

J.S. PANEL SCORES MISSISSIPPI POLICE

Unrest Commission Alleges 'Unjustified Overreaction' in Shootings at Jackson

OCT 2 1970

Excerpts from report are
printed on Page 18.

By JACK ROSENTHAL
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1—The President's Commission on Campus Unrest accused Mississippi policemen today of "unreasonable, unjustified overreaction" when they fired shotgun, machine gun, rifle and armor-piercing shells into a crowd of black students at Jackson State College last May 14.

Two blacks were killed and 12 were injured. The commission said that some of the wounded had been far from where the state and city police said they had seen a sniper and that one body had been found in the opposite direction.

After the shootings, the commission declared, policemen lied to their superiors and to agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And, it asserted, the county grand jury, which cleared the police of blame, relied on "a number of inaccurate findings."

The commission presented its conclusions in a special, 86-page investigative report released today. A similar report on the killings of four students at Kent State University in Ohio is expected shortly. The commission released its general report on campus unrest last weekend.

The commission's investiga-

Continued on Page 18, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

tive report has no legal force, but a spokesman for the Department of Justice said today that the report would be carefully reviewed by a Federal grand jury investigating the Jackson deaths.

The commission said it was encouraged by remedial steps taken so far by city officials in Jackson. But, the report said the "reaction of the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol to the deaths and injuries continues to be disturbing."

Students Critized

The commission also expressed concern over increasingly hostile rhetoric from some Jackson State students.

"We understand the profound emotional impact of the deaths and injuries of fellow

students," the commission said. But it condemned calls for students to arm themselves against the police and such statements as: "All the pigs will not walk away from the campus."

"There must not be a repetition of the tragic incident at Jackson State," the report said.

The report said the firing had begun without warning and evidently without any order from the police commanders.

Police witnesses told the commission that the 28-second fusillade into and around a girls' dormitory had been prompted by sniper fire from the third floor.

The commission found it impossible to determine positively if there had been sniper fire. But the report left little doubt that the commissioners were dubious.

It quoted one policeman as having testified that he had seen "a colored male" break out a piece of window and fire twice at the policemen below.

F.B.I. Report Cited

The report then cited an F.B.I. examination that said that the window glass had been broken by incoming bullets or shotgun pellets.

"Even if there were sniper fire," the report said, "the 28-second barrage of lethal gunfire partly directed into crowded windows . . . and into a crowd . . . was completely unwarranted and unjustified."

Instead of taking cover and using the police sniper team already at the scene, the report said, state and city policemen opened up, directing their fire

over an area more than 200 feet wide.

"Indeed, the police sniper team did not fire at all," it said.

Despite the policemen's contentions that they had shot upward, the commission observed, both of the young men killed were at ground level. One was found lying on the side of the street opposite the alleged sniper's window.

Police Command Scored

The report said the police at the scene did not have an agreed-upon plan, had no clear idea of command, no common radio channel and no adequate consultation with college officials before going on to the campus.

The commission confirmed police statements that the crowd of 75 to 200 students

had subjected the officers to obscenities and racial and sexual epithets.

A small number of bottles, rocks and bricks were thrown at the police, the report said, but this was far short of the "constant barrage of flying missiles" described by state policemen.

The commission completely rejected the state police contention that the crowd of students had advanced on the police. Most of the crowd, the report noted, was behind a chain link fence.