

Harold: See marked passage at bottom of p. 2 and 101 of p. 3

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FBI: 'No Justification' to Try to

By Norman Kempster
Washington Star Staff Writer

A top FBI official conceded today there was "no justification" for the bureau's years-long attempts to discredit Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

James Adams, assistant deputy director and the FBI's most frequent link with Congress, told the Senate Intelligence Committee that at least 23 separate efforts to harass King were improper and without justification.

However, Adams said the bureau began its investigation of the slain civil rights leader in an effort to determine if he was influenced by Communists. Adams added quickly, in answer to a question, that there was no evidence that King was a Communist.

Adams and FBI intelligence chief W. Raymond Wannall were called to answer questions after the intelligence committee yesterday revealed the results of a staff investigation showing widespread illegal activity on the part of the bureau.

Adams said former Atty. Gen.

Discredit Dr. King

Robert F. Kennedy approved the use of a wiretap on King's telephone after initially rejecting such a plan.

The committee's staff investigation showed that while there were two authorized telephone taps, there were 16 hidden microphones used against King without approval of the Justice Department.

Adams said much of the information concerning the FBI's investigation into possible Communist influence on King is still "too sensitive" to be discussed in public. The staff investigation included an exchange of messages between former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and then-FBI intelligence chief William Sullivan concerning efforts to discover Communist influence on King and the civil rights movement generally.

SULLIVAN AT FIRST said there was no evidence of Communist penetration but Hoover returned the memo with a sarcastic note that Sullivan once doubted Communist influence on Fidel Castro.

Sullivan apparently took the hint because in a later memo he referred to King as "the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country" and suggested an FBI meeting to discuss ways of dealing with him.

At one point Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, the committee chairman, noted the FBI had attempted to develop a "national Negro leader" to take King's place as the head of the civil rights movement. Church asked what authority entitled the FBI "to decide who should lead political movements in this country."

"I can't think of any off-hand," Adams replied. "Neither can I," Church said.

Sen. Philip Hart, D-Mich., broadened the focus of the questioning away from King.

"IT IS RIGHT that the committee and the press be concerned about the treatment of a Nobel Prize winner," Hart said. "But there are a lot of people who never got close to a Nobel Prize, whose names are Jones and Smith, who had violence done to their First Amendment rights."

Hart referred to anonymous letters the FBI now admits having sent to hus-

bands, wives and employers in an effort to break up marriages and deny jobs because of membership in groups the FBI considered improper.

Adams conceded the actions that Hart had cited were wrong and he insisted the FBI is no longer engaged in such activities.

But Adams said many of the attempts to disrupt groups ranging from the Communist Party to the Ku Klux Klan to the Black Panthers to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were born of frustration that the activities of such groups were not prohibited by law.

"What you are saying is you didn't operate within the law because the law didn't give you sufficient latitude," Church said.

SEN. JOHN TOWER, R-Texas, asked Adams, "Did you proceed on the assumption that those organizations might break the law and you would disrupt them before they did?"

"I can't say that," Adams said.

But Adams said, "We had men who felt there was a danger to this country. They felt they had a responsibility to act...I can't argue with their good faith determination."

The committee staff presentation yesterday, conducted by chief counsel Fritz Schwarz and minority counsel Curtis Smothers, included 29 years of FBI files recording efforts to disrupt and destroy organizations considered subversive.

The emotional peak of the hearing came from Hart, making his first appearance as a committee mem-

ber following a 2½-month bout with cancer. Hart offered a dramatic summary of the impact of the staff presentation.

"I've been told for years, by, among others, members of my own family, that this is what the bureau has been doing all this time," he said. "As a result of my superior wisdom in high office, I assured them that they were on pot — it just wasn't true. They (the FBI) just wouldn't do it. What you have described in a series of illegal actions intended to deny certain citizens their First Amendment rights — just like my children said." Many of the FBI activities have been revealed previously. But the committee's account, which added detail and indicated the scope of spying and disruptive efforts, is greater than had been previously reported.

Schwarz said there is evidence that the FBI sometimes ignored orders from the Justice Department to stop secretly illegal programs. But he said there is also evidence that on other occasions presidents and attorneys general acquiesced to or even ordered questionable programs.

FOR YEARS, former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover thiblated presidents with spicy accounts of the private lives of individuals who came under FBI scrutiny. There is no evidence that any president ever objected to getting such information.

On Nov. 26, 1969, this technique was formalized. In a letter to special agents in charge of bureau offices, Hoover said he regularly

would send to the White House summaries of "high-level intelligence data." These reports were code-named "Inlet."

In addition to other categories of information, Inlet letters were to include "items with an unusual twist or concerning prominent personalities." The Inlet procedure was discontinued in 1972. A bureau memo said it was no longer necessary because a teletype link had been established between the bureau and the White House.

According to Schwarz and Smothers, the most determined of all of the bureau's domestic counterintelligence activities was aimed at discrediting King and dissipating his influence in the black community.

SMOTHERS SAID the files show that Hoover was suspicious of King from the moment King first began to achieve national prominence with the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott in 1956. One reason for the animosity, Smothers suggested, was King's criticism of Hoover.

By December 1958, shortly after the assassination of former President John F. Kennedy, the effort to discredit King began in earnest. An FBI memo summarizing a meeting devoted to ways of dealing with King contains 21 suggestions of methods of obtaining derogatory information. Many of the ideas are phrased as questions. They include: "Can colored agents be of any assistance?" "What are the possibilities of using Mrs. King?" "Are there any disgruntled employees of

SCLC?" and "What are the possibilities of providing a food-locking female plant in King's office?"

Also suggested were telephone taps and hidden microphones. The first of these was installed the next month.

In all, 16 microphones were planted in hotel rooms used by King during the next few years. There also were several telephone taps.

SHORTLY BEFORE

King was to leave for Stockholm in 1965 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, the FBI sent King an anonymous letter which seemed to be a suggestion that he kill himself. The letter was accompanied by a tape recording of some of the hotel room bugs.

"King, there is only one thing left for you to do," the letter said. "You know what it is. You have just 34 days (the number of days before the Nobel ceremony) in which to do it. . . . You are done. There is but one way out for you."

King did not kill himself. But another FBI dirty trick may have indirectly contributed to his assassination in April of 1968.

The FBI files show that the bureau leaked to a friendly reporter that King was staying in the white-owned Holiday Inn during his participation in a sanitation workers strike that included a boycott of white-owned businesses. A bureau memo said King should be called a hypocrite because he was not staying in the Lorraine, a black-owned and black-patronized motel.

King did check into the Lorraine where he was shot to death April 4 while standing on a balcony. The FBI contends that he had checked into the black-owned motel before the reports of his stay at the Holiday Inn had surfaced.

IN 1953, former Asst. FBI Director William Sullivan suggested to Hoover that the bureau pick and develop a "national Negro leader" to take King's place. Hoover approved the plan, but apparently nothing ever came of it.

Smothers said the FBI had in mind a black who was prominent in a field other than civil rights. Smothers said the individual, whom he would not name, apparently never knew of the plan.

An obsession with communism runs through the documents that were either released or read.

An April 24, 1961, memo from Hoover to the special agent in charge of the New York office called for renewed investigation of a civil rights leader, whose name was removed before the document was made public: "The bureau does not agree with the expressed belief of the New York office that (deleted) is not sympathetic to the party cause. While there may not be any evidence that (deleted) is a Communist, neither is there any substantial evidence that he is anti-Communist."

AN EXCHANGE of memos between Hoover and Sullivan in mid-1953 illustrates Hoover's determination to find Communist

influence even where it might not exist and spotlights the problems of working for the often irascible director.

Sullivan at first said an investigation had turned up no evidence of substantial Communist penetration of the civil rights movement. Hoover peered at the bottom of the memo a sarcastic note that Sullivan once doubted Communist influence on Fidel Castro.

Sullivan took the hint. He shortly wrote a memo noting that "the director is correct." He said the intelligence operation may have "made a mistake of limiting ourselves to legalistic proof."

Hoover was not pleased. He asked Sullivan why he seemed to waver so in his opinion.

But 10 days later Sullivan wrote a memo that satisfied the director. He referred to King as "the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country," and suggested the meeting that resulted in an intensification of the program against King.

Schwartz and Smothers referred to previously disclosed FBI efforts to infiltrate such target groups as the Ku Klux Klan, black nationalist organizations, the Socialist Workers party and the New Left.

AT TIMES, they said, FBI infiltrators attempted to aggravate tensions between rival groups. They said there was one attempt to provoke a street war between the Black Panthers and the Los Angeles black nationalist group headed by

Ron Karenga. On another occasion, infiltrators tried to increase warfare between the Panthers and the Blackstone Rangers in Chicago.

"When it came to blacks, the most violent types of methods seemed to be acceptable," Smothers said. "If they were going to have gang fights and if they were going to be killing each other, it seemed to be an opportunity to promote it."

Both Schwartz and Smothers complained of the loose way in which the FBI classified its target groups. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was carried on the books as "black hate group" and Smothers said the "new left" category included groups ranging from opponents of the Vietnam War to critics of Hoover.

A July 5, 1968, memo from Hoover to special agents in charge of bureau offices detailed 12 techniques for disrupting new left college groups. These included hinting that leaders were FBI informants, anonymous letters to parents or employers, narcotics arrests, attempts to aggravate rivalries between groups and ridicule.

A FAVORITE technique of the bureau was to attempt to break up the marriages of individuals considered troublesome. One way to do this was to forge letters charging sexual misconduct. Documents

presented to the committee did not indicate whether bureau surveillance was used as a basis for such charges or if the alleged misconduct was simply fictitious.

One letter, written in a scrawl complete with misspellings, was sent to the wife of a black leader. It said "the leader, whose name was removed, "been maken it here with Sister Marva Bass & Sister Tony and than he gives us this jive bout their better in bed than you (sic)...."