

Black Panthers Wage A Battle for Survival

Militants Hurt By Crackdown

By Laurence Stern
Washington Post Staff Writer

Working in carefully guarded obscurity within the Justice Department, a small force of government lawyers has been preoccupying itself this year with the activities of the Black Panther Party.

The task force consists of white, middle-class career public servants who regard themselves, on the whole, as racial moderates.

They report directly to the heads of three principal Justice Department divisions, Internal Security, Civil Rights and Criminal. The heads are, respectively, J. Walter Yeagley, Jerris Leonard and Will Wilson.

The interdivisional unit was created by Attorney General John N. Mitchell early this year to coordinate department's effort in dealing with Black Panther activities.

Jury Probing Group

Victor C. Woerheide, the senior attorney in Mitchell's special group, is now presenting evidence to a special San Francisco grand jury that is looking into activities of Black Panther leaders in that region—the home of the movement's national headquarters.

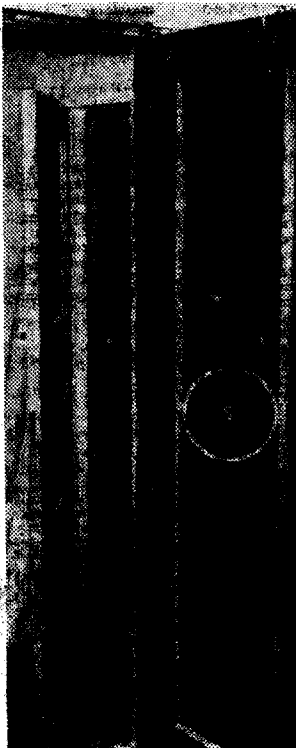
There has been no public announcement yet of the purpose or scope of that inquiry. It is, however, the second federal prosecution started this year of Black Panther activities. The other case is against David Hilliard, Black Panther chief of staff, who was arrested on Dec. 3 for saying to a crowd of more than 100,000 in San Francisco during the Nov. 15 Mobilization observance:

"We will kill Richard Nixon. We will kill any m - - - that stands in the way of our freedom."

See PANTHERS, A24, Col. 1



Associated Press
DAVID HILLIARD
... held in threat to Nixon



Associated Press
Chicago police insist this hole was made by bullet fired from inside, while Panthers say it came from the outside.

Chicago Raid: Versions Clash

By William Chapman
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Washington Post Staff Writers

CHICAGO, Dec. 13 — At 4:45 a.m. on the chilly morning of Dec. 4, 14 Chicago policemen armed with a sub-machine gun, three shotguns and sidearms, burst into a seedy apartment in the West Side ghetto.

Inside were nine black men and women, including the charismatic leader of the Illinois Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton, and a Panther leader from Peoria, Mark Clark.

Many bursts of gunfire shattered through the room. When it was over, Hampton and Clark were dead, four of their friends and one policeman were wounded.

Those were the stark facts—and they are still the only ones which all Chicago is agreed upon. All the rest, for the past 10 days, has been the subject of intensifying disagreement.

"Murder," said the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, a moderate civil rights leader. A "search and destroy mission" organized to eliminate their party's leadership, said the Panthers.

It was a "shootout" spawned by a legal, routine raid to seize illegal weapons by officers who never knew until afterward that Hampton and Clark were in the rooms, insisted Cook County's States Attorney, Edward V. Hanrahan.

After examinations of the apartment and interviews with many sources on both sides, it appears:

• That the police account of their entry and of being fired on first is subject to serious doubts.

See CHICAGO, A3, Col. 1

• That virtually all of the shots came from weapons fired into the Panthers' quarters from directions where police had entered. Most of it was directed toward Hampton's bedroom.

• That no evidence is available to show that Hampton and Clark were the deliberately chosen targets of the raid.

The full police version of the raid was released publicly this week in an extraordinary fashion—through a lengthy story in the Chicago Tribune and a police re-enactment on television that apparently is unprecedented in the annals of crime.

Police Report

The following is what police said happened:

Hanrahan's office, which includes about 100 assigned Chicago policemen, had received reports from two informants that illegal weapons were present in the apartment on West Monroe Street, a block from Black Panther Headquarters.

A warrant was obtained to search the premises. It did not name the occupant. Although Hanrahan's office knew that was Hampton's address, the officers making the raid insist they did not connect him with that apartment.

Sgt. Daniel Groth and two detectives decided that an early morning raid was necessary, both to avoid injury to bystanders in the residential block and to minimize danger to themselves. Groth said they expected to "run up against dangerous individuals."

No tear gas was brought along in case the occupants resisted, Groth said, because the officers counted on surprise and because their mission was to enter and search.

Groth and four men approached the first of two doors leading into the apartment. (The first door faces the street and opens into a small anteroom. On the immediate left is the second door, leading directly into the apartment living room).

Groth knocked twice on the door, heard a voice say, "Who's there?" and answered that they were police with a search warrant. When he demanded again that the door be opened, a voice replied, "Just a minute."

Blast from Within

Without waiting further, Groth ordered the door kicked open and the officers moved into the anteroom. A shotgun blast came through the inner door from inside the apartment.

The officers burst inside and began firing—at a woman holding a shotgun in the living room, then at a man with another shotgun.

Simultaneously, four other officers burst in the rear door. Then followed what police first reported as a 20-minute exchange of gunfire. Shotgun blasts and pistol fire reportedly came from two bedrooms and police in front and back returned fire. Groth called for the the occupants to surrender several times. A voice from a bedroom said, "Shoot it out."

Eventually, three persons surrendered from the rear bedroom. Police entered the front bedroom, shot two persons, and found a third already injured. When the shooting ended, Clark was slumped dead behind the front door, through which police had entered and Hampton was lying face-down on his bed, dead of bullet wounds in his head. Police confiscated nine shotguns, seven pistols, two carbines and several hundred rounds of ammunition.

Subject to Question

This police account is subject to question on two major points:

The direction of the first blast through the inner front door.

Police said it was a shotgun blast from inside, although a single hole was left in the wooden panel. Police claim the single hole was caused by a deer slug fired from a shotgun within.

However, had it been fired from inside, and missed the officers outside, the slug seemingly would have smashed against a wall directly across the anteroom behind them. There are no marks on that wall to indicate a slug struck it.

In an interview this week, Hanrahan acknowledged that the expended slug



FRED HAMPTON
... slain Panther leader



MARK CLARK
... victim of gunfire

which pierced the door was never recovered. An aide said they "conjectured" that it flew out the open front doorway, which is at a right angle to the inner door and into the street.

Attorneys Have Door

The door was removed this week and is in the hands of defense attorneys representing the surviving Panthers, who are charged with attempted murder.

Reporters, black policemen and defense lawyers who examined the door maintained that splintering marks indicate that the shot came from outside and was fired from the anteroom where police stood.

One of those is Renault Robinson, a Chicago police officer who is head of the Afro-American Patrolmen's League. Robinson and other black officers investigated the premises on the day of

the shooting.

The second point concerns the firing inside the apartment.

Police contend there was a general exchange of gunfire with officers firing into the bedrooms and with the occupants firing out. There are dozens of bullet holes on the walls of the bedrooms. Reporters could find no definite bullet holes or chip marks on the walls opposite those bedrooms or around the front and rear doors through which police entered. There is one hole in the edge of the outer front door, seemingly caused by a bullet fired from inside.

There are about 40 bullet holes in the wall separating the living room from the front bedroom. All indications are that they were caused by fire from a submachine gun from the front of the apartment.

Many other holes, apparently from a gun fired from the same direction, are in the wall directly above the bed where Hampton was found dead. There are more holes high up on the rear wall of Hampton's bedroom.

Photographs Released

In an attempt to prove that the police were fired upon, Hanrahan's office this week took the extraordinary step of releasing police photographs of the apartment's interior to one newspaper, the Chicago Tribune. The photographs displayed three different scenes, purporting to show holes caused by bullets fired by people in the apartment.

The first was of the front-door slug hole, the origin of which is very much in dispute.

The other two turned out not to be what the Tribune's police pictures described. Reporters — first from the Sun-Times and then from other newspapers — discovered the pictures were mislabeled and did not, in fact, represent firing by persons inside the apartment.

One picture was of the rear door through which the second contingent of police had entered. In the police photos, two "bullet holes" were circled in the door facing. The caption said that Hanrahan "released pictures to the Tribune showing that bullets were fired from inside the secret headquarters of Black Panthers."

The "bullet holes," however, turned out to be the rusted heads of nails in the door facing. When questioned by the press, Hanrahan said the Tribune's employees, not his office, had circled the spots on the pictures and had written the caption. "We are not editors,"