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NYT

PRESIDENT'S PLEA

On TV, He Deplores 'Brutal' Murder of Negro Leader

Statements by Johnson and
Humphrey are on Page 24.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 4—President Johnson deplored to-night in a brief television address to the nation the "brutal slaying" of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

He asked "every citizen to reject the blind violence that has struck Dr. King, who lived by nonviolence."

Mr. Johnson said he was postponing his scheduled departure tonight for a Honolulu conference on Vietnam and that instead he would leave tomorrow.

The President spoke from the White House. At the Washington Hilton Hotel, where Democratic members of Congress had gathered to honor the President and the Vice President, Mr. Humphrey, his voice strained with emotion, said:

"Martin Luther King stands with our other American martyrs in the cause of freedom and justice. His death is a terrible tragedy."

The dinner was canceled 10 to 15 minutes after the Vice President spoke. Mr. Johnson, who was scheduled to appear at the dinner, canceled his plans to attend.

F.B.I. Inquiry Ordered

Attorney General Ramsey Clark ordered an immediate inquiry by the Federal Bureau of Investigation into the shooting of Dr. King in Memphis.

He said the purpose of the investigation would be to determine whether any Federal law had been violated.

One provision of the law that could be invoked makes it a

crime to engage in a conspiracy to deprive a person of his civil rights.

In addition to F.B.I. agents, Department of Justice civil rights representatives were on the scene in Memphis and were in touch with the Attorney General.

Military sources said that no National Guard units had yet been Federalized and no Regular Army troops had been alerted yet for possible movement to cities where violence had broken out.

National Guard troops, such as the 4,000 men who have been called into Memphis, remain under state control until the responsible Governor requests help and the President

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decides to assume responsibility for restoring order.

David E. McGiffert, Under Secretary of the Army, Gen. Harold K. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, and the general counsel of the Army, Robert Jordan, went to the Army Operations Center at the Pentagon tonight.

The XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, N. C., also opened its emergency operations headquarters tonight. The XVIII Airborne Corps controls the 82d Airborne Division, whose remaining two brigades are the only elite Army troops capable of swift movement to a riot-torn city.

The division headquarters was alerted by the corps tonight, but none of the troop units have yet been placed on the alert.

The shock of Dr. King's death, which hit this capital with numbing suddenness, was reflected in the President's face as he spoke to the nation.

In his message, delivered shortly after 9 P.M. Eastern standard time from a doorway of the west wing of the White House, the President said:

"America is shocked and saddened by the brutal slaying tonight of Dr. Martin Luther King. I ask every citizen to reject the blind violence that has struck Dr. King, who lived by nonviolence."

Mr. Johnson said he and Mrs. Johnson had conveyed their sympathy to Mrs. King.

"I know," he added, "that every American of goodwill joins me in mourning the death of this outstanding leader in praying for peace and understanding throughout this land."

The President said that nothing could be achieved by lawlessness and divisiveness among Americans. Only by working together, he asserted,

can America move toward full equality and fulfillment for everyone.

"I hope," Mr. Johnson declared solemnly, "that all Americans tonight will search their hearts as they ponder this most tragic incident."

The President and Dr. King developed a close working relationship during Mr. Johnson's first two years in the White House, but it began to cool when the Negro leader became critical of the Administration's Vietnam policies as a costly diversion of resources from pressing domestic needs.

They cooperated in Mr. Johnson's 1964 campaign against Barry Goldwater and in the development of Great Society programs, including civil rights and voting rights measures. As far as is known, they had no contact in the last year.

The Vice President announced Dr. King's death to the 2,500 persons attending the Congressional dinner. Mr. Humphrey, who was seated at the head table on a raised platform, rose, and in a solemn, heavy voice said:

"This is a very unusual and special and very difficult time. A great tragedy has taken place in America tonight. One of our renowned and active leaders in the cause of civil rights has been stricken down by an assassin's bullet. Martin Luther King has been shot and is dead."

The Vice President then read a prepared statement. "The criminal act that took his life brings shame to our country," he said. "The apostle of non-violence has been the victim of violence. The cause for which he marched and worked, I am sure, will find new strength."

Mr. Humphrey added: "An America of full freedom, full and equal opportunity, is the living memorial he deserves, and it shall be his living memorial."