

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

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JAN 5 1976

file - 100-11-8
As-... ..
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TO : The Attorney General

DATE: January 2, 1976

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FROM : Director, FBI

SUBJECT: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

This Bureau is in possession of 78 reels of tape resulting from our microphone coverage of the activities of Martin Luther King, Jr., during the period 1964-65. We also possess transcripts of these tapes.

Pursuant to the letter of December 12, 1975, from Mr. J. Stanley Pottinger, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, setting forth your authorization for Mr. Pottinger's access to tapes concerning King, on December 19, 1975, Mr. Pottinger listened to some of these tapes. In preparation for this hearing, one of our supervisors in the Radio Engineering Section of the FBI Laboratory, had occasion to also listen to a number of the tapes. He observed that there had been some deterioration in the audio quality of the tapes, a condition which could easily occur when such tapes are retained for so long a period of time. It is his further observation that the tapes will deteriorate at an even more rapid pace in the years ahead.

We cannot, of course, anticipate with any degree of certainty the need in the years ahead to be able to listen to and understand these tapes, whether it will be our own personnel or others who will need to listen to them. In view of the foregoing, coupled with the current interest in these tapes by the Department and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, we have given consideration to having the tapes duplicated onto fresh tapes which could be used

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FBI #8

The Attorney General

as working copies and which would thus preserve the audio quality of the tapes. We have, however, taken no steps to copy the tapes, deferring such action to your judgment. Unless we hear to the contrary from you, we will not copy these tapes.

1 - Deputy Attorney General
Attention: Michael E. Shaheen, Jr.
Special Counsel for
Intelligence Coordination

1 - J. Stanley Pottinger
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

1 - Richard L. Thornburgh
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division