

No reason for King harassment

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top FBI official testified Wednesday there was no legal justification for the 25 separate attempts by the bureau in the 1960s to discredit the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a civil rights leader.

James B. Adams, associate deputy FBI director, told the Senate Intelligence Committee there is "no statutory basis or justification" for the attempts which included sending King and his wife an anonymous letter which King took as a suggestion he commit suicide.

Adams said, however, he believes the FBI was justified in investigating King because of the possibility that Communist influences were being brought to bear on him and on the civil rights movement.

He said he can find no basis for King's conclusion that the FBI-prepared letter and the tape recording that accom-

panied it suggested King kill himself. But he acknowledged under questioning that interpretation is "a possibility."

"I certainly would say it was improper and I can't justify its being prepared or sent," Adams said.

The letter read in part: "King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is ... You are done. There is but one way out for you."

In addition to the letter, the committee on Tuesday made public evidence that the FBI installed a total of 16 electronic bugs and eight wiretaps on King and promoted a candidate — still unidentified — to succeed him as a "national Negro leader."

Adams said the wiretaps were authorized by then-Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Later, committee staff members said the FBI had justified the bugs under what it considered to be its general in-

vestigative authority.

Staff members said Kennedy and his brother, then-President John F. Kennedy, told King at one point that continued FBI interest in his activities arose out of a fear or a suspicion that he was being influenced by someone the bureau felt was subversive.

Chairman Frank Church, Idaho, said that when the New York field office issued a memo saying that the person was not thought to have Communist leanings, it was told emphatically by FBI headquarters in Washington that it was wrong.

A directive from the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's office said the bureau did not agree with the finding that the investigation should be dropped. While there was no evidence that the person was not a Communist, "neither is there any evidence that he is anti-Communist," the directive said.