

FBI Altered Log On Cassius Clay

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government has admitted the FBI changed—without informing the Justice Department—a recorded log of wiretapped conversations involving former heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Clay.

In disclosing this to Clay's attorneys, the department Monday contended it did not learn of the FBI action until June 13,

several days after copies of what were purported to be the original logs were filed in U.S. District Court in Houston.

John S. Martin Jr. and Michael T. Epstein, who are handling the government's case against Clay, said the original record contained the notation, "Sum up in memo."

But the hand-written phrase was blanked out on documents

submitted to the court concerning a Sept. 4, 1964, telephone conversation between Clay and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The discrepancy came to light when Clay's lawyers, unsatisfied with copies, demanded to see the original transcripts. Epstein and Martin then checked with the FBI and found the penned-in portion was left off copies submitted in court.

Government attorneys were unhappy about the affair, expressing concern that the differences would cast doubts on the validity of the documents themselves.

No reason was given for the omission. The FBI had no comment. And special FBI Agent Robert R. Nichols, who supervised the tap on King's telephone, claimed in an affidavit the notation was of no consequence.

"When I initially scanned this log," Nichols said, "I made the handwritten notation 'sum up in memo,' as a flag to myself to consider this as an item to be placed in memorandum form."

"Upon subsequent detailed review of the entire log and evaluation of its contents," he added, "I decided the substance of the information did not warrant the preparation of a memorandum."

As summarized in the record, the conversation which Nichols considered unimportant was one in which Clay advised King to "watch out for them whities."

Clay, sentenced to five years'

imprisonment for refusing induction into the armed forces, is seeking further federal court hearings in an effort to overturn his conviction.

Meanwhile, Clay's lawyers contended at the Houston hearing the government took positions which "test the naivete of even their most willing believers."

"In short," they said, "the gap of credibility in this case now approaches a crater."

The Clay attorneys, headed by Charles Morgan Jr. of Atlanta, cited statements by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover last week during a controversy over whether Hoover, or the late Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, authorized the plan to tap King's telephone.

At that time, Hoover claimed the wiretap was installed on King's phone at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference headquarters in Atlanta.

"But in this court," the lawyers noted, "the undisputed testimony has been that the wiretap was on Dr. King's home telephone."