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3 on JFK Panel Return From Cuba

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Three members of the House committee that is investigating the assassination of President Kennedy returned yesterday from Cuba after a secret trip that was described as "the first direct contact" between U.S. investigators and Cuban sources relating to the murder of the president more than 14 years ago.

Continuing a policy of secrecy that apparently is aimed at muting controversy that has embroiled the committee since its formation late in 1976, Chairman Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), and Reps. Richardson Preyer (D-N.C.) and Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn) would not even say if they met with Fidel Castro during their 4½ days in Cuba. Accompanying the congressmen

were G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel and staff director of the committee, Gary Cornwell, deputy chief counsel of the JFK subcommittee, and Edwin J. Lopez, a researcher who acted as interpreter.

While official representatives would not comment on the purpose of the trip, Harold Weisberg, a private investigator who has conducted studies of the deaths of Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., said yesterday that there could be "no purpose [in going to Cuba] unless they have an established theory, which they don't."

Preyer, chairman of the JFK subcommittee, met the others in Havana Friday after flying there from Lisbon, where he had been attending the spring meeting of the Interparliamentary Union.

Interviewed in Lisbon, Preyer said that he and two investigators for the committee spent about a day last week interviewing sources in Lisbon about James Earl Ray, the convicted killer of King.

Preyer said he was hoping to learn why Ray spent about 10 days in Lisbon during the six weeks he was at large after the slaying of King 10 years ago yesterday in Memphis.

"It was never conclusively determined why Ray came here," Preyer said in Lisbon last week. He said the major theories were that Ray went to Portugal in hopes of signing on as a mercenary in Angola, Rhodesia or South Africa, or that "he met somebody here, which would bear on the conspiracy theory."