

the functioning of the surveillance post and that he was asked "if there was some way they could be moved." (138) Tines then called either Chief Hamilton or Williams of the fire department and requested they be transferred. (139)

Tines' testimony is corroborated by a memorandum he received from Redditt. Dated April 4, 1968, it referred to Newsum as being very sympathetic with the sanitation strike and possibly the cause of the threats he had received. (140) When confronted by the committee with the memorandum, Redditt acknowledged that his request could have been the reason the firemen were transferred. (141)

In an interview with the committee, Newsum acknowledged he had been very sympathetic with the strike, that his support for it was well known, and that he had in fact passed information to persons affiliated with the strike. (142) He conceded that his reporting of information may have had something to do with his transfer, (143) since such activity on his behalf would have jeopardized the surveillance post.

While Wallace did not have a history of specific activities that would account for his transfer, it appeared that his transfer was prompted by Redditt's request to Tines. Wallace's and Newsum's supervisor, James O. Barnett, recalled that the transfers were made because someone in the police department was uncomfortable with Black firemen sympathetic to the strike in the vicinity of the surveillance post. (144)

The committee found that the transfers of Newsum and Wallace were made at the request of the Memphis Police Department out of a concern for the security of the surveillance post. Redditt himself was the person who initiated the request. The committee found that the transfers in no way facilitated the assassination or the escape of the assassin. The firemen obviously had no protective or surveillance responsibilities. Allegations that the transfers were part of a conspiracy to assassinate Dr. King were determined to be groundless.¹⁶

(d) The postassassination performance of the Memphis police

The committee also investigated the possibility that the postassassination conduct of the Memphis Police Department was indicative of an official effort to facilitate the escape of the assassin. When Dr. King was shot at approximately 6 p.m. on April 4, 1968, there were from 53 to 66 law enforcement officers within a mile of the Lorraine Motel. (145) Included in this force were six "tact" or tactical units, each consisting of three or four vehicles. The purpose of the tact units was to respond to any disorder or emergency.¹⁷ (146) One of the units

¹⁶ Many of the allegations of conspiracy the committee investigated were first raised by Mark Lane, the attorney who represented James Earl Ray at the committee's public hearings. As has been noted, the facts were often at variance with Lane's assertions. For example, Coy Dean Cowden did not see James Earl Ray at a service station at the time of the assassination (section II A 6 a). Further, Grace Walden was not hospitalized to prevent her from testifying and presenting exculpatory information on behalf of Ray (section II A 6 c); and the FBI did not lure Dr. King to the Lorraine Motel for the purpose of setting him up for assassination (section II D 1). Finally, the committee found that Detective Edward Redditt was not relieved of his post to strip Dr. King of security, and Firemen Newsum and Wallace were not transferred to assure the escape of an assassin.

In many instances, the committee found that Lane was willing to advocate conspiracy theories publicly without having checked the factual basis for them. In other instances, Lane proclaimed conspiracy based on little more than inference and innuendo. Lane's conduct resulted in public misperception about the assassination of Dr. King and must be condemned.

¹⁷ The tact units had been patrolling the streets immediately surrounding the Lorraine until, in response to a request from someone in Dr. King's party, they were ordered to pull back so as not to be visible from the Lorraine. (See MLK exhibit F-193, affidavit of William O. Crumby, IV, HSCA-MLK hearings, 279.)