury's "conclusion that the officers 'returned the fire' is a patently inadequate description of the extent of the shooting that actually took place," the commission said.

Action Urged

The commission urged action at all levels of government to protect life and insure equal justice for all.

It also said law enforcement agencies and the National Guard should be fully integrated.

It noted that "students should recognize that the use of obscenities and derogatory terms such as 'pigs' and 'honkies' during a demonstration may trigger a violent if unjustifiable response by peace officers."

"When policemen willfully violate the civil rights of black or white citizens," the report concluded, "they should be prosecuted vigorously and fairly by the government."