

FBI Apparently Faked Threat Against Activist

By Ronald Kessler
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The American Civil Liberties Union yesterday made public FBI documents showing the bureau fabricated a threatening letter in 1969 to persuade a black civil rights worker to leave Mississippi.

Within a month of receiving the letter, the documents show, the civil rights worker, Muhammad Kenyatta, returned to Pennsylvania, saying Mississippi was "too hot."

Although civil rights workers have long suspected they were the target of FBI harassment, yesterday's disclosures appeared to document an instance when the FBI had taken disruptive action against an activist who was not charged with violating any federal laws.

John H. F. Shattuck, national staff counsel of the ACLU, called disclosures in the bureau documents "shocking evidence" that the FBI had engaged in activities that were neither legal nor constitutional.

Speaking at a press conference, Shattuck said the ACLU obtained the documents from the FBI after Kenyatta, a Baptist minister who is a candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, charged the FBI in a lawsuit with violating his constitutional rights.

The suit was filed, Shattuck said, after Kenyatta learned from FBI documents stolen from the bureau's Media, Pa., office that he had been under FBI surveillance. Copies of the Media documents were sent to the press; the thieves were never caught.

The documents released yesterday show the FBI sent Kenyatta a bogus letter in 1969 to warn him that he should leave the Tougaloo College campus.

The letter purportedly was signed by a committee of Tougaloo students. In fact, the FBI documents show, it was prepared and mailed by the Jackson, Miss., FBI office.

In proposing the letter to the FBI director, then J. Edgar Hoover, the Jackson office said it hoped it would give

Kenyatta the impression that he has been discredited at the Tougaloo College campus and is no longer welcomed there, the FBI document said.

The letter that was sent warned that if Kenyatta did not leave "... we shall consider contacting local authorities regarding some of your activities or take other measures available to us which would have a more direct effect and which would not be as cordial as this note."

The FBI director was later informed by the Jackson office, the documents show, that Kenyatta was planning to return to Pennsylvania because of family problems, alleged law enforcement interest in him, and "the fact that he had received a letter from a defense committee at TC (Tougaloo College) indicating he was no longer welcome on the college campus..."

A year before the letter was sent, the documents show, Kenyatta, formerly Donald W. Jackson, had been placed on the FBI's "agitation index" as part of its Counterintelligence Program.

The program, started by Hoover in 1956 and ended in 1971, was intended to disrupt groups considered subversive.

The FBI said Kenyatta had tried to organize black power youth groups and started racist publications.

In 1969, the Jackson FBI office reported that an FBI source said Kenyatta had stolen a television set on the Tougaloo campus.

The source said he tried to publicize the incident among the students.

After the source was directed by the FBI to find out what would be done about the alleged theft, college authorities signed a complaint against Kenyatta, the FBI documents show.

Kenyatta said yesterday the charges were dropped, but he said he agreed to pay a fine for disturbing the peace, although he had not taken a television set nor disturbed the peace.