



# RFK and the Wiretaps

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WASHINGTON.

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy has denied that when Attorney General he authorized the wiretapping or bugging of Dr. Martin Luther King, or any other of the FBI's eavesdropping activity.

In a conversation with the author of this column last January, he denied that he knew anything about the FBI's eavesdropping. In referring to the bugging of lobbyist Fred Black's room in the Sheraton-Carlton hotel he said he had not known about it until he read it in the newspapers.

Kennedy also denied having anything to do with the investigation of Bobby Baker, the ex-Senate Secretary who may have been investigated for the purpose of linking him with the then Vice-President, Lyndon Johnson. Baker and Fred Black were intimate friends, and President Johnson has been convinced that Kennedy launched the Black probe as a means of knocking LBJ off his brother's 1964 ticket. Kennedy, however, denied this.

"If I had ordered an investigation of Bobby Baker," he told us, "someone would have written a memorandum to that effect, and there is no such memo."

It is not pleasant to be in the position of challenging the word of a member of the Kennedy family. In all deference to the former Attorney General, however, there exist some important memos in the Justice Dept. which show conclusively that he did have knowledge of eavesdropping and that he authorized part of it.

One memo was written on July 16, 1963, after Kennedy had requested a wiretap be placed on the phone of Dr. Martin Luther King. The memo explained how the FBI had persuaded Kennedy to change his mind for the time being.

Another is a written notation on an FBI report on the bugging of Fred Black's room in the Carlton hotel.

These reports were definitely submitted to Attorney General Kennedy and he appeared to be very much interested in them. For he scribbled a notation on one report to Courtney Evans, then an assistant director of the FBI and liaison man between the FBI and the Attorney

General's office, to keep him further advised.

Perhaps the most significant document involving Attorney General Kennedy in eavesdropping, however, was an FBI memo dated July 7, 1961, which reviewed the FBI's eavesdropping policy. This policy was to use bugging or "electronic devices" for crime investigation and wiretaps for national security cases. Kennedy was represented as "pleased" over the way the FBI was carrying on electronic eavesdropping.

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The memo is signed by Courtney Evans, who became Bobby's close friend and was entertained in the Kennedy home. Addressed to Alan H. Belmont, assistant director of the FBI, the memo reads:

"In line with the director's approval, the Attorney General was contacted this morning, July 7, 1961, relative to his observation as to the possibility of utilizing 'electronic devices' in organized crime investigations.

"The strong objection to the utilization of telephone taps as contrasted to microphone surveillance was stressed. The Attorney General stated he recognized why telephone taps should be restricted to national-defense-type cases and was pleased we had been using microphone surveillances where these objections do not apply wherever possible in organized crime matters.

"The Attorney General noted that he had approved several technical surveillances in connection with security-type investigations since he took office, but that he had not kept any record and didn't really know what he had approved and what surveillances were currently in operation. He said that for his own information he would like to see a list of the technical surveillances now in operation. He added that this could be brought over to him personally and that he would look it over and immediately return it because he realized the importance of having these records maintained under the special security conditions which only the FBI had.

If the director approves, we will have the list of technical surveillances prepared, delivered personally to the Attorney General and then returned to the bureau's file."