

Agency Kept Data On Panther Phones

By DIANE HENRY

Special to The New York Times

NEW HAVEN, Feb. 28—A newly released memorandum from the Federal Bureau of Investigation discloses that the agency kept telephone records of the Black Panther headquarters here during the time that Alex Rackley, a Panther member, was murdered.

The memorandum was obtained under a freedom-of-information request by lawyers in a civil suit representing dozens of people who believe they were overheard in an illegal wiretapping operation here by local police during the late 1960's and 1970.

John Williams, a lawyer, said he believes the memorandum represented the "first proof, black-and-white evidence," that the New Haven police or the F.B.I. had wiretaps on the house where Mr. Rackley was being tortured for three days and where plans were made for his murder. He was murdered in May 1969.

The memorandum lists "telephone numbers and subscribers of several numbers which were contacted from telephone 3 (787-5566) in New Haven, which was the headquarters for the B.P.P. [Black Panthers Party] in April and May of 1969." The memorandum is dated June 19, 1969, however the Panthers moved their headquarters within days of Mr. Rackley's murder.

Without Taping Conversations

It is possible to log telephone numbers without taping conversations by using a machine called a "pen register," however such machines are commonly used with tape recorders, as was the established case with the local police wiretaps.

No one has made any substantive charge or produced evidence that the F.B.I. or the Police Department had knowledge of the Rackley torture and murder plans even though evidence of wiretapping during that time appears to exist.

Mr. Rackley's murder resulted in the arrest of 14 Black Panthers, including the the national co-chairman, Bobby Seale. During the trial in 1970 thousands of protestors from across the country rallied on the New Haven Green. The trial of Mr. Seale and his co-defendant, Ericka Huggins, were freed by a hung jury.

The three telephone numbers attached to the memorandum were supplied by the F.B.I. in response to a specific F.B.I. request on the Hill Parents Association.

The memorandum obtained by Mr. Williams was addressed to the special agent in charge of the F.B.I. office in New Haven, however the author's name was batted out.