

Conspirator Contacted Ray on His Trip Abroad, Source Tells King Death Inquiry

WASHINGTON (AP)—A House Committee on Assassinations report says its investigators have obtained uncorroborated testimony that James Earl Ray received instructions from a secret conspirator during his flight after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.), chairman of the subcommittee investigating King's slaying, said that the information came from "a very reliable source" who talked with Ray, currently serving a 99-year prison term. Fauntroy stressed that the testimony had not been corroborated yet.

Fauntroy said in a telephone interview Friday that the witness told the investigators "that there was someone with whom he (Ray) was to get in touch in Portugal."

The testimony is cited in a 26-page report approved by the full 12-member committee as one of two examples of leads the panel believes must be pursued in its investigation into the assassinations of King and President John F. Kennedy, Fauntroy said.

The other example is the previously reported recollection of former CIA employees regarding the agency's surveillance of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City less than two months before Kennedy's assassination.

The report, not yet publicly released, will be presented to the full House in January as justification for the committee's proposed one-year, \$6.5 million budget.

Speaking of the new lead in the King case, Fauntroy told a reporter, "You've gone to the heart of the matter, have we corroborated this, and we have not." But he insisted, "The source is of such reliability we feel confident the lead is worth following."

Fauntroy said the report identified the source as "a witness who had never previously been interviewed by any investigative agency." Fauntroy said the source was an American who was neither a relative nor an attorney of Ray's, but he refused to give any further identifying information.

James Lesar, who has represented Ray since 1970, said that the only other persons with whom Ray had talked had been reporters and his pri-



Walter E. Fauntroy

AP photo

son guards. Lesar said that Ray never told him about a secret meeting in Portugal.

The report described the lead as follows:

"Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions . . . out of the United States."

Fauntroy confirmed that the loca-

tion was Portugal but said investigators did not know the identity of the other person nor whether the meeting actually took place.

Ray's ability to evade law enforcement authorities for two months after the April 4, 1968, slaying of King has often been cited as an indication that he had help from unknown conspirators. In particular, his ability to obtain three false passports and pay for trips to England and Portugal has been cited as actions beyond his intellectual or financial means.

In March, 1969, when Ray pleaded guilty to killing King, he told the court he did not agree with statements by the prosecution and by his own defense attorney that there was no conspiracy involved. Ray has never explained what he meant.

The new lead involving the Kennedy assassination cited in the report centers on the CIA's electronic surveillance of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City.

The CIA tape-recorded a phone call from Oswald and the Soviet Union. However, three CIA employees stationed in Mexico City at the time have been quoted as saying the tape recordings showed Oswald offering information to the Russians in return for a free trip to Russia.