

7 054 2/10/69

Justice Denies Assisting Police In Any Harassment of Panthers

The Justice Department said yesterday that it "has never had any policy of concerted activity with local police in order to harass any members of the Black Panther party."

Some Panther supporters have claimed that federal authorities have joined state and local law officers in an effort to suppress the militant black group.

A spokesman for Attorney General John N. Mitchell said that "only one member of the Black Panther party has been indicted this year by a federal grand jury for party-related activities and that was for making a public threat against the life of the President."

The Justice Department statement noted that the "recent incidents of violence," including the slaying of two Black Panther leaders in Chicago last week, "took place when local police departments were attempting to serve warrants. The violations alleged in the warrants were infractions of state law and were not under federal jurisdiction. No federal officials participated in the police actions."

The statement added that the department's civil rights division "is considering a request to make an investigation of allegations that undue force may have been used by local police in carrying out their obligations."

A department spokesman

said the request for an investigation was made by Illinois State Sen. Charles Chew Jr. after the Chicago slayings in a police raid last week.

That was the fourth violent clash between police and Black Panthers in Chicago in four months. Two policemen and three Black Panthers have been killed and 14 policemen and eight Black Panthers injured.

Charles Garry, the Panthers' general counsel, has estimated that 28 Panther party members have died in gun fights with police since January, 1968.

Civil rights attorney Joseph L. Rauh of Washington, a vice chairman of the Americans for

Democratic Action, asked Chairman Emanuel Celler (D-N.Y.) of the House Judiciary Committee to begin a committee investigation of police shootings of Black Panther officials.

"We hold no brief for the Black Panthers," Rauh said in his letter. "Where they violate the law, they should be prosecuted and prosecuted vigorously. But we oppose anyone taking the law into his own hands, including the police."

In Chicago, the police department said it did not intend to have its internal inspections division make an inquiry into the conduct of the 14 policemen involved in last week's shootings.

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A department spokesman also said that it is considering a request to determine whether local police had used unnecessary force against Black Panthers. The request came from Illinois State Sen. Charles Chew Jr. Police in Chicago shot to death two Black Panthers last Thursday.

Details on Page A2.