

Counsel Denies Any Wrongdoing In King Probe

By George Lardner Jr.

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The chief counsel of the House Assassinations Committee yesterday flatly denied "each and every allegation of wrongdoing" raised earlier this week by a disaffected undercover agent.

The counsel, G. Robert Blakey, said the committee was still investigating the charges, but said "on the strength of a preliminary investigation, the committee categorically denies each and every allegation of wrongdoing."

The committee's accuser, a former FBI informer named Oliver Patterson of Blackjack, Mo., said he was recruited early this year to spy on Jerry Ray. Jerry Ray is a brother of the convicted killer of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., James Earl Ray.

According to Patterson, who has also given a statement under oath to the committee, he secretly tape-recorded Jerry Ray's telephone conversations and even secured samples of Jerry Ray's hair at the instructions of committee investigator Conrad Baetz. Patterson has said he also filched some of James Earl Ray's letters to Jerry Ray and turned over photocopies to the committee.

In a four-paragraph statement handed out to reporters, Blakey said, without using Patterson's name, that the individual making the charges "has never been an employe of the committee."

Blakey also said the committee "states with assurance that no federal, state or local law or any rule of the House or of the committee has been violated by the investigator or by any other member of the committee staff."

The committee's rules, including a ban on surreptitious tape recordings, apply only to committee members and staffers, and do not cover undercover agents. Blakey refused to say whether Patterson had been an undercover agent for the committee. "The statement speaks for itself," Blakey insisted in declining to entertain any questions about it.