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The Associated Press

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House assassinations committee staff investigators are not satisfied that a CIA agent rifled their files out of mere curiosity, the committee's chairman said Thursday night.

But the investigators don't know what the motive was and are satisfied CIA headquarters did not order the agent to look through committee files, the chairman, Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, told the House.

"The committee staff members are not satisfied that the motive has been established," Stokes told the House. "They believe mere curiosity is not consistent with the fingerprint evidence."

He said the fingerprint evidence indicated the CIA agent opened a closed but unlocked safe and ripped an autopsy photograph of President John F. Kennedy's assassination head wounds out of a plastic cover in a notebook.

He said the CIA agent at first denied looking at the autopsy photographs. In a second interview, Stokes said, the agent "did not admit any wrongdoing" and refused to be interviewed any further.

The CIA conducted its own investigation and has publicly stated its conclusion that the agent removed the photograph from the safe out of mere curiosity. The agent was fired.

Stokes told the House his investigators "are satisfied that there was no evidence uncovered that the agency directed the employee to obtain access to the autopsy materials."

Stokes' report to the House confirmed a series of articles by Washington Post reporter George Lardner Jr. disclosing the July incident.

The Post identified the agent as Regis T. Blahut. Blahut was quoted as saying "there's other things that are involved that are detrimental to other things" but refusing to elaborate.

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The committee has concluded that Kennedy's assassination Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas was probably a conspiracy involving two gunmen.

A committee source who did not want to be named speculated that the CIA agent, and possibly the CIA itself, was probably curious in July whether the committee was making any conspiracy conclusions from the photographs.

In fact, the committee's experts concluded that autopsy material including the photographs proved that the only bullets that hit Kennedy were fired from above and behind by Lee Harvey Oswald.

But the committee concluded later that a police tape recording has the sound of a shot fired by a second gunman that missed the president.

Stokes told the House the CIA agent was assigned to guard secret agency material in a different room and that the safe had been left open by an artist making medical drawings of Kennedy's wounds.

The artist opened the safe in the morning and when he returned in the afternoon found the notebook and photograph out of the safe with the photograph ripped out of its cover.

Stokes said the committee kept the photographs in a separate safe and used elaborate access procedures to guard against their becoming public.

He said there is no evidence that they have been misused and "no evidence was uncovered that anyone has profited from these acts."

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