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Hoover Ordered FBI to Plant Spies, Forge Papers Against Extremists

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The late J. Edgar Hoover issued orders calling on FBI agents across the country to expose, disrupt, and "otherwise neutralize" a variety of black, white and left-wing groups from 1961 to 1970.

The targets were the Black Panther Party, six unnamed "black nationalist-hate groups" and six unnamed black leaders, the Ku Klux Klan and nine unnamed white "hate" groups and the Socialist Workers Party.

FBI tactics against the targets included fabricating documents so they would appear to be "pilfered from police files," planting spies pretending to be "disgruntled police employees," and discrediting leaders of extremist groups in their own communities.

These disclosures came in seven severely censored documents that the FBI released yesterday to NBC newsman Carl Stern, who had sued for release of the Hoover memos under the Freedom of Information Act.

They were the second of a series of secret memos released by the Justice Department in response to Stern's suit. The first two memos, made public last Dec. 6, disclosed Hoover's counter-intelligence program (called COINTELPRO) against the New Left that went from 1968 to 1971.

A major goal of Hoover's campaign against "black nationalist hate groups" was to prevent the rise of a "messiah" who could unify and electrify the militant black nationalist movement," accord-

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ing to a March 4, 1968, Hoover memo.

It said that one black leader, whose name is deleted but who may be Malcolm X, "might have been such a 'messiah'; he is the martyr of the movement today." Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965.

The memo listed other names, all deleted, who, it said, "all aspire to this position." One leader, whose name is blanked out but who may be the 76-year-old Elijah Muhammad, head of the Black Muslims, "is less of a threat because of his age," the memo said.

Another would-be messiah, whose name was deleted but was probably Martin Luther King, could "be a very real contender for this position should he abandon his supposed 'obedience' to 'white, liberal doctrines' (nonviolence) and embrace black nationalism," Hoover wrote. The man "has the necessary charisma to be a real threat in this way," Hoover added.

In the same memo he noted that in the summer of 1967 leaders of an unnamed group being watched by the FBI were brought to the attention of police in an unnamed city.

"They were arrested on every possible charge until they could no longer make bail," Hoover said. As a result, they spent most of the summer in jail and no violence took place that could be attributed to them, he added.

Hoover's 1968 memo referred to the tense summer the year before when Detroit and Newark erupted in bloody riots that killed 69 persons and injured 3,500 in the two cities.

He noted that in 1968 the counter-intelligence program against black organizations was being carried out by 41 FBI field offices. Besides trying to head off the rise of a "messiah," the program was designed to prevent the coalition of "militant black nationalist groups."

In explaining, Hoover warned, "An effective coalition of black nationalist groups might be the first step toward a real 'Mau Mau' in America, the beginning of a true black revolution."

Other goals included prev-

enting violence, keeping such groups from attracting young members, and preventing them "from gaining respectability."

Hoover told his agents, "You must discredit these groups and individuals to, first the responsible Negro community," then to the white community, especially liberals "who have vestiges of sympathy for militant black nationalist[s] simply because they are Negroes. Third, these groups must be discredited in the eyes of Negro radicals, the followers of the movement."

Hoover outlined his "disruptive-disinformation operation" against the Black Panther Party (BPP) in Oakland and San Francisco in a May, 11, 1970, memo:

"Xerox copies of true documents, documents subtly incorporating false information, and entirely fabricated documents would be periodically anonymously mailed to the residence of a key Panther leader," he proposed.

They would be on police and FBI stationery and if they were supposedly FBI documents, they would be marked as "early indicating they had files," he said. The Panthers would be made to think they came from a "disgruntled police employee sympathetic to the Panthers."

Then phony documents would be prepared "pinpointing Panthers as police or FBI informants, ridiculing or discrediting Panther leaders through their ineptness or personal escapades, espousing as "clearly indicating they had personal philosophies and promoting factionalism among BPP members, indicating electronic coverage where none exists, outlining fictitious plans for police raids or other counteractions, revealing misuse or misappropriation of Panther funds . . ."

A Dec. 24, 1970, Hoover memo noted that a leader, whose name was blanked out but who was probably Eldridge Cleaver, had "broken with the . . . organization."

An Oct. 12, 1961, Hoover memo on the Socialist Workers Party said it should be disrupted "along similar lines" to the way the FBI attacked the Communist Party.