

SAC, MEMPHIS (170-98) (P)

4/16/68

SA WILLIAM H. LAWRENCE

REV. JAMES MORRIS LAWSON, JR.  
RM

On 4/15/68, SAC ROBERT G. JENSEN advised that he had received a call at 11:25 A.M., 4/15/68, from Assistant Director WILLIAM C. SULLIVAN, Domestic Intelligence Division of the FBI, to the effect that one Dr. DUDLEY WARD of the Methodist Center located on Capitol Hill, Washington, D. C. (apparently a lobbyist and national official of the Methodist Church) had advised the Bureau that he was most concerned about Rev. JAMES MORRIS LAWSON, JR., Pastor, Methodist Church, 653 Austin Street, Memphis, to the effect that he understood based on stories going around Washington, D. C., which were not elaborated upon and for which no basis in fact was furnished, that LAWSON will be the next prominent Negro civil rights leader to be murdered in the United States as a sequel to the 4/4/68<sup>murder</sup> of Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Assistant Director SULLIVAN has requested the Memphis FBI to (1) advise the Memphis PD of this fact and (2) to advise LAWSON and determine from him if he has, in fact, received any personal threats and if so from whom if he is aware as to their identity.

[REDACTED]

Race  
Sex  
DOB  
POB  
Convictions

Negro  
Male  
9/22/28  
Uniontown, Pennsylvania  
Convicted in USDC, Cleveland,  
Ohio, 4/25/51, to serve three  
years imprisonment for  
violation of SSA, 1948.

- 1 - 170-98
- ① - 157-1092
- 1 - 66-1687 Sub Dissemination
- WHL:PEH
- (3)

*Handwritten signatures and initials*

157-1092-325

Church affiliation      Pastor of the Centenary Methodist Church which until recently was located at 878 Mississippi Boulevard; the church is now located at 584 East McLemore having recently purchased this property.

At approximately 12:30 P.M., 4/15/68, SA LAWRENCE furnished the information concerning the welfare of Lawson regarding the welfare of Lawson. SA LAWRENCE was advised that a memo would be prepared for the Homicide Division and for COP JAMES C. Macdonald to this effect. Also immediately thereafter, the writer attempted to call LAWSON at his church. His secretary advised that he was not there, that he was probably at home, and he probably would be scheduled to return to the church at about 2 P.M.

The writer introduced himself, gave his full name and phone number of the office, and asked that she have LAWSON call the writer as early as possible as the matter was quite important. She stated she would do so.

Thereafter, the writer called LAWSON's residence and spoke to a woman who introduced herself as his wife. She stated LAWSON had just left to go to one of the Memphis radio or television stations for some sort of conference, and that she would have him call the writer as soon as she made contact with him. As of the late afternoon of 4/15/68, LAWSON had not returned the call.

SAC JENSEN in an afternoon conversation on 4/15/68 with GEORGE C. MOORE, Section Chief, Domestic Intelligence, advised Mr. MOORE of the efforts of the writer to locate LAWSON, and it was pointed out that it was not felt necessary to make any fugitive type or repeated efforts to contact LAWSON.

ME 170-98

as LAWSON is an intelligent person, that he personally knows the writer, and that he knows how to use the telephone.

It will be noted that the 4/12/68 issue of the Memphis newspaper, The Commercial Appeal, reported that LAWSON at a press conference for the Community on the Move for Equality of which he is chairman of the strategy committee had blasted the Memphis PD and Federal law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, stating that he did not feel that it was in their best interests to find the killer of Dr. KING. He did not elaborate. During this same press conference, LAWSON and Rev. SAMUEL B. KYLES, Pastor, Monumental Baptist Church, according to a story in the Memphis Press-Scimitar newspaper, 4/12/68 issue, page one, by reporter CLARK PORTEOUS, both LAWSON and KYLES blasted the Memphis PD, accused it of engaging in police brutality, accused it of stealing money from Negroes stopped for questioning, and accused it of harassing people during the recent curfew following the murder of Dr. KING. LAWSON claimed that police brutality would be the next major issue taken up by the above-mentioned COME group after the sanitation strike currently in progress ends.

It is significant to note that in another investigation, the MURKIN case (killing of Dr. KING ME 44-1987), SA LAWRENCE attempted to contact Rev. KYLES on 4/15/68 for the purpose of interviewing him inasmuch as it has been determined that he was registered in the Lorraine Motel on 4/3-4/68 when Dr. KING was registered there, and that his wife tersely stated that he was out of town and would not be back until 4/20/68 and refused to furnish information concerning his current location in order that he might be interviewed by another field division.

The actions circumstantially on the part of LAWSON and KYLES would tend to indicate their bitterness toward all law enforcement and their

ME 170-98

refusal to cooperate in matters of mutual interest and to discharge their civic responsibility as citizens of this country. It is felt that this information should be made a matter of record for future reference.

It will be noted that LAWSON was last arrested 4/5/68 by the Memphis PD on disorderly conduct charge when he and over 100 other persons refused to leave the Memphis City Hall after appearing to protest the treatment of the sanitation workers and on 4/15/68, Inspector H. L. MC ADEN, Memphis PD, advised LAWSON has Memphis PD [REDACTED] FBI [REDACTED] DOB, 9/22/28; POB, Uniontown, Pennsylvania.