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FBI was active against King

WASHINGTON (AP) — The staff of a Senate committee said Tuesday that the FBI waged a campaign against the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., including sending a letter which King interpreted as a suggestion he commit suicide.

The campaign to destroy King's influence also included the planting of 16 electronic bugs and eight wiretaps and an effort to hand pick and promote a successor to him as the nation's most influential black leader, committee lawyers said.

The disclosures came as the top lawyers of the Senate Intelligence Committee detailed FBI efforts to investigate, infiltrate and discredit thousands of persons in groups ranging from the Ku Klux Klan and the Communist party to the women's liberation movement.

Chief counsel F.A.O. Schwarz III and minority counsel Curtis Smothers said the full extent of the bureau's activities may never be known because most of director J. Edgar Hoover's personal files

were destroyed shortly after his death in 1972.

The staff lawyers gave the most complete account to date of the FBI's counterintelligence, or Cointel programs, which were aimed at disrupting the personal lives of members of alleged terrorist, radical or new left groups by causing them to lose their jobs, fight among themselves or be arrested by local police.

They documented several attempts at destroying the marriages of such persons through anonymous letters written by FBI agents.

In the case of King, Smothers testified that a draft of the anonymous letter his wife received was found at FBI headquarters in the file of deputy director William Sullivan.

They said Sullivan maintains the draft letter was planted in his files by persons attempting to discredit him.

They added the FBI does not dispute its authorship of the letter or the fact it was delivered to King.

King received the letter just 34 days before he was to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965, an event which Schwarz said generated intense FBI efforts to find information to discredit King.

Schwarz said the letter "includes materials the FBI had gathered illegally or improperly through tapes and bugs and so forth." Sen. Walter F. Mondale, D-Minn., said some of the bugs were installed in King's hotel room.

The letter read in part:

"King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do. (This exact number has been selected for a specific reason.) It has definite practical significance. You are done. There is but one way out for you."

The rest of the letter was not read because of privacy reasons, the lawyers said.

They said King himself interpreted the letter as a clear suggestion that he commit suicide.