

FBI Chief Backed on King Wiretap

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Newsman Says President Defends J. Edgar Hoover

By WILLIAM J. EATON

WASHINGTON — President Nixon has come to the defense of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover in a controversy involving the late Robert F. Kennedy and a wiretap aimed at the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Mr. Nixon bolstered Hoover's assertion that Kennedy, who

dence in the FBI chief.

"Mr. Hoover does enjoy my complete confidence and there has been no discussion so far as his future is concerned," the President began. He said that his own check had shown that Hoover was correct in insisting that each wiretap used by the FBI had been approved by the attorney general.

IT WILL BE his administration's policy to use electronic surveillance "very sparingly, very carefully . . . but very effectively" to protect national security, Mr. Nixon said.

Before the President's news conference comments, Hoover told the Washington Star that Kennedy proposed the wiretapping of the Negro minister because of concern over his possible Marxist ties.

Former associates of Kennedy said he approved the tap, at the FBI's suggestion, in an effort to clear King from charges of Communist sympathies that were being circulated in Congress to undermine support for federal civil rights legislation.

"There's no question that Bob (Kennedy) did not regard Martin Luther King as a security risk," said a former aid of the late senator, who asked not to be identified.

THE STAR'S copyrighted story said Kennedy signed an FBI memo, indicating approval, that said it was possible to apply taps to King's telephones at headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Ga., and at an unnamed location in New York City. The document was dated Oct. 10, 1963.

The FBI director also apparently showed the Star reporter a memo dated June, 1963, that was written by Courtney Evans, a former FBI official who was a go-between for Kennedy and Hoover. Evans said in the memo that Kennedy was concerned about allegations that King was a student of Marxism and associated with a New York attorney who was close to Communist party leaders. The memo indicated Kennedy wanted to know if it were technically possible to use electronic devices to prove or disprove the reports.

KENNEDY'S former associate, who once was a Justice Department official, disputed the Hoover claim. He said, "all the impetus came from the FBI" and it was "unmanly" for the FBI director to shift the blame to the slain senator from New York, who could not reply.

(Chicago Daily News Service)



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was attorney general when the tap was started in 1963, had approved the FBI's eavesdropping to check reports of King's associations with Communist party officials.

A NEWSMAN SAID at least one newspaper has called for the resignation of the 73-year-old Hoover and asked if the President has complete confi-