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NEW YORK AP - ATTY. Gen. Ramsey Clark says the government should say if it's true that tapes from listening devices installed in the late Dr. Martin Luther King's hotel rooms were played to publishers, senators and others.

In an article in the current issue of McCall's magazine, Clark said:

"Since his murder, rumors have spread that tapes from bugs, secretly installed in hotel rooms used by Dr. King were played to publishers, senators and others.

"The people of the United States should know whether this is true. Their government should tell them. The motives for such acts by the FBI, if true, are terribly dangerous. The purpose could only be to destroy a great leader and as a consequence to divide the nation.

"We should not be surprised if the police make such use of surreptitious invasions of privacy. The very act cultivates its own abuse."

Clark, now in private law practice, called wiretapping "the act of an incipient police state." He said it was irrelevant to most crime, and often is "guided by the prejudices of those who would overhear."

Last year, Clark suggested that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover retire after it was disclosed that the FBI had tapped King's phones. Hoover had explained that former Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy had proposed it.

Clark called Hoover's statement at that time "unfair and deceptive."

He said that when he was attorney general, Hoover repeatedly asked for authorization to tap King's phones. He said he refused all such requests, including one two days before King's assassination.

In his article, Clark said that the fact that the FBI tapped King's phone and bugged his hotel rooms "should tell us all we need to know about the desirability of those practices."

"This great American, who sought change through nonviolence, was a public man, his conduct open," Clark wrote. "A leader of black America, he offered more hope for reconciliation of the races than any other person. The risks of surreptitious police surveillance of such a leader are immense. It is the act of an incipient police state."

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