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FBI Tapped King at 1964 Convention

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President Johnson during the 1964 Democratic National Convention received reports on the conversations or activities of senators and congressmen, on then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and on key convention delegates from wiretaps and bugs installed by the FBI on civil rights leaders, a Senate Watergate committee memo says.

The memo, summarizing a 1973 interview with Leo T. Clark, then in charge of the FBI's Atlantic City, N.J., office, quotes Clark as saying the information was reported to Johnson from bugs and wiretaps installed in the hotel suite of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and in a storefront used by civil rights groups.

Civil rights was a key political issue during the Atlantic City convention.

In the Watergate committee interview, Clark, a 22-year veteran of the FBI, said electronic and physical surveillances were carried out by a special FBI team ordered by the Johnson White House.

The team, he said, was under the personal direction of Cartha D. DeLoach, then assistant to then FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

The stated purpose of the operation, Clark said, was to gather intelligence on potential violence or disruptions.

But Clark, who acknowledged playing a key role in the surveillance activities, said DeLoach told him to avoid discussing the operation with the Secret Service, which has responsibility for protecting the President, or with the FBI's Newark office, which would normally coordinate security at the convention.

Instead, he said, most of the information obtained was transmitted to President Johnson over a telephone line specially installed to bypass the White House switchboard.

Clark said the information included Kennedy's activities, identities of senators and congressmen visiting King's hotel suite, identities of persons seeking support of civil rights leaders, plans of delegates or delegations, and speculation on vice presidential nominees.

At one point, Clark said, he asked DeLoach if the Attorney General had authorized the taps and bugs. He said DeLoach replied that Kennedy had not been informed of them. But he said DeLoach in-

dicated Johnson was aware of them.

At the time, bugging by the FBI was illegal, and interception and divulgence of telephone communications by the FBI was a criminal offense.

The authenticity of the Clark memo, which cites room numbers of suites bugged and the source of funds for part of the operation, was verified by a number of persons who either received it or were present when Clark was interviewed.

The memo indicates Clark appeared in response to a subpoena but did not testify un-

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der oath. It indicates he revealed the summary of his interview before it was typed in memo form.

Clark, who retired from the FBI in 1965 and later headed his own private investigation firm, was traveling by car on a vacation and could not be reached for comment.

Asked why the memo had not come out in Senate Watergate committee hearings, a committee source said previous presidential campaigns were not considered to come within the committee's legislative mandate of campaign activities in 1972.

DeLoach, informed through a secretary of the nature of a reporter's inquiry, did not return telephone calls.

DeLoach denied under oath in a 1973 Senate Watergate committee interview that he had a direct line to Johnson or spoke with him during the convention.

A summary of his interview shows DeLoach said one surveillance was conducted as part of a continuing installation on a person believed to be under the influence of the

Communist Party.

The continuing surveillance had been approved by Kennedy, although DeLoach did not remember seeing any written authorization, he said. Johnson was not aware of this surveillance, he added.

The FBI's activity at the convention was for the purpose of keeping abreast of "any political violence," DeLoach said. If any political intelligence was reported to the White House, he added, it was only incidental to reports on possible violence.

DeLoach said he might have instructed agents to work undercover in Democratic factions. But he denied telling agents the operation was secret.

Another participant in the operation said he could not deny that the purpose of the operation was political. He said each agent might have a different view of how much of the intelligence gathered was political and how much related to security.

"It's probably a matter of proportions, and different people would come out with different percentages," he said.

The participant said he did not want to discuss details of the operation because of the certainty that he would be required to testify during investigations that would ensue once the operation is publicly disclosed.

Although not a participant, another FBI source said he was told by an agent who participated that prevention of violence was the operation's cover.

"The purpose was to serve President Johnson's political interests," he said. "They picked up any information that concerned Kennedy, and what he was up to and whom he was trying to line up support for," the source said.

Asked for comment, FBI spokesman James Murphy did not address himself to the question of whether the purpose of the operation was political or whether it included installation of wiretaps and bugs.

Instead, he said: "As a result of a request from the White House, the FBI did coordinate the development of intelligence information concerning the plans of subversive, criminal, and hoodlum groups attempting to disrupt the Democratic National Convention at Atlantic City, N.J., in 1964."

The information was gathered by FBI informants and sources and was subsequently furnished to the White House and its representatives in Atlantic City on a continuing basis, he said. Pertinent data were also given to the Secret Service and police authorities, he said.

"In addition to the coverage afforded the 1964 Democratic convention, the FBI afforded similar coverage to both the Democratic and Republican conventions in subsequent Presidential election years 1968 and 1972," Murphy said.



CARTHA D. DeLOACH . . . head of '64 special
J. EDGAR HOOVER team and FBI director

Although President Johnson in 1964 was assured of nomination for his first full term as President he was worried about a possible movement to draft Robert Kennedy to be his running-mate and about a challenge by a primarily black delegation to the white, Mississippi delegation.

A conflict could have marred Democratic unity or provoked picketing by civil rights activists. Although the civil rights movement at the time largely adhered to King's doctrine of nonviolence, such demonstrations could have been politically embarrassing.

As it turned out, the conflicts were resolved quietly and commentators at the time remarked on the perfect control Johnson appeared to have on convention activities from the White House.

"The interesting question is why he had such complete control," columnist Walter Lippman wrote at the conclusion of the convention in late August.

"Quite evidently," Lippman wrote of Johnson, "he is a great politician, but what is the secret of his greatness as a politician?"

In early August, Clark said, he began to work with the Secret Service and local police to insure that the convention later that month would be peaceful.

Three days before the convention opened on Aug. 24, he was told by DeLoach in a telephone call that the White House wanted special assistance, Clark said.

This assistance would be independent of the Secret Service and should not be discussed with it or otherwise publicized, Clark quoted DeLoach as saying.

"Trouble was expected from the Mississippi and Alabama delegations," he said.

"One of the objectives of the FBI would be to infiltrate dissident factions and keep Walter Jenkins advised at Atlantic City, the interest being to preclude disorders," Clark said.

An FBI agent was later assigned to accompany Jenkins,

a White House aide, with a walkie-talkie, Clark added.

In a recent telephone interview, Jenkins, who was executive assistant to Johnson, said he had no knowledge of any FBI surveillance activities at the convention and could not recall having any contact with the FBI.

Another key Johnson aide at the convention, W. Marvin Watson, did not return telephone calls last week after one of his assistants was informed of the nature of the inquiry.

Clark said he was told by DeLoach to set up a control center where informants could report. Individuals of particular interest included civil rights activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Clark said he was told from Washington.

Mrs. Hamer said recently from Ruleville, Miss., that she was not aware she was being watched during the convention.

But she said she and other Freedom Democratic Party members of the Mississippi that was challenging the white delegation felt pressure from many sides to back down on their demands.

"People were saying things, and then chickening out, and we didn't know why," she said.

Clark said he established a control center on the second floor of the old Post Office building. The first floor was occupied by the FBI resident agent for Atlantic City, he said.

He established a special telephone number in DeLoach's Control center office to take calls from informants, he said.

On instructions from DeLoach, Clark said, he determined where King and James L. Farmer, then national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) would be staying.

Clark said he was also told to check the whereabouts of other civil rights leaders with surveillances in mind.

He said he determined that King would stay at the Clai-

ridge Hotel. DeLoach instructed him to survey the building to determine the feasibility of installing a wiretap and microphone (bug) surveillance, he said.

Clark arranged with the hotel management to have King stay in Rooms 1901, 1902, and 1923, he said. The hotel management gave keys to the rooms to two FBI technical men from Newark, and they surveyed the rooms, he said.

Clark said he reserved Room 1821, a floor below King's suite, for himself. After DeLoach and other FBI officials arrived from Washington on Aug. 23, Clark said, the room was used to monitor conversations in King's rooms as well as those beamed from a tap and bug installed at 2414 Atlantic Ave., a storefront used by CORE and other groups.

Clark did not say whether a break-in was necessary to install the microphone surveillance at the Atlantic Avenue address.

Surveillances from the storefront were monitored by agents John J. Cramer and Billy D. Williams, he said. Those from King's rooms were listened to by agents John P. Devlin and John J. Connolly, he added.

The FBI declined to allow a reporter to talk with these or other agents named by Clark.

Conversations were tape recorded and telephoned to DeLoach and agents Harold P. (Bud) Leinbaugh, and Donald G. Hanning in the control center, Clark said.

They, in turn, dictated memos based on the information to stenographers, he said.

Leinbaugh and Hanning, both retired, declined to comment.

Information that related to Secret Service or police responsibilities were relayed to the appropriate agency by Clark, he said.

"Clark recalls overhearing DeLoach speaking on the telephone to President Johnson and to Director Hoover, giving them summary information from the technical surveillance," the Watergate committee memo says.

"In a DeLoach conversation with the President, Clark heard mention of discussions concerning the seating of delegations or delegations, of vice presidential candidate possibilities, and the identities of congressmen and senators going in and out of King's quarters," the memo says.

"Robert Kennedy's activities were of special interest, including his contacts with King. There was particular interest in learning who was seeking the support of the black leaders and the maneuvering of the black factions with regard to the seating of the Mississippi delegations," the memo says.

In addition to bugs, wiretaps, and undercover informants, the FBI monitored the two-way radio communications of groups using the Atlantic Avenue storefront and solicited intelligence through agents posing as reporters, Clark said.