

Misplacing Report On King Called 'Inadvertence' By FBI

NEW YORK (AP)—A 1974 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report alleging a conspiracy in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was filed away for four years instead of being turned over to federal investigators because of "simple inadvertence," FBI Director William Webster said Monday.

However, Webster downplayed the significance of the slip-up, saying the report contained "hearsay three times removed" and that it was written long after the original investigation was concluded anyway.

The recently released document quotes an informer as saying he was told a Missouri businessman was "the individual who made the payoff to James Earl Ray after the killing." Ray is serving a 99-year term in Tennessee for the 1968 murder of the civil rights leader.

The report "would normally have been filed with the King investigative file. This was not done," Webster said in an interview.

"It hasn't been verified that the informant spoke the truth. It hasn't been verified" that he was told the truth, Webster said.

Webster said he first learned of the FBI report last March and that it was turned over to the House assassinations committee at that time. He said his office concluded after conducting its own investigation that the report's misplacement was a matter of "simple inadvertence."

He declined to characterize the status of the King investigation or comment on whether the report's existence represented a break in the investigation.
