FBI King Files
Show Suspects

WASHINGTON AP) — The FBI investigated members of the Ku Klux Klan and the Minutemen in the early days of the search for Martin Luther King's assassin, newly disclosed FBI documents reveal.

Four days after King was slain in Memphis on April 4, 1968, FBI headquarters ordered an investigation of all known members of the Klan, the rightwing Minutemen, "other hate group members, rabble rousers and any other individuals known to have violent proclivities located within your territories."

The order was sent to FBI field offices in Memphis and Knoxville, Tenn., Birmingham and Mobile, Ala., Jackson, Miss., Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

The memo is part of about 18,000 documents compiled by the FBI during its investigation of the civil rights leader's death.

The FBI is releasing 412 pages to comply with requests under the Freedom of Information Act. Officials are screening the rest of the files to determine what else will be released.

The documents provide the first public details of the FBI probe. James Earl Ray, who was subsequently arrested, pleaded guilty to shooting King. As a result, the government never was required to present its evidence at a trial or any other public forum.

Ray has since attempted to change his plea and obtain a trial.

The first batch of papers dealt with the early days of the investigation and included no mention of Ray.

But three memos identified Eric Starvo Galt as a suspect. That was an alias Ray used.