March 21, 1969

GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION

This is the case involving the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The attached sets forth statements made by one of the local officers regarding the conversation that took place between James Earl Ray and the officers who accompanied Ray during transfer from Memphis to Tennessee State Prison, Nashville. Ray stated that about 90% of the information appearing in "Look" magazine (written by William Bradford Huie) were lies. Ray compared the British jails with the Shelby County jails and stated a "Federal man" had the Shelby County jail windows boarded.

The reference to the "Federal man" apparently pertains to U. S. Bureau of Prison personnel who consulted with local authorities relative to Ray's incarceration at Memphis.

Attached statement being furnished to the Department.

REL:jms

5648

FBI

Date: 3-18-69

Transmit the following in _____ (Type in plaintext or code)

Via AIRTEL AM (Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (44-38861)

FROM: SAC, MEMPHIS (44-1987) P

MURKIN

There are enclosed two copies of report of Captain RICHARD M. DAWSON, one of the officers who accompanied RAY during his transfer from custody of the Sheriff's Department, Memphis, to the Tennessee State Prison, Nashville.

3 BUREAU (Enc. 2)(AM)
1 MEMPHIS

RGJ:BN
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Approved: _____ Sent _____ M Per _____
Special Agent in Charge

Statement of RICHARD M. DAWSON, Captain of the Tennessee Highway Patrol, station at Jackson, Tennessee. Made in the Attorney General's Office at 11:40 A.M. on Tuesday, March 18, 1969. Questioned by John L. Carlisle. Typed by Mrs. Loretta Bennett.

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Relative to the JAMES EARL RAY case.

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Q. Captain Dawson, on the morning of March 11, 1969, did you, with other officers of the Tennessee Highway Patrol, accompany James Earl Ray to the State Penitentiary at Nashville?

A. Yes sir, I did.

Q. Would you name the officers that accompanied you and relate any discussion as you can recall between Ray and any of the officers.

A. Yes sir. We assumed custody of Ray at approximately 5:20 A.M. in the Highway Patrol Station on Summer Avenue, Memphis. He was placed in the rear seat of the automobile. I sat on his left. Commissioner O'Rear was on his right. Inspector Mickey McGuire drove. Deputy Commissioner Bud Hopton sat in the front on the right. I recall some...for the first 15-20 minutes, there was very little conversation. As we continued on, Ray made some remarks concerning the landscape and scenery. I remember asking Ray that yesterday was his birthday and he looked like he had celebrated it with a bang. He said, hell, yesterday wasn't my birthday. I've lied to them so much they don't know when I was born,..or words to that effect. I remember Inspector McGuire asking Ray then if the articles in Look Magazine pertaining to his case were in fact truth. Ray responded...hell no, about 90% of it is lies and Huie now knows about the time that I was in a mental institution and I understand that his next article is going to say that I'm crazy. I also remember McGuire asking Ray if he had been in Nashville before. Ray said that is where the Grand Ole Opry is, isn't it? I don't remember if he said he had or had not been in Nashville but he said he had not been to the Grand Ole Opry. I remember Ray asking me if I was with the prison. I told him no and asked why. He said I was wondering if legal services are available in the State Pen. Commissioner O'Rear told him he would have to take that up with the warden of the institution. I remember Ray saying they had not treated him badly in the Shelby County Jail other than the damn Federal man had had the windows boarded up and he could not see out or get any fresh air with the exception of what was blown in and it made him feel like he had a cold all the time. I remember asking Ray how the jail here compared to the confinement facilities in England. He said in England they had two types of jails, one before trial and one after trial and that the one before trial was not bad, but he understood the other one was rough as hell. I remember him saying that he was trying to get to Africa, but the riots were going on in France and he had gone to Portugal, but was unable to get a boat to Africa; but heard he could get one in Brussels so he returned to England intending to get to Brussels. He said he had run out of money, and that he had intended to go to Brussels and get a boat to Africa. I recall some conversation and I don't know who asked the question, concerning getting the passports in Canada and also the mention wa

made that one of them, we understood, was in the area of [illegible] police officer and he laughed heartily, but he did [illegible] He made no reference to the crime itself. He did ask [illegible] if he would be placed in a cell or be allowed to be outside some and he was told that he should take this up with the warden of the institution. He indicated that he sure wish they would not lock him in a cell. I recall that he said he had sure messed up and if it was to do over, he would not have pleaded guilty to the offense. We arrived at the Penitentiary at 8:06 and Ray was released to the prison authorities.

Q. That's all, thank you.

RICHARD M. DAWSON

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