

Layton to be tried for murder



LARRY LAYTON

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) — A Guyanese magistrate has ordered Peoples Temple member Larry Layton to stand trial for the murder of Rep. Leo Ryan.

Magistrate Krishna Veni Chinta ruled against the 32-year-old X-ray technician from San Francisco Tuesday at the end of a three-week preliminary inquiry. Defense lawyers said the trial before Guayana's Supreme Court probably would begin next month.

"I am innocent of the charge," Layton declared. "I did not shoot at or conspire with anyone to shoot at Congressman Ryan or any other person."

Ryan, D-Calif., was killed with three U.S. newsmen and a defecting member of the cult at the Port Kaituma airstrip, six miles from Jonestown, on Nov. 18. Hours later the leader of the Peoples Temple, the Rev. Jim Jones, led more than 900 followers to their death in a murder-suicide ritual at their jungle commune.

The congressman had flown to Guyana to investigate reports that some members of the San Francisco-based Peoples Temple were being abused and held in the colony against their will. He was taking some of them out when a truckload of men from Jonestown opened fire on him at the airstrip.

Layton is also charged in the other four deaths, but a hearing date for those cases has not been set.

Prosecuting attorney Andram Kisoos conceded that there was no evidence Layton killed any of the five, but he said the slayings were the result of a plot in which Layton participated. Under Guayanese law, persons convicted of conspiracy in a murder case are guilty of murder.

The government contends that Layton was to get aboard Ryan's plane by posing as a defector and crash the plane by killing the pilot so that Ryan, the newsmen and the defectors could not tell the world what

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was going on at Jonestown.

There were two planes at the airstrip, however, and Layton was put aboard one with several of the defectors, while Ryan, the newsmen and the others prepared to board the other aircraft several hundred yards away.

Survivors reported that a truckload of men from Jonestown drove up and opened fire on Ryan and his group. Dale Parks, a defector aboard the plane with Layton, testified at the hearing that when the shooting started, Layton pulled out a pistol, wounded two other defectors in their plane and then pointed the gun at Parks. He said the gun misfired and he grabbed it.

Kisoos said Layton prior to the at-

tack was seen receiving a gun from Joe Wilson, the acting security chief at Jonestown who with others was seen shooting at Ryan and his party. Kisoos also said witnesses saw Layton not far from the bodies.

Layton signed a statement Nov. 22 saying he took "full responsibility for all the deaths and injuries that took place at Port Kaituma airstrip," the prosecuting attorney said.

Defense attorney Jainarine Singh argued that the charge against Layton should be dropped because there was no evidence he killed or conspired to kill Ryan. He said the prosecution evidence showed he was in the smaller plane with its doors closed several hundred yards from where Ryan was killed, and that this ruled him out as a suspect.

