

# ROLE IN MURDER LAID TO PANTHER

## Party Aide Allegedly Gave Order to Kill Rackley

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By JOSEPH LELYVELD  
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NEW HAVEN, July 31 — The jury in the Lonnie McLucas trial heard a New Haven detective say today that the order to kill Alex Rackley was relayed by a member of the central committee of the Black Panther party, Landon Williams.

The defense contends that the idea of killing Rackley was solely that of George Sams Jr., the man who actually gave the order to fire. Sams has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder.

Earlier testimony in the trial by another participant in the killing, Warren Kimbro, portrayed Mr. Williams as having been present in the Panthers' local headquarters on the night of the murder giving orders to Sams.

"How do you know that Landon didn't say to Sams, 'I want you to let him go'?" Mr. McLucas's lawyer, Theodore I. Koskoff, asked the detective, Sgt. Vincent DeRosa.

### Source of Order Debated

The detective said he only "assumed" early in his investigation that the order came to Sams from higher up in the party. "I really didn't know," he acknowledged.

"To this day you don't know," Mr. Koskoff declared.

"There's no question in my mind," replied Sergeant DeRosa.

"Did Landon Williams tell you?" the lawyer asked. Mr. Williams is now in Denver, fighting extradition to Connecticut.

"No," said the detective.

"Did Sams tell you?"

"Yes."

"And you're taking Sams's word for it?"

"I'm taking Sams's word and Mr. McLucas's word," Sergeant DeRosa said. He was referring to a recorded interrogation of the defendant in which he indicated to the detective that Mr. Williams and another Panther, Rory Hithe, asked Sams how the murder mission went.

### Strategy by Defense

At the time of that interrogation, June 11, 1969, Sams was not yet in custody. In cross-examination the detective, Mr. Koskoff tried to show that the police investigators were out to blame the Panther leadership for the slaying before there was any testimony to that effect.

The cross-examination disclosed that Mr. McLucas did not know Rackley's name until he heard it from Sergeant DeRosa after his arrest. The detective confirmed also that he had heard Mr. McLucas say he was afraid Sams would kill him if he disobeyed his orders.

Sams now appears to be the only prosecution witness prepared to testify that Bobby G. Seale, national chairman of the Black Panthers, confronted Rackley and ordered his death. Thus there is great interest as to whether the prosecutor, State's Attorney Arnold Markle, will call Sams to the stand in the McLucas trial. The fourth week of testimony begins Tuesday.