

# U.S. attorney eyes Clarke

By Thomas J. Dolan  
and Edward T. Pound

The U.S. attorney's office is investigating obstruction of justice charges against police consultant John J. Clarke for his role in producing two bogus witnesses in a 1970 special county grand jury probe of the Black Panther raid, it was learned Wednesday.

The federal investigation, being directed by Asst. U.S. Atty. Tyrone C. Fahnner, was begun several weeks ago after The Sun-Times disclosed information linking Clarke to the bogus witnesses. Included in the information was correspondence received by this newspaper after investigative stories on Clarke.

It also was learned that at least one person with important inside information on Clarke's role in the Panther case is co-operating with the federal investigation.

Federal agents are expected also to interview members of the special county grand jury prosecuting staff.

The federal investigation reopens a controversial case that began Dec. 4, 1969, when state's attorney's police raided a West Side Black Panther Party apartment, fatally shooting Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

Meanwhile, State's Atty. Bernard Carey disclosed Wednesday that he has asked Police Supt. James B. Conlisk Jr. to remove Clarke from the police payroll. Clarke is a \$1,500-a-month special consultant to Deputy Supt. Mitchell Ware, head of the supersecret C-5 Unit, which investigates police corruption.

Carey noted in a letter to Conlisk that Clarke was indicted last month by a federal grand jury on charges unrelated to the Black Panther case. However, he added, referring to the case:

When U.S. Atty. James R. Thompson announced Clarke's indictment last month, he indicated that his office was continuing its investigation. Thompson noted that one area under investigation would be charges of possible obstruction of justice on Clarke's part, but he did not indicate what allegations were under study.

"I am particularly concerned with the role he (Clarke) played in providing witnesses who gave false testimony to a Cook County grand jury (in the Black Panther case)."

Clarke was named in a 12-count federal indictment June 25. It charged him with using false income tax returns, perjury, ob-

## role in Panther probe

structing justice. The charges covered his activities as a county probation officer and high-paid city consultant and investigator for Mayor Daley.

It was learned, however, that federal agents began investigating Clarke's role in the 1970 special county grand jury investigation of the Black Panther raid shortly after The Sun-Times reported on bogus witnesses he produced.

The story, published on May 16, reported that Clarke produced two witnesses who gave misinformation, which could have been crucial, to the Black Panther grand jury.

The special county grand jury eventually indicted 14 persons, including former State's Attorney Edward V. Hanrahan and members

of the raiding party, for conspiracy to obstruct justice in the aftermath of the raid. The defendants were later acquitted.

The witnesses who gave the misinformation to the special county grand jury were identified as George McKatherine, 26, and Maria Fisher Mendes, 35, who testified that survivors of the raid said they had fired shots at the police.

The Sun-Times reported that the Panthers in question were in the county jail and inaccessible on the dates on which McKatherine and Miss Fisher claimed to have had conversations with them.

Conlisk was not available for comment. His office said it did not know where or when he could be reached.