

TO : J. Stanley Pottinger
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

DATE: March 31, 1975

FROM : Robert A. Murphy
Chief
Criminal Section

RAM:vap

SUBJECT: Martin Luther King, Jr.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the direction of November 24, 1975 of the Attorney General, a review was undertaken of the files of the Department and the FBI that pertain to Martin Luther King, Jr. The purpose of the review was to make a recommendation as to whether the investigation of the assassination of Dr. King should be reopened. On December 1, you elaborated on the Attorney General's direction and set as goals for the review the answering of two questions: (U)

- 1) What action, if any, was undertaken by the FBI which had or may have had an effect, direct or indirect, on the assassination of Martin Luther King? (U)
- 2) What action, if any, was undertaken by the FBI which had or may have had any other adverse effect, direct or indirect, on Martin Luther King?(U)

At various times you, Mr. Turner and I participated in the review. I saw nothing in the files that I read that indicates any involvement of the FBI in the assassination of Dr. King. However, there was a campaign by the FBI to discredit and to neutralize Dr. King and to remove him from a leadership role in the civil rights movement. There are many examples of improper FBI activity that were directed against Dr. King, his associates and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). (U)

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IV. INVESTIGATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING'S DEATH
BY THE FBI

A. Adequacy of the Investigation

My reading of the assassination investigation leads me to conclude that the Bureau's investigation was comprehensive, thorough and professional. Every conceivable lead seems to have been pursued. Great numbers of persons who were known to dislike blacks were checked out as suspects. All Bureau field offices were put on alert to participate in the investigation and each SAC was held personally responsible for seeing that leads in his area were run down. I have talked with three attorneys who, at various times, had responsibility for monitoring the investigation and all are satisfied that the FBI had nothing to do with Martin Luther King's assassination. (u)

B. Indications of Bureau Involvement in the Assassination

There are none with the exception of the COINTELPRO activity of proposing that a blind memorandum be sent to a Memphis paper to embarrass King into moving into the Lorraine Hotel where he was shot. That has been investigated previously and its purpose is subject to a different interpretation, discussed below (u)

Evidence exists that the FBI was not involved in King's assassination. On April 2, 1968 Attorney General Ramsey Clark turned down an FBI request to tape the telephones of SCLC in Atlanta and Washington to learn about plans for the Poor People's Campaign. This request indicates that the FBI expected no change in SCLC's (and King's) plans. The attempt to discredit King by planting an embarrassing story in the Memphis papers indicates a continuation of the Bureau's campaign against King. Logic suggests that the last thing J. Edgar Hoover wanted was to make King a martyr, thereby enhancing his image. This runs counter to years of effort by the FBI to discredit and neutralize King. Finally, the investigation was so massive and

Wiretap Surveillance of Dr. King and the SCLC

<u>Location</u>	<u>Installed</u>	<u>Discontinued</u>
King's home	11/8/63	4/30/65
New York City apartment	8/14/64	9/8/64
Hyatt House, Los Angeles	4/24/64	4/26/64
Hyatt House, Los Angeles	7/7/64	7/9/64
Claridge Hotel, Atlantic City	8/22/64	8/27/64
SCLC, Atlanta	11/8/63	6/21/65
SCLC, New York	10/24/63	1/24/64
	7/31/64	7/31/64

(u)

Microphone Surveillance of Dr. King: Jan. 64-Nov. 65

<u>Location</u>	<u>Installed</u>
Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C.	1/5/64
Shroeder Hotel, Milwaukee	1/27/64
Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu	2/18/64
Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles	2/20/64
Hyatt House, Los Angeles	2/22/64
Statler Hotel, Detroit	3/19/64
Senator Motel, Sacramento	4/23/64
Hyatt House Motel, Los Angeles	7/7/64
Minger Hotel, Savannah	9/28/64
Park Sheraton, New York	1/3/65
Americana Hotel, New York	1/28/65
Park Sheraton, New York	3/29/65
Sheraton Atlantic, New York	5/12/65
Astor Hotel, New York	10/14/65
New York Hilton, New York	10/28/65
Americana Hotel, New York	11/29/65

(u)

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(c)

Attorney General Kennedy resigned in September and he gave Courtney Evans the material about King's hotel activities provided him on two earlier occasions by the FBI. Kennedy did not want the material in Department of Justice files and he recommended that the FBI destroy it. Hoover refused to do so and directed that it be retained in a secure location. (u)

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met with a delegation of several women reporters. On the record, he called King "a notorious liar". Hoover's remark caused a sensation. Off the record, Hoover said of King: "He is one of the lowest characters in the country". Later one of these reporters apparently asked to cover a proposed meeting between Hoover and King. Hoover wrote on the memo reporting the request, "I have no appointment with King and I do not intend to make one" (u)

On November 19, 1964, Frederick J. Baumgardner sent a memo to Sullivan reporting a discussion between Wachtel and Rustin as to how to respond to Hoover's "liar" statement. The memo indicated that an investigation was being conducted to determine Wachtel's connection with the communist movement. In a rather lengthy observation, Baumgardner wrote: (u)

"The significant thing involved here is not that these individuals have jumped quickly to King's defense, but rather that they are seizing the opportunity, in line with a long-held communist objective, to launch a campaign to oust the Director as head of the FBI. (u)

The important thing at this point is to follow this matter closely to determine the degree to which King follows their advice in regard to issuing the statement prepared by Wachtel for we will then have further evidence of the extent to which King is being used by communist sympathizers in support of communist objectives." (u)

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(S)

King sent Hoover a telegram responding to the Director's calling him a "notorious liar". On November 20, it was recommended that Hoover ignore it. Hoover wrote: "OK. But I can't understand why we are unable to get the true facts before the public. We can't even get our accomplishments published. We are never taking the aggressive but allow lies to remain unanswered". A new 51 page profile of King was prepared on the 23rd. On the same day, Sullivan authorized the State Department to brief the USIA security officer about King. The security officer then requested supporting data so that he could dissuade USIA from sponsoring King on a trip through Europe, Africa and the Near East. Belmont approved disseminating the information. (4)

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(S)

On November 27, 1964, Roy Wilkins requested and was granted a meeting with DeLoach after Hoover had given a speech at Loyola University in Chicago in which he referred to "sexual degenerates" in civil rights groups. According to a memorandum prepared by DeLoach of the meeting, Wilkins asked that the FBI not ruin King because that would ruin the civil rights movement.

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The memo states that Wilkins said he would try to get King to retire. DeLoach wrote that he chastized Wilkins for his comments about Hoover and the FBI. He said he warned Wilkins that if King wanted a war with the FBI, they had the ammunition and would win. Wilkins was reported as saying he knew King was a liar and had sympathies toward the communist movement. Hoover sent a letter to President Johnson about the meeting. (u)

On November 30, permission was given to the Legat in London to brief U.S. Ambassadors in Sweden and Denmark about King. On the same day King asked (b)(7)(c) to discuss his five minute acceptance speech with ... (b)(7)(c) ... He also said he was going to ask Andy Young and Harry Wachtel to write a 5 minute speech each (u)

Andrew Young called DeLoach on December 1, 1964 and requested a meeting between King and the Director. Young said that King wanted to talk about the future and not the past. DeLoach said he told Young that the "...crusade of defamation against Mr. Hoover and the FBI... [the] campaign of slander and defamation against the Director and the FBI..." by King and his organization behind "our" backs, must be dropped. Hoover and King met in Hoover's office on December 1. DeLoach sat in on the meeting and wrote a 10 page memo to Mohr about the meeting. One and one half pages covered what King said; the rest covers what Hoover said. This may actually represent the relative amounts of conversation. King was overheard (by a tap) talking to a reporter and to Harry Wachtel and he told them that he had spoken for 10 minutes and Hoover had spoken for 45-50 minutes. During the meeting King said he could never be a communist and he referred to his removal of ... (b)(7)(c) ... Hoover covered many subjects, including FBI infiltration of the Klan, upgrading of local police, psychoneurotic tendencies of Gov. Wallace, assignment of northern agents to the South, some cases, Selma, that Aubrey Lewis (a black man) was an agent, that there were 10 or 11 Indian agents and "Mexican-blooded" agents, and that the Bureau couldn't lower its standards just because of color. He gave King some advice: register Negroes

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and educate Negroes in certain skills. Hoover said he was in favor of equality in schools and restaurants but against busing. He mentioned a shoeshine boy in Florida whom he knew who was a doctor. He told King to advise him of any bias or prejudice by an agent. He told King that agents investigate and do not provide protection. He concluded by talking about how good agents were with guns. (u)

On the same day DeLoach met with James Farmer at Farmer's request. It was similar to DeLoach's meeting with Wilkins. (u)

Hoover memorialized a call he had from Katzenbach who had inquired about the meeting with King. He told Katzenbach that King was a persuasive speaker. Katzenbach answered by saying that's all he could say about King. Hoover told Katzenbach that King and Abernathy praised the Bureau and that he (Hoover) had "taken the ball away from King" at the beginning of the meeting. Hoover sent a letter to President Johnson and described the meeting as most amicable. (u)

On the same day, Joseph Sizoo of the FBI sent Sullivan a memo suggesting that selected Negro leaders come to the FBI on the pretext of learning the facts about what the FBI was doing under the Civil Rights statutes. They then would be told of King's background in an effort to have him removed. The White House would not be advised. The suggestion appears to be a follow-up to DeLoach's meeting with Wilkins in late November. The idea apparently did not get beyond Sullivan and was not executed. (u)

On December 2, 1964, the Bureau observed press reaction to the meeting. A columnist who took Hoover's side was sent a letter of appreciation; a TV commentator who said King had "turned the other cheek" by seeking the meeting was sent nothing. On the third, the Bureau was advised by a police officer who was assigned to protect King in Cincinnati that King had told

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him he had no controversy with Hoover; that he did not want to become involved in any controversy with Hoover; that he would be a "fool" to become so involved; and that he would, therefore, avoid press conferences. (u)

On December 4, 1964 Wachtel told King that Nelson Rockefeller might contribute \$250,00 to King and that Rockefeller had invited King to lunch. On December 11, Headquarters sent material to Albany for former SAC Cornelius to brief Rockefeller about King's background. This action revealed that the Bureau had not changed its attitude about King as a result of King's meeting Hoover. (u)

Also on December 4, 1964, Moyers called DeLoach and said that he and the President felt that an updated 13 page monograph on King should be disseminated to appropriate government officials if it was in the interest of internal security. It had been sent to the White House about two weeks previously with a request that Moyers advise whether it should be disseminated. It was sent to Justice, State and Defense Departments, CIA, USIA, and military intelligence officers on December 7. On December 10, after Hoover approved it, DeLoach briefed two members of the Baptist World Alliance about King's background in an effort to forestall an invitation for King to speak to the group. DeLoach had given a similar briefing six months earlier to the Associate General Secretary of the Alliance. Hoover had disapproved a proposal to permit the Associate General Secretary and another to listen to tapes of King. (u)

On December 10, 1964 Wachtel advised King that Attorney General Katzenbach had called Jack Greenberg of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to discuss "clearing" some one for the Fifth Circuit. King said he would back whomever Greenberg wanted. Hoover wrote on the memo: "This is shocking". The information was forwarded to the White House and the Acting Attorney General. (u)

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January 8, 1965, Young called DeLoach and requested a meeting with Hoover or DeLoach. It was set for January 11. DeLoach told Mohr that Young would be told on the eleventh that the Director was out. He suggested that he and Leinbaugh meet with Young. Hoover approved. Leinbaugh was the originator of the Lorraine Hotel COINTELPRO activity. (u)

On January 7, 1965, a report from two NAACP contacts in Memphis said King [.....(b) (7) (C).....] These contacts were being developed as part of an FBI program, "Liaison with Groups Sponsoring Integration". On the same day, Headquarters received a report of checks drawn on King's New York bank in November 1964. (u)

January 8, 1965, Milton Jones of the FBI gave DeLoach an Italian magazine article about King's trip to Europe. The article is very racist in tone; the editor of the magazine had been a Fascist. It was read by Hoover. Jones forwarded the article with a note: "It appears the article... contains excellent public source material for our contacts in this country who would be interested in the true background of Martin Luther King." (u)

Joseph Sizoo advised Sullivan on January 8 that he had authorized misurs in King's and Young's hotel rooms in New York. On the tenth a three page memorandum was prepared from the products of the microphones. King, and perhaps Young and Bernard Lee, an SCLC aide, discuss phone taps and information the Bureau had and how DeLoach and Hoover should be approached. Some mention was made of Joe Rauh and the Bureau characterized him as being associated with communist causes and as being critical of the Bureau. The bugs also recorded King characterizing the mailing of the tape as, "God's out to get you", and as a warning from God that King had not been living up to his responsibilities in relation to the role in which history had cast him. [.....(b) (7) (C).....] (u)

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