

FBI Silent on Rumor Brown Is in Algeria

3/70 By George Lardner, Jr.
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The FBI had no comment yesterday on a report that H. Rap Brown is in Algeria, but government officials insisted widely that it was "speculation" at best.

The fiery black militant, now on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list, dropped out of sight at least two days before he was to be tried in Maryland March 9 on charges of arson and inciting to riot.

The Washington Star reported yesterday, without elaboration, that Brown, "according to Government sources," was in Algeria.

Brown's lawyer, William M. Kunstler, said he was inclined to doubt it.

"I don't think he would go underground in a friendly country," Kunstler said in a telephone interview. "My own guess is that if Rap gets anywhere like that, he would issue a statement to allay the fears of his friends and family."

The refuge of Eldridge Cleaver, another black power leader facing criminal charges, Algeria has no extradition treaty with the United States. The CIA, as usual, had no comment.

State Department officials, however, said a check with U. S. diplomats in Algiers turned up no immediate information that Brown was in the country. Government officials in other agencies, who declined to be named, said they had nothing solid on his whereabouts.

"We've had constant speculation about his being in 11 different places," said one. He said there was "nothing concrete whatsoever" about the Algeria report.

The 26-year-old chairman of the Student National Coordinating Committee, Brown was reported last seen March 7 when he left his Harlem apartment, ostensibly for a leisurely drive to Bel Air, Md., where he was to stand trial.

Preliminary motions began March 9. That night, two of Brown's friends were killed when dynamite exploded in their car near the Harford County seat. Brown was scheduled to appear in the courthouse the next morning, but he never showed up.

Court officials eventually reset the case for May 4 in Howard County. Brown's \$10,000 bond was revoked when he did not appear there and a bench warrant was issued for his arrest. Federal fugitive warrants were issued hours later.

Unless he shows up by June 3, he will also face prosecution for bail-jumping. Conviction could mean seven years in jail and fines up to \$7,000.

Brown had been ordered to trial on charges stemming from a controversial speech he gave in Cambridge, Md., in 1967. Fires and disorder broke out in the Negro section of town after he spoke.

The arson charge carries a maximum of 10 years in prison. Brown, has also been accused of inciting to riot and participating in a riot, but both of these counts are misdemeanors under Maryland law.