

# How CIA Used Blacks To Spy on Panthers

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The Central Intelligence Agency recruited American blacks in the late 1960s and early 1970s to spy on members of the Black Panther party, both in the United States and in Africa, according to sources with first-hand knowledge of the operation.

Details of these clandestine activities were considered among the agency's most sensitive and closest-held information, the sources said, because of fears that disclosures about the program would arouse a public backlash.

At least some specific information about the CIA's spying was provided to the 1975 Rockefeller Commission and later to the Senate Intelligence Committee in their inquiries into illegal CIA activities, but those investigating groups did not include any specific mention of the recruitment and use of American blacks in their subsequent public reports.

The activities of the black agents ranged from following and photographing suspected Black Panther party members in the U.S. to the infiltration of Panther groups in Africa.

One agent managed to gain access to the personal overseas living quarters of Eldridge Cleaver, the Panther leader who set up a headquarters in Algeria in the late 1960s.

In its final report, the Rockefeller Commission, a panel appointed by President Ford to investigate charges of CIA abuses, concluded that the agency's spying in the United States exceeded its authority. The overseas efforts to link the Black Panther operations to foreign influence theoretically was proper, the commission said, although much of the material in the CIA's files "was not directly related to the question of the existence of foreign connections."

CIA officials have said repeatedly that the goal of the agency's domestic spying program was to determine whether anti-war activities and black extremists were being financed and directed by Communist governments.

One longtime CIA operative with direct knowledge of the spying said, however, that there was an additional goal in the case of the Black Panthers living abroad: To "neutralize" them; "to try and get them in trouble with local authorities wherever they could."

The Times's sources said that the CIA conducted at least two major programs involving the use of American blacks when the Black Panther party was attracting wide public attention.

In one program, Internal CIA documents show that black agents attended rallies and other public occasions, such as funerals, in hopes of identifying members of the Black Panther party.

The second major CIA spying program revolved around a small number of carefully recruited black Americans who were sent to Algeria, Kenya and Tanzania, among other places to keep close watch on American black radicals.

A key to the operation, a first-hand source said, was Eldridge Cleaver's decision — after he was ordered to face charges of parole violation — to leave the United States in 1969 and move to Algeria. In 1970, the Black Panther party formally opened an international headquarters, headed by Cleaver in Algiers.

While in Africa, Cleaver and his colleagues visited Peking, Hanoi and Pyongyang, North Korea, and visited with Palestinian guerrilla leaders.

But despite years of intense spying, the source said, the agents were unable to develop any information linking Cleaver and other American black radicals to a foreign government.