



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535

June 23, 1976

Mr. Les Payne
Newsday
550 Stewart Avenue
Garden City, New York 11530

Dear Mr. Payne:

I have received your letter of June 10, 1976, and appreciate the continued interest in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which prompted you to write.

You undoubtedly will be pleased to know that data concerning evidence recovered in Memphis, Tennessee, and sent to the FBI Laboratory for examination have been released in response to requests received by us under the Freedom of Information Act. If you will write or telephone him at (202) 324-5350, Assistant Director Donald W. Moore, Jr., of our External Affairs Division will make arrangements for you to review this material.

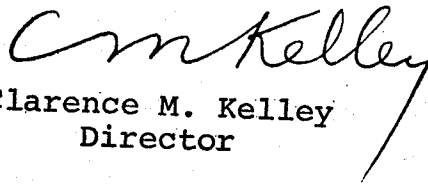
Presumably your desire to discuss the Invaders group which existed in Memphis at the time of Dr. King's murder stems from the article you wrote for the February 1, 1976, issue of Newsday. At my instruction, a thorough search was made of pertinent files at our Headquarters, as well as in our Memphis Field Office, immediately after that article was published. It resulted in no substantiation being found for the allegations which served as the basis for your article: namely, that "Several FBI informants...were among the most active members" of the Invaders and that "FBI informants actively participated in the rioting" that erupted in Memphis on March 28, 1968.



Mr. Les Payne

Enclosed is a copy of a news release which was issued by the Department of Justice on April 29, 1976, reflecting that Attorney General Edward H. Levi has directed that a review be made of all records in the Department concerning Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We are, of course, cooperating fully in that review; and I am sure you will agree that it would be improper for us to comment further prior to its completion.

Sincerely yours,


Clarence M. Kelley
Director

Enclosure



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE AT 11:00 A.M., E.D.T.,
THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1976

AG

In response to inquiries from the news media regarding the Civil Rights Division's review of the Martin Luther King files, Attorney General Edward H. Levi today issued the following statement:

I have directed the Office of Professional Responsibility, headed by Michael Shaheen, to complete a review of all records in the Department of Justice concerning the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Civil Rights Division, under the personal direction of Assistant Attorney General J. Stanley Pottinger, completed on April 9 a five-month preliminary review of files at FBI headquarters. As a result of this preliminary review, the Civil Rights Division has recommended that the review be carried forward to completion with an additional examination of records at FBI headquarters and field offices. It is believed that more than 200,000 documents may be involved.

On the basis of this preliminary review, Assistant Attorney General Pottinger stated that his tentative conclusions were (1) there was no basis to believe that the FBI in any way caused the death of Dr. King, (2) no evidence was discovered that the FBI investigation of the assassination of Dr. King was not thorough and honest, and (3) instances were found indicating that the FBI undertook a systematic program of harassment of Dr. King in order to discredit him and harm both him and the movement he led.

In ordering on April 26 the complete review by Mr. Shaheen, I directed that the investigation be completed forthwith and that answers to four specific questions be furnished to me and FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley on the basis of the review of all documents:

-- Whether the FBI investigation of Dr. King's assassination was thorough and honest;

-- Whether there is any evidence that the FBI was involved in the assassination of Dr. King;

-- Whether, in light of the first two matters, there is any new evidence which has come to the attention of the Department concerning the assassination of Dr. King;

-- Whether the nature of the relationship between the Bureau and Dr. King calls for criminal prosecutions, disciplinary proceedings, or other appropriate action.

Mr. Pottinger pointed out that the Civil Rights Division has been continuously investigating allegations concerning the assassination of Dr. King as these allegations come to the attention of the Department.