

KC 44-760

RBA:ss

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The following investigation was conducted by SA [REDACTED]

On May 6, 1968, EARL KNIGHT, MSP [REDACTED] serving [REDACTED] from New Madrid, Missouri, said he did not know JAMES EARL RAY. He said he was at Fordland (honor camp) on [REDACTED]. He said he came to the penitentiary in [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and was out on [REDACTED]. He said he never heard of a bounty for the killing of MARTIN LUTHER KING and never heard of any time of a mutual organization for protection, profit or otherwise. He said he had never heard of the COOLEY gang or anyone by the name of COOLEY.

On May 6, 1968, MAJOR BERNARD J. POIRY, Assistant Warden in charge of Security, said that the person who escaped by using a uniform and going out the gate was [REDACTED] number [REDACTED]. He was apprehended in Kansas City, Missouri, the next day. He said [REDACTED] also attempted to escape by using a ladder and a uniform. He did not get away from the walls. He also said that the only person who had ammunition in his pockets was a [REDACTED] and another inmate by the name of [REDACTED]. He said he also traced some ammunition to the shop where [REDACTED] worked, but could not "pin" them on him. He said RAY was never involved in any of these matters.

MAJOR POIRY said he had no information regarding any COOLEY or COOLEY gang, but would attempt to develop information in this regard through his inmate contacts.

On May 14, 1968, MAJOR POIRY further advised he has developed no information in regards this alleged organization or group.

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The following investigation was conducted by
SA [REDACTED]

At Leavenworth, Kansas

On May 17, 1968, Inmate [REDACTED] USP
[REDACTED] advised he is serving a [REDACTED] sentence for
[REDACTED] from St. Louis. He said he began serving his
sentence in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] said he knew JAMES EARL RAY from about
[REDACTED] to [REDACTED] when both were inmates at the Missouri State
Penitentiary (MSP), Jefferson City, Missouri. He said
RAY was still in the MSP when he was released. He said
he knew RAY as a good friend, but did not cell with him or
work in the same place with him.

[REDACTED] said he did not have any conversations with
RAY concerning escape or what RAY would do if he did escape.
He said to his knowledge, RAY did not plan or consider
escape...

[REDACTED] said he did not know RAY to be race minded
and said he was surprised that RAY would consider killing
for racial reasons.

[REDACTED] said RAY's closest friend at the MSP was
[REDACTED] who is presently released and residing at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] St. Louis, Missouri.

RAY talked about having a brother in St. Louis
and apparently this brother was connected in some way with
the supplying of drugs to RAY. [REDACTED] was connected closely
with RAY in the supplying of drugs in the MSP. Two other
inmates were also connected with this business, [REDACTED]
of St. Louis, Missouri and [REDACTED] of Kansas City.

[REDACTED] said it was hard to estimate what RAY's
take per month on the drug sales was, but it would probably
run an average of \$200.00 per month. Some months it might
be nothing and others it might run up to \$1,000.00. He said
this would depend on the source of supply and ability of
suppliers to get drugs into the penitentiary.

[REDACTED] Missouri State Penitentiary, # [REDACTED] said he knew RAY well. He said he was working in [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] when RAY escaped and he knew all about it. He said another inmate was going to escape in the bread box, but he and RAY decided, since RAY had more time, that RAY would go. He said the other inmate gave RAY some money and some clothing he had acquired to make the escape, and RAY went with the cooperation of the other inmate covering him and "for him". [REDACTED] said under no circumstances would he divulge the identity of this other inmate since he is a good friend of his and still in the prison. He said there was no conspiracy and no mention had ever been made of Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING and he doubts that RAY had anything to do with that murder. He said it was a case of law enforcement attempting to get a "scapegoat".

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[REDACTED] Missouri State Penitentiary # [REDACTED] assigned to [REDACTED] said he was out of the penitentiary from [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] when he was returned for [REDACTED]. He said he knew RAY to talk to him, but knew nothing of his escape and could furnish no information concerning his whereabouts. He said he has heard of a lot of cliques in the penitentiary that make bets, handle amphetamines, etc., but he knew of no organization called Cooley or similar and had never heard of any bounty on Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING.

Warden HAROLD SWENSON, Missouri State Penitentiary, advised he could locate no record of [REDACTED], in or out of the penitentiary.

[REDACTED] Missouri State Highway Patrol, Jefferson City, Missouri, advised no record for [REDACTED] could be located.

On May 18, 1968, Assistant Warden JESS ELLIOTT, Missouri State Penitentiary, and [REDACTED] Identification, advised they could locate no [REDACTED] as ever having been in the Missouri State Penitentiary.

Mr. DANTON STEELE, Captain of the Guards, Missouri State Penitentiary, said he has been employed "inside the walls" at the penitentiary for 13 years. He said he could not recall [REDACTED]. He said he knew JAMES EARL RAY, and knew of no relationship between RAY and [REDACTED]. He said he did not know of any COOLEY organization or similar. He said there are countless small cliques of inmates who have various "rackets" going and cigarettes have always been used as a medium of exchange, in lieu of money, which is not allowed inside the walls. He said RAY is not the type of person who would have killed MARTIN LUTHER KING, and he was not a "leader" of any type in the penitentiary. His claim to fame was his various attempts, finally successful, to escape. He said RAY was never a "walk boy" in J Hall or any other hall. He said the best he could recall was that he either was a maximum security or assigned to food services all the time he was in.

Mr. STEELE said he also has been told the name of the inmate who aided RAY in escaping by putting bread over him in the "bread box". However, he was unable to recall it. He said "it would come to him", and he would immediately advise.

[REDACTED] Board of Pardons and Paroles, said that [REDACTED] # [REDACTED] was arrested [REDACTED] at Wyandotte, Kansas and bond was set at \$2,500.00. At that time he was living at [REDACTED] Kansas City, Kansas.

[REDACTED] # [REDACTED], serving [REDACTED] for [REDACTED] from Moberly, Missouri, said he came to the penitentiary in [REDACTED] and was released the same year on a [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] sentence. He was returned, on his present sentence, in [REDACTED]; paroled [REDACTED]; back on parole violation in [REDACTED]. Paroled on [REDACTED] and returned on [REDACTED]. He said he has been [REDACTED] but is now working as [REDACTED]. He said [REDACTED] worked under him. He said RAY never did. He knew RAY on sight, but never associated with him and he never saw [REDACTED] with RAY and knew of no relationship between them.

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BAKER said he sent [REDACTED] a letter in August, 1963, advising him he would be unable to handle his case. BAKER also produced a letter dated July 10, 1963, that he received from JERRY RAY, 1713 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri. This letter states as follows:

"I visited my brother James Ray this past Sunday and he said you represent him. Also, he said he was going to mail you \$49.75 plus later on send you some money and you are supposed to send it to me.

"He will let you know when he sends it. He will also let me know.

"/s/ Jerry Ray"

BAKER advised that this was the extent of his contact with RAY and can furnish no further information regarding him. However, if such information comes to his attention, he will immediately contact the FBI.

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After interview with attorney PHILLIP LEE BAKER at Independence, Missouri, SA [REDACTED] returned to the office and checked subject's file to determine if there was a recording of subject's sending \$50 to attorney PHILLIP LEE BAKER. Prison records failed to substantiate this. In fact, they show that on June 19, 1963, PHILLIP LEE BAKER, 516 Guitar Building, Columbia, Missouri, sent a money order of \$50 to JAMES EARL RAY. Because of this, SA [REDACTED] recontacted attorney PHILLIP LEE BAKER the same date.

BAKER advised that his file reveals that he received a letter from JAMES EARL RAY dated May 19, 1963, from the Missouri State Penitentiary stating he was going to sign over \$50 to BAKER and the money would be sent to him when money orders can be sent out. He advised that he got a letter dated June 11, 1963, postmarked June 11, 1963, from JAMES EARL RAY indicating that a relative was sending him \$100. He stated he received another letter dated June 7, 1963, postmarked June 12, 1963, from the Missouri State Penitentiary enclosing a check or money order (BAKER could not tell from this letter) for legal fees. This letter was unsigned, however, the return address listed [REDACTED] Missouri State Penitentiary # [REDACTED]. BAKER advised that his records revealed that on June 17, 1963, he sent RAY a check for \$50 which was the excess over his legal fees.

BAKER stated he could not remember any further details of these transactions, however, he would continue to review his files and check records and see if he could furnish any information which would be more helpful in this matter. BAKER supposed that maybe he was supposed to send the \$50 to JERRY RAY instead of back to the subject in view of the letter he received from JERRY RAY on July 10, 1963, however, he could not elaborate on this.