

Washington Star

WASHINGTON, D.C. THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1976

Phone: (202) 484-5000

Levi: Continue Review of King Case

By Jerry Oppenheimer
Washington Star Staff Writer

Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi has formed a task force within the Justice Department to continue a review of FBI files to determine whether the bureau properly investigated the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., or had any involvement in his death.

Levi called for the expanded inquiry after receiving finds of a five-month civil rights division review of some 3,500 FBI files on King that "tentatively" exonerated the bureau of any links to the black civil rights leader's slaying in April 1968.

The review also tentatively found the FBI's probe of the assassination to be "honest and thorough." But, it showed evidence that the FBI undertook a "systematic program" of harassment against King in order to discredit him and the movement he led.

IN DISCUSSING today's

announcement of Levi's decision, Asst. Atty. Gen. J. Stanley Pottinger said, "it is possible" that the task force review could reach different findings than the inquiry he headed "or I wouldn't have recommended that they go forward. This further investigation may indeed turn up something."

Informed sources have said that Pottinger recommended to Levi that a blue ribbon panel of private and public citizens conduct the investigation, but Pottinger declined to discuss the internal memorandum sent by him to the attorney general. He said he supported Levi's recommendations and declared that "the Justice Department is honest enough to investigate properly and thoroughly."

The expanded review, which will include the questioning of witnesses, will be carried out by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility, which handle internal

investigation. Pottinger indicated that about six lawyers will be assigned to the King task force.

Levi directed that the investigation be completed as soon as possible and that the results be furnished to him and FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley. Pottinger estimated that it would take "months" for the task force to review some 200,000 files on King that are stored at FBI headquarters and at FBI field offices around the country.

POTTINGER, in response to a question, indicated that there were nine FBI officials who designed, approved and directed the harassment campaign of King but he said that they were either "all dead or retired" and declined to identify them.

See KING, A-6

KING

Continued From A-1

"There may be others in the chain we may not have identified," he added, "and the task force will try to track them." He said there may be lower level FBI officials still in the bureau who were involved in the King harassment campaign.

While the five-year statute of limitations rules out prosecutions on any wrongdoing found by the task force, the statute has no effect on any conspiracy to cover up the harassment campaign.

Pottinger said that the records reviewed showed that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover did not see the activities of the FBI against King as an "harassment campaign. He wanted it to be effective." But Pottinger declined to discuss details of the harassment activities that were uncovered in the FBI documents.