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Panther lawyers to view Hoover-ordered reports

By Rob Warden

In 1968, J. Edgar Hoover ordered FBI offices around the country to set up programs to prevent "the rise of a messiah who could unify and electrify the black nationalist movement."

He instructed each regional office to submit to him every two weeks a written report on its "imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling" the Black Panther Party.

It is clear that he intended the contents of the biweekly reports to be strictly confidential. "Because of the na-

ture of this program," Hoover messaged his regional chiefs, "each operation must be designed to protect the bureau's interest so that there is no possibility of embarrassment to the bureau."

Hoover has been dead for more than three years, yet the fear he expressed about the possibility of embarrassment is very much alive.

ALL OF THE "imaginative" ideas generated by the Chicago FBI office — presumably immortalized in those biweekly reports ordered by Hoover — are going to be released to, of all people, lawyers for Black Panthers.

A federal judge here Tuesday ordered the government to produce forthwith not only copies of the biweekly reports, but also copies of virtually all other FBI reports, letters and memos about Chicago Black Panthers.

For the time being, U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Sam Perry ordered the Panther lawyers to keep the contents of the reports to themselves.

But any of the information that Perry later determines is relevant evidence in a Panther civil suit will be made public.

THE PANTHERS are suing 28 FBI, Chicago police and state's attorney's officials for \$47.7 million in damages for the alleged wrongful deaths of Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

Hampton, who admirers believe might have been the "messiah" Hoover so feared, and Clark were shot to death by raiders under the direction of former State's Atty. Edward V. Hanrahan in a West Side apartment early the morning of Dec. 4, 1969.

Government lawyers argued vainly before Perry Tuesday against release of the FBI material, which the Panther lawyers contended will show ultimately that a conspiracy existed to deprive Panthers here of their rights and even their lives.

Panther lawyer James D. Montgomery charged that "the whole concept was born in the offices of the FBI" to have local officials conduct the violent raid.

JUSTICE Department lawyer Edward Christenbury, imported from Washington to bolster the defense, argued that none of the documents pertains specifically to the Dec. 4 raid and, consequently, the documents are irrelevant to the case.

But Montgomery's con-

tion that the Panthers "have a right to show previous attempts to do the same thing" prevailed with Perry.

The trial is scheduled to begin late this week or early next week, after Perry resolves the remaining pretrial issues raised in 11th-hour motions by both sides.