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PROCEDURES

- 1 - Mr. Adams - Enc.
- 1 - Mr. Gallagher - Enc.
- 1 - Mr. Leavitt - Enc.
- November 18, 1976
- 1 - Mr. Mintz - Enc.
- 2 - Mr. Daly - Enc.

Assistant Attorney General  
Office of Legislative Affairs

Director, FBI

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Reference is made to Chairman Thomas N. Downing's request contained in his letter of November 2, 1976, addressed to the Attorney General, requesting certain information concerning the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

You referred the aforementioned request to the FBI for comments concerning access to FBI files. In this regard, I believe that this Committee should be granted the same degree of access for appropriately cleared personnel as was granted to the House Select Committee on Intelligence Activities (HSC) and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities (SSC). I am taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of the agreement between the Attorney General and Chairman Frank Church of the SSC concerning access to FBI files.

I wish to advise you in connection with the FBI's investigation into the assassination of Dr. King that the news media has reported James Earl Ray who was convicted in that matter has petitioned the Supreme Court to review his case.

As to the other information requested in Chairman Downing's letter, the FBI does not have summaries of its investigations into these two matters nor does it have an itemization of material contained in FBI files pertaining to these investigations which might not have been disseminated to "any other individual or agency."

It would appear advantageous to meet with representatives of the Committee so that they might be informed as to the FBI's filing system and in a general fashion, concerning the FBI's investigations into the two assassinations identified in their letter so that the Committee might better understand what information is in the possession of the FBI.

- Assoc. Dir. \_\_\_\_\_
- Dep. AD Adm. \_\_\_\_\_
- Dep. AD Inv. \_\_\_\_\_
- Asst. Dir.:
- Adm. Serv. \_\_\_\_\_
- Ext. Affairs \_\_\_\_\_
- Fin. & Pers. \_\_\_\_\_
- Gen. Inv. \_\_\_\_\_
- Ident. \_\_\_\_\_
- Inspection \_\_\_\_\_
- Intell. \_\_\_\_\_
- Laboratory \_\_\_\_\_
- Legal Coun. \_\_\_\_\_
- Plan. & Eval. \_\_\_\_\_
- Rec. Mgnt. \_\_\_\_\_
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(LEGAL COUNSEL DIVISION)

SEE NOTE PAGE 2  
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : Mr. Gallagher

DATE: 11/8/76

FROM : J. S. Peelman

- 1 - Mr. Gallagher
- 1 - Mr. Ingram
- 1 - Mr. Peelman
- 1 - Mr. Helterhoff
- 1 - Mr. Cooke
- 1 - Mr. Burton
- 1 - Mr. Deegan

- Assoc. Dir. \_\_\_\_\_
- Dep. AD Adm. \_\_\_\_\_
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- Asst. Dir.:
- Adm. Serv. \_\_\_\_\_
- Ext. Affairs \_\_\_\_\_
- Fin. & Pers. \_\_\_\_\_
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- Telephone Rm. \_\_\_\_\_
- Director Sec'y \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON ASSASSINATIONS

PURPOSE: To furnish comments by the Civil Rights Section, General Investigative Division (GID), as to Committee access to the Civil Rights investigation into the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Bufile 44-38861).

SYNOPSIS: House Select Committee on Assassinations has requested access to FBI files and Department of Justice files concerning the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (copy of Committee letter attached). Legal Counsel Division has requested comments from GID re Committee access. (Copy of Legal Counsel memorandum attached.) Dr. King was assassinated on 4/4/68 and the FBI conducted an immediate Civil Rights investigation per the request of the Department. Our investigative results were furnished to the Department and based upon the authority from the Department, certain pertinent investigative results were furnished to the State of Tennessee authorities. James Earl Ray pled guilty on 3/10/69 to the murder of Dr. King before a state court in Tennessee and presently is in local confinement. In November, 1975, the Attorney General directed Assistant Attorneys General Pottinger and Thornburgh to review the files relating to Martin Luther King and make a recommendation as to whether the assassination case should be reopened. In April, 1976, the Attorney General requested the Department's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) to complete the review of all records re Dr. King. The Department's OPR still has this King matter under review. Any decision relative to Committee access to the Civil Rights assassination investigation of Dr. King rests within the province of the Department. The Department should also be advised that in making its decision it should also consider:

Enclosures (3)

HNH:bam (8)  
44-38861

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LEGAL COUNSEL ADDENDUM PAGE SEVEN

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Memorandum to Mr. Gallagher

RE: ~~HOUSE~~-SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

(1) What authority the Committee has to request access; (2) What effect access would have on the local prosecution and the rights of Ray who has his case under appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court. ("Washington Post" article re his appeal attached); (3) What effect Committee access would have on privacy of those individuals who furnished information in a criminal case; (4) If Department grants access, it should oppose disclosing identity of informants or persons who furnished information on a confidential basis and (5) What action it intends to take to obtain third-agency clearance including foreign Governments; (6) The decision to furnish an itemization of material turned over to another agency remains within the province of the Department; (7) The FBI has not prepared any summary of the King assassination investigative results other than that contained on the summary (synopsis) pages of each report and a reports containing a prosecutive summary; (8) The Civil Rights Section recommends no meeting with staff members until Department makes its decision.

RECOMMENDATION: That these comments of the Civil Rights Section be furnished to the Criminal Section of the GID (attention Mr. Len S. Burton), which section is coordinating the overall GID response to this matter.

APPROVED: Adm. Serv..... Legal Coun.....  
Ext. Affairs..... Plan. & Insp.....  
Director..... Fin. & Pers..... Rec. Mgt.....  
Assoc. Dir..... Gen. Inv..... S. & T. Serv.....  
Dep. AD Adm..... Ident..... Spec. Inv.....  
Dep. AD Inv..... Intell..... Training.....

DETAILS: The House Select Committee on Assassinations has requested access to FBI files and Department of Justice files concerning the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Committee letter attached). The Legal Counsel Division has requested comments of the GID as to the Committee's access to these files. (copy of Legal Counsel memorandum attached). The Civil Rights assassination investigation of Dr. King is located in Bufile 44-38861.

Memorandum to Mr. Gallagher

RE: ~~HOUSE~~ SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Dr. King was shot to death by an assassin's bullet while standing on a balcony of a motel in Memphis, Tennessee, on 4/4/68. The U. S. Department of Justice requested the FBI to conduct an immediate Civil Rights investigation into this assassination which was confirmed in writing by a letter from Stephen J. Pollak, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, to the Director of the FBI, which requested a full investigation into a possible violation of Title 18, U. S. Code, Section 241, (possible conspiracy to violate the Civil Rights of Dr. King, namely, the right to travel interstate.)

The FBI conducted an extensive, exhaustive investigation into this assassination and James Earl Ray was identified as the assassin. Our investigative results were furnished to the Civil Rights Division, U. S. Department of Justice, and based upon the authority of the Department, certain pertinent investigative results were furnished to the appropriate local authorities in the State of Tennessee. On 3/10/69, in state court, Memphis, Tennessee, Ray entered a plea of guilty to charges of the murder of King and received a 99-year sentence. Ray is presently in local confinement.

By letter dated 12/4/75, the Attorney General of the United States advised that on 11/24/75, he directed Assistant Attorneys General J. Stanley Pottinger and Richard L. Thornburg to review the files relating to Martin Luther King at once in the light of recent testimony, and make a recommendation as to whether the assassination case should be reopened. The Department had complete access to the Civil Rights assassination investigative file during its review.

On 4/29/76, the Attorney General of the United States issued the following news release:

"I have directed the Office of Professional Responsibility, headed by Michael Shaheen, to complete a review of all records in the Department of Justice concerning the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Civil Rights Division, under the personal direction of Assistant Attorney General J. Stanley Pottinger, completed on April 9 a five-month preliminary review

Memorandum to Mr. Gallagher  
RE: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

of files at FBI headquarters. As a result of this preliminary review, the Civil Rights Division has recommended that the review be carried forward to completion with an additional examination of records at FBI headquarters and field offices. It is believed that more than 200,000 documents may be involved.

On the basis of this preliminary review, Assistant Attorney General Pottinger stated that his tentative conclusions were (1) there was no basis to believe that the FBI in any way caused the death of Dr. King, (2) no evidence was discovered that the FBI investigation of the assassination of Dr. King was not thorough and honest, and (3) instances were found indicating that the FBI undertook a systematic program of harassment of Dr. King in order to discredit him and harm both him and the movement he led.

In ordering on April 26 the complete review by Mr. Shaheen, I directed that the investigation be completed forthwith and that answers to four specific questions be furnished to me and FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley on the basis of the review of all documents:

- Whether the FBI investigation of Dr. King's assassination was thorough and honest;
- Whether there is any evidence that the FBI was involved in the assassination of Dr. King;
- Whether, in light of the first two matters, there is any new evidence which has come to the attention of the Department concerning the assassination of Dr. King;
- Whether the nature of the relationship between the Bureau and Dr. King calls for criminal prosecutions, disciplinary proceedings, or other appropriate action.

Mr. Pottinger pointed out that the Civil Rights Division has been continuously investigating allegations concerning the assassination of Dr. King as these allegations come to the attention of the Department."

Memorandum to Mr. Gallagher  
RE: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

The Department's OPR still has this matter under review and has had complete access to the Civil Rights assassination investigative files both at FBIHQ and in all of our field offices.

The decision as to what access, if any, the Committee has to the FBI file on the Civil Rights assassination of Dr. King, therefore, rests entirely within the province of the Department of Justice. The Department should also be advised that in making its decision relative to Committee access, it should also consider the following:

(1) The Department should determine what authority the Committee has to request access to the Civil Rights assassination investigation of Dr. King. For example, is it requesting such access for a specific legislative interest? If not, such access by the Committee could be construed by some as an effort by a legislative body to act as a "grand jury" even though James Earl Ray has already been processed through the court system;

(2) The Department should determine what effect any such Committee access to our investigative results in the Civil Rights assassination investigation of Dr. King (including the physical evidence, FBI Laboratory and Identification reports, etc.) would have on the local prosecution of James Earl Ray and upon the rights of Mr. Ray, who has recently appealed his conviction to the U. S. Supreme Court. ("Washington Post" article re appeal attached). If necessary, the Department should resolve this with the State of Tennessee authorities and with Mr. Ray's counsel;

(3) The Department should determine what effect any such access would have on the privacy of those individuals who furnished information to the FBI in a criminal case the FBI was investigating (Title 18, U. S. Code, Section 241);

(4) If the Department grants access to the Committee, it should oppose disclosing the identity of any informants or persons who furnished information on an expressed confidential basis;

Memorandum to Mr. Gallagher  
RE: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

(5) If the Department grants Committee access, the Department should advise what action it intends to take to obtain third-agency clearance including obtaining authority from those foreign Governments which furnished investigative results, such as Canada (where Mr. Ray stayed and obtained a passport) and London (where Mr. Ray was captured);

(6) The decision to furnish an itemization of any material which has been turned over to any other individual or agency remains within the province of the Department. For instance, certain material was turned over to the State of Tennessee authorities based upon the authority of the Department and the Department would have to make a decision as to whether this itemization could be made available to the Committee. Other material from our files has also been made available pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act;

(7) The FBI has not prepared any summary of the Civil Rights investigation of the assassination of Dr. King. Neither the Civil Rights Division nor the OPR requested such a summary during its review. Each investigative report contains a summary (synopsis) page and a prosecutive summary report and a non-prosecutive summary report were also previously prepared. There is, of course, extensive public source information available concerning this matter;

(8) Inasmuch as any Committee access to the Civil Rights investigation of the assassination of Dr. King remains within the province of the Department, the Civil Rights Section of the GID recommends that no meeting be held re the Civil Rights investigation with staff members of the Committee until the Department makes its decision in this matter.

These comments of the Civil Rights Section of the GID are in no way intended to be obstructive but it is felt the Department must resolve these issues before it can make a determination as to whether or not it will grant Committee access to the Civil Rights investigative file on the assassination of Dr. King.



J. S. Peelman to Mr. Gallagher Memo  
Re: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON ASSASSINATIONS

ADDENDUM: LEGAL COUNSEL DIVISION PVD:mcz 11/12/76

As to the questions raised by the General Investigative Division in this memorandum, Legal Counsel Division makes the following observations:

The authority of a committee of Congress to make a request for information is derived from the authority to seek information to fulfill a legislative function, and in this instance this particular committee is acting pursuant to a resolution of the House of Representatives. The more critical question rather than the authority for the request is the kind of information the committee will receive, and it is for this reason that the standards set forth in the agreement between the Attorney General and the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Frank Church, are being used to govern this question.

The possibility, of course, could be raised that the Select Committee on Assassinations is not a properly constituted Committee in that it has<sup>not</sup> been created to serve a legislative function, but it is not believed advisable nor desirable to raise this particular issue since there would appear to be little hope of obtaining support in the Department or elsewhere in such a challenge.

Concerning the invasion of privacy "of those individuals who furnished information in a criminal case." It should be noted the Privacy Act does not preclude or prohibit responding to a legitimate request of a committee of Congress. The question of protecting identity of informants, persons who furnished information on a confidential basis, raised in this memorandum is addressed in the aforementioned agreement between Senator Church and the Attorney General which is governing the furnishing of information to this committee and provides for the protection of the identities of such people. The third agency rule providing for clearance prior to the furnishing of information to the Committee will also be followed.

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