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F.B.I. SOUGHT DOOM OF PANTHER PARTY

Senate Study Says Plot Led to Internal Splits, 'Gang Warfare' and Killings

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 8—The Federal Bureau of Investigation carried out a secret, nationwide effort to "destroy" the Black Panthers, including attempts to stir bloody "gang warfare" between the Panthers and other groups and to create factional splits within the party, according to the staff report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities.

The bureau's efforts contributed to a climate of violence in which four Black Panthers were shot to death in internal battles, according to the report. Independent police and Panther sources said there had been two other slayings of Panthers in intraparty rivalry in New York City. The plan, part of the F.B.I. Cointelpro, or counter-intelligence program, against dissidents and radicals, the committee report said, included driving a wedge between two Panther leaders, Eldredge

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Cleaver and Huey P. Newton, and splitting the party by sending bogus divisive letters.

The bureau also used informers and bogus messages and cartoons to make trouble between the Panthers and a black nationalist group called US in southern California and between Chicago Panthers and the Blackstone Rangers, a heavily armed street gang, according to the report, released this week.

Warned of a 'Hit'

For example, a faked note was sent to the leader of the street gang Jeff Forte, telling him of the Panthers' hostility toward his group, saying, "There's supposed to be a hit out for you."

In noting that this meant there was probably a contract to kill someone, the Chicago F.B.I. office sent in a memorandum to headquarters that the letter "may intensify the degree of animosity between the two groups and occasion Forte to take retaliatory action which could disrupt the B.P.P. [Black Panther Party] or lead to reprisals against their leadership."

The report portrays a campaign in which the bureau used a legion of informers, sometimes as provocateurs, and close cooperation with local police antiradical squads to sow confusion, fear and dissension among the Panthers. Cartoons attacking them, purportedly from rival groups, were distributed to aggravate antagonisms. Stories were planted with newspaper and television outlets, put the Panthers and their supporters in a bad light. Bogus messages were sent to cause rifts between the party and its white leftist supporters.

After a series of clashes between the Panthers and Ron Karenga's U.S. group — U.S. stood for United Slaves — in southern California, which resulted in three deaths (one more would follow), the San Diego F.B.I. office sent to headquarters a message that the report says "pointed with pride" to the violence, saying:

"Shootings, beatings and a high degree of unrest continues to prevail in the ghetto area of southeast San Diego. Although no specific counterintelligence action can be credited with contributing to this overall situation, it is felt that a substantial amount of the unrest is directly attributable to this program."

'Intolerable' Tactics

The committee report said that the techniques used in Cointelpro "would be intolerable in a democratic society even if all the targets had been involved in violent activity; but Cointelpro went far beyond that."

"The unexpressed major premise of the programs," the report went on, "was that a law enforcement agency has the duty to do whatever is necessary to combat perceived threats to the existing social and political order."

A separate committee report on the F.B.I. efforts against the Black Panthers said that, although the "claimed purpose" of the program was to prevent violence, some of the tactics "were clearly intended to foster violence, and many others could reasonably have been expected to cause violence."

The bureau, this report concluded, "itself engaged in lawless tactics and responded to deep-seated social problems by fomenting violence and unrest."

William C. Sullivan, former assistant to the director of the F.B.I., testified before the committee:

"This is a rough, tough, dirty business, and dangerous. It was dangerous at times. No hokks were barred."

The Black Panther Party, in a statement issued from its headquarters in Oakland, Calif., yesterday, said that the disclosures in the Senate committee report were "too little and too late" and constituted the "tip of the iceberg."

"Since the early days of the Black Panther Party founding nearly a decade ago, constant attempts have been made to call attention to F.B.I.-led incidents of harassment and violence," the statement said.

Clarence M. Kelley, director of the bureau, in a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Mo., today, issued the first official apology for the program, saying, "We are truly sorry we were responsible for instances which now are subject to such criticism."

Mr. Kelley also said, "Many of the activities being condemned were . . . good faith efforts to prevent bloodshed and wanton destruction of property."

Similar Instances Found

Mr. Kelley's apology notwithstanding, the report said that the Senate committee had not been able to determine "the extent to which Cointelpro may be continuing." The committee found three instances of similar operations, the report said, even though the program was supposed to have been abandoned "for security reasons" in April, 1971, after the existence of Cointelpro had been made known when a radical band made off with documents from F.B.I. office in Media, Pa. The report suggested that a search of the more than 500,000 Bureau's case files might be "productive."

The report noted that in the current fiscal year the bureau had budgeted some \$7.4 million for domestic intelligence informers, more than twice the amount budgeted for informers in organized crime.

The committee investigators had considerable difficulty, according to staff sources, in assembling their information.

For instance, these sources said, the F.B.I. declined to turn

over documents in which its Chicago office said that their informer had been the sole source of information that led to the Chicago police raid in 1960 in which the state Panther leader, Fred Hampton, was killed.

'Gang Warfare' Noted

Those documents were obtained only in the last week by the committee because they turned up in a civil damage suit filed in Chicago by the Panthers who survived the raid. They emerged there because testimony in the case indicated that documents were being withheld and a federal district judge, Joseph Sam Perry, ordered a search that turned up more than 50 volumes of previously undisclosed files.

The Panthers became the primary focus of the "black nationalist hate groups" section of Cointelpro by July 1969, and were the target of 233 of the 295 actions authorized against black groups, the report says. J. Edgar Hoover, the F.B.I. director, sent a memorandum to 14 field offices in late 1968 noting that a "state of gang

warfare" existed between the Karenga organization and the Panthers "with attendant threats of murder and reprisals." He ordered "imaginative and hard hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP" to be drawn up to "fully capitalize" on the rivalry and "exploit all avenues of creating further dissension" in the Panther ranks.

On Jan. 17, 1969, two Panthers, "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins, were killed in a shootout with US members on the University of California, Los Angeles, campus. The F.B.I. helped stir the feud further, the report says, and on May 23 John Savage, a Panther, was killed and another, Sylvester Bell, was slain on Aug. 15, both by US members. There were other confrontations.

At one point, a bureau memorandum said, its informers in both camps would be used so the Karenga group would be "appropriately and discreetly advised of the time and location of B.P.P. activities in order that the two organizations might be brought together and thus grant nature the opportunity to take her due course."

Enmity Inflamed

Although it is not mentioned in the report, both the police and Panther sources say that a split that developed in the Panthers, Robert Webb, a member of the Cleaver faction in New York, was shot while selling the party newspaper on 125th Street on March 9, 1971 by Panthers loyal to Huey P. Newton. In retaliation, Samuel Lee Napier, circulation manager of the paper, controlled by the Newton faction, was slain in Queens on April 17, 1971.

The report heavily documents the efforts of the F.B.I. to ex-

acerbate the split by sending false messages back and forth between Mr. Cleaver, who had fled to Algeria to avoid prosecution for parole violation, and the Newton group in Oakland, telling of alleged failings, deviations, high living and plots.

These F.B.I. efforts began, the report says, in March 1970 while Mr. Newton was in jail on a voluntary manslaughter conviction, later overturned, in connection with a gunfight in which an Oakland policeman was slain. The Panthers at that time were presenting a united front.

An anonymous letter was sent to Mr. Cleaver telling him that the California Panthers were seeking to undercut his influence. This prompted him to expel three party members, the report said.

What then followed, the report said, was a "barrage" of letters of various types to sow divisiveness, creating what an F.B.I. memorandum described as a "chaotic situation" that "must be exploited." Among them was a directive, on false Panther stationery, attributed to the Newton group, declaring that Mr. Cleaver was "a murderer and a punk" and warning that anyone aiding "Cleaver and his jackanapes" would be "dealt with."

The Panthers' newspaper and the their free "breakfast for children" program were particular targets of the F.B.I.'s efforts, the report said. In a memorandum disclosed in the civil damage suit in Chicago, Mr. Hoover said the breakfast program had generated publicity that showed the Panthers in an unfavorable light and clouds the violent nature of the group and its ultimate aim of insurrection.