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Walsh blasts Mattox for Lucas report

By MIKE HAILEY
 Cox News Service

AUSTIN — Convicted killer Henry Lee Lucas became the focal point of an impromptu debate Wednesday when Republican attorney general candidate Ed Walsh blasted Democratic incumbent Jim Mattox for claiming that Lucas conned lawmen into believing he was a mass murderer.

The verbal free-for-all broke out at a press conference after Mattox released a report that indicated Lucas could not have committed many of the slayings for which he was charged, including the "Orange Socks" case that propelled Walsh into the spotlight.

"The report comes to the basic conclusion that Lucas was able to perpetrate a hoax on the criminal justice system," Mattox said.

Mattox said some lawmen cleared murder cases "just to get them off the books" when Lucas was eager to confess.

"There are murderers that are walking the streets today where the evidence is getting much colder as a result of the unprofessional handling of the Lucas investigation," Mattox said.

After Mattox fielded questions from reporters, Walsh, a former Williamson County district attorney, marched abruptly to the lectern.

Walsh, who is in a runoff campaign for the GOP nomination for attorney general, defended his role as the only prosecutor to obtain the death penalty for Lucas for the murder of an unidentified hitchhiker whose body was found near Georgetown. That is known as the "Orange Socks" case.

Walsh said a jury in San Angelo, where the case had been transferred, reviewed evidence that Mattox's report relied on to claim that Lucas was in Jacksonville, Fla., when the murder was committed. The report indicates that records show Lucas and companion Otis Toole were working for a roofing company in the Florida city the day the woman was raped and strangled.

"Jim Mattox has demonstrated today why the relationship between the attorney general's office and law enforcement in this state is at an all-time low," Walsh

LUCAS

✓ The report indicates that records show Lucas was working for a roofing company in Florida when the 'Orange Socks' victim was raped and strangled.

✓ With the exception of the murders of Lucas' mother, the Montague woman and his girlfriend, Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox says, there's a lack of evidence connecting Lucas to murders to which he confessed.

✓ Mattox says lawmen continued to insist that Lucas was a mass murderer, despite evidence that he was lying.



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charged. "He has just indicted our entire law enforcement system in this state.

"Jim Mattox has given law enforcement a black eye," Walsh said.

The lengthy report by Mattox chronicled Lucas' whereabouts after his release from a Michigan prison in August 1975, where he was confined for the murder of his mother, to June 1983 when he was arrested in Montague County for the killing of an elderly woman.

With the exception of the murders of his mother, the Montague woman and his girlfriend, "there is a notable lack of physical evidence linking Lucas to the crimes to which he confessed," Mattox said. He said lawmen continued to insist that Lucas was a mass murderer, despite mounting evidence that he was lying.

At one point, Lucas claimed responsibility for more than 300 killings, but he has since recanted all but the three.

Mattox said the Lucas investigation should be examined by the FBI and the U.S. Justice Department, even though he said there was no evidence to show that any lawmen violated criminal laws.

Mattox said Lucas kept confessing to murders while he was being held in Georgetown because he was enjoying himself and trying to delay being tried and sent to prison.

"He didn't want to go to Huntsville," Mattox said. "He had a relatively good thing going over there in Williamson County."

Mattox said some members of the Texas Rangers should be criticized for their roles in the Lucas inquiry.

Department of Public Safety Col. Jim Adams, whose agency supervises the Texas Rangers, said the report contains nothing new. He reaffirmed his support for the Rangers' handling of the inquiry.

"The apparent focus of the report was the fact that Lucas falsely claimed responsibility for numerous murders which he did not commit," Adams said. "Little

effort appears to have been made to explore and report on the many cases where the investigative agency involved still believes Lucas to be the prime suspect.

"I don't know of one case that has been cleared by a law enforcement agency attributed to Lucas where some other person has subsequently been charged with the crime," Adams said.

Lucas has been convicted of 16 murders in Texas, Adams said. He said 26 cases still were pending against Lucas across the nation and that the one-time drifter still is a "viable" suspect in another 36 cases.

Lucas was the focus of McLennan County grand jury investigation in 1985, and spent several months in the McLennan County Jail.

Mattox and McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazel led the investigation into confessed Lucas' made to three unsolved McLennan County murders.

After months of testimony and closed doors, the grand jury no-billed Lucas on the three McLennan County murders.

Feazel was in Washington Wednesday and could not be reached for comment.

Walsh loses his bid for the Republican nomination for Texas Attorney General