

Panel to Study 2 Assassinations Asks \$13 Million

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 9—Richard A. Sprague, chief counsel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, told Congress today that the reinvestigation of the deaths of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would cost more than \$13 million.

The size of the budget request—far more than was spent by the Warren Commission staff in its original investigation



Associated Press

Richard A. Sprague, director of House panel on assassinations, at hearing in Washington.

of President Kennedy's assassination a dozen years ago—surprised even members of the committee.

"The budget blew my hat off, too," said Representative Thomas N. Downing, the Virginia Democrat who heads the committee, after Mr. Sprague presented his cost estimates at a committee hearing.

Members Back Request

Despite the size of the budget—about double that spent by both the Senate Watergate committee and the House Judiciary Committee in their investigations of the Nixon Administration—the six Democrats and three Republicans present at today's session voted unanimously to approve the proposed request.

The committee acted after Mr. Sprague testified that the \$6,531,050 request for the first year's operation of the proposed 170-person staff was a "bare-boned minimum figure" and that "any cut, in my opinion, would make the task of investigating the assassinations impossible."

In a later presentation to the caucus of House Democrats, Mr. Sprague said he expected that approximately the same budget would be requested for the committee in its second year.

Mr. Sprague presented the committee with a brief outline of some areas already

under investigation by the panel. These included information concerning the surveillance and security provided by the F.B.I. at the time of Dr. King's death and a report that intelligence about Lee Harvey Oswald was not passed to other agencies before the death of President Kennedy or to the Warren Commission after it.

Mr. Sprague also announced that the Justice Department, the F. B. I. and the C.I.A. have agreed not to destroy any documents until the committee had completed its investigation or given its opinion that the documents were not needed.

According to a research paper completed for Mr. Sprague, the Warren Commission spent \$1.2 million in its 10-month life, but its 83-member staff was supplemented by 222 investigators borrowed from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Secret Service.

High Cost Explained

Mr. Sprague said that a major reason the assassination committee budget was so high was that it had been forced by circumstances to hire its own investigators and not borrow from the F.B.I. or the C.I.A.

Noting that the C.I.A. had not told the Warren Commission about its attempts to assassinate Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba and that the F.B.I. had not disclosed the animosity felt for Dr. King by J. Edgar Hoover, the bureau's Director at the time, the chief counsel said that an independent investigation was essential.

Mr. Sprague told the Democratic caucus that if the committee was staffed by investigators from the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. it would "make Congress the laughing stock not only of the nation, but the world."

The former prosecutor said that another reason for the large budget was the committee's mandate to investigate at the same time the assassinations of both President Kennedy, who was killed on Nov. 22, 1963, and Dr. King, who was killed on April 4, 1968.

Approval of Funds Foreseen

Representative Frank Thompson Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, who is chairman of the House Administration Committee, which will pass on the assassination committee's budget before it goes to the House, said that in his experience the size of the request was "unprecedented" but that Congress would probably vote to fund that committee "up to its justified needs."

Conversations with several other Congressmen and House staff members indicated that despite the size of the budget, the full House would probably grant most of the request if not all of it.

Mr. Sprague said that he planned to assign the major part of the investigation to two teams, each made up of 15 lawyers and 25 investigators. One team would investigate President Kennedy's death, the other that of Dr. King.

In addition, the committee plans to have a legal unit to prepare subpoenas with a staff of five persons, a document analysis and research team of 30, a polygraph and stress evaluation unit of four and a security unit of two to assure the safety of important witnesses.

The committee's first year budget allots \$3,635,600 for salaries; \$1,864,200 for travel; \$155,000 for consulting services; \$425,000 for telephones, and \$78,900 to pay the expenses of witnesses.