

# THE FBI'S COVERT ACTION PROGRAM TO DESTROY THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

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# THE FBI'S COVERT ACTION PROGRAM TO DESTROY THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

## INTRODUCTION

In August 1967, the FBI initiated a covert action program—COINTELPRO—to disrupt and “neutralize” organizations which the Bureau characterized as “Black Nationalist Hate Groups.”<sup>1</sup> The FBI memorandum expanding the program described its goals as:

1. Prevent a coalition of militant black nationalist groups. . . .
2. Prevent the rise of a messiah who could unify and electrify the militant nationalist movement . . . Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael and Elijah Muhammad all aspire to this position. . . .
3. Prevent violence on the part of black nationalist groups. . . .
4. Prevent militant black nationalist groups and leaders from gaining respectability by discrediting them. . . .
5. . . . prevent the long-range growth of militant black nationalist organizations, especially among youth.”<sup>2</sup>

The targets of this nationwide program to disrupt “militant black nationalist organizations” included groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and the Nation of Islam (NOI). It was expressly directed against such leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Maxwell Stanford, and Elijah Muhammad.

The Black Panther Party (BPP) was not among the original “Black Nationalist” targets. In September 1968, however, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover described the Panthers as:

“the greatest threat to the internal security of the country. “Schooled in the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the teaching of Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-tung, its members have perpetrated numerous assaults on police officers and have engaged in violent confrontations with police throughout the country. Leaders and representatives of the Black Panther Party travel extensively all over the United States preaching their gospel of hate and violence not only to ghetto residents,

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<sup>1</sup> For a description of the full range of COINTELPRO programs, see the staff report entitled “COINTELPRO: The FBI's Covert Action Programs Against American Citizens.”

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum from G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, 2/29/68, pp. 3-4.

but to students in colleges, universities and high schools as well."<sup>3</sup>

By July 1969, the Black Panthers had become the primary focus of the program, and was ultimately the target of 233 of the total 295 authorized "Black Nationalist" COINTELPRO actions.<sup>4</sup>

Although the claimed purpose of the Bureau's COINTELPRO tactics was to prevent violence, some of the FBI's tactics against the BPP were clearly intended to foster violence, and many others could reasonably have been expected to cause violence. For example, the FBI's efforts to "intensify the degree of animosity" between the BPP and the Blackstone Rangers, a Chicago street gang, included sending an anonymous letter to the gang's leader falsely informing him that the Chicago Panthers had "a hit out" on him.<sup>5</sup> The stated intent of the letter was to induce the Ranger leader to "take reprisals against" the Panther leadership.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, in Southern California, the FBI launched a covert effort to "create further dissension in the ranks of the BPP."<sup>7</sup> This effort included mailing anonymous letters and caricatures to BPP members ridiculing the local and national BPP leadership for the express purpose of exacerbating an existing "gang war" between the BPP and an organization called the United Slaves (US). This "gang war" resulted in the killing of four BPP members by members of US and in numerous beatings and shootings. Although individual incidents in this dispute cannot be directly traced to efforts by the FBI, FBI officials were clearly aware of the violent nature of the dispute, engaged in actions which they hoped would prolong and intensify the dispute, and proudly claimed credit for violent clashes between the rival factions which, in the words of one FBI official, resulted in "shootings, beatings, and a high degree of unrest . . . in the area of southeast San Diego."<sup>8</sup>

James Adams, Deputy Associate Director of the FBI's Intelligence Division, told the Committee:

None of our programs have contemplated violence, and the instructions prohibit it, and the record of turndowns of recommended actions in some instances specifically say that we do not approve this action because if we take it it could result in harm to the individual.<sup>9</sup>

But the Committee's record suggests otherwise. For example, in May 1970, after US organization members had already killed four BPP members, the Special Agent in Charge of the Los Angeles FBI office wrote to FBI headquarters:

Information received from local sources indicate that, in general, the membership of the Los Angeles BPP is physical-

<sup>3</sup> New York Times, 9/8/68.

<sup>4</sup> This figure is based on the Select Committee's staff study of Justice Department COINTELPRO "Black Nationalist" summaries prepared by the FBI during the Petersen Committee inquiry into COINTELPRO.

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/13/69.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Baltimore Field Office (and 13 other offices), 11/25/68.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/16/70.

<sup>9</sup> James Adams testimony, 11/19/75, Hearings, Vol. 6, p. 76.

ly afraid of US members and take premeditated precautions to avoid confrontations.

In view of their anxieties, it is not presently felt that the Los Angeles BPP can be prompted into what could result in an internecine struggle between the two organizations. . . .

The Los Angeles Division is aware of the mutually hostile feelings harbored between the organizations and the first opportunity to capitalize on the situation will be maximized. It is intended that US Inc. will be appropriately and discreetly advised of the time and location of BPP activities *in order that the two organizations might be brought together and thus grant nature the opportunity to take her due course.* [Emphasis added.]<sup>10</sup>

This report focuses solely on the FBI's counterintelligence program to disrupt and "neutralize" the Black Panther Party. It does not examine the reasonableness of the basis for the FBI's investigation of the BPP or seek to justify either the politics, the rhetoric, or the actions of the BPP. This report does demonstrate, however, that the chief investigative branch of the Federal Government, which was charged by law with investigating crimes and preventing criminal conduct, itself engaged in lawless tactics and responded to deep-seated social problems by fomenting violence and unrest.

#### *A. The Effort to Promote Violence Between the Black Panther Party and Other Well-Armed, Potentially Violent Organizations*

The Select Committee's staff investigation has disclosed a number of instances in which the FBI sought to turn violence-prone organizations against the Panthers in an effort to aggravate "gang warfare." Because of the milieu of violence in which members of the Panthers often moved we have been unable to establish a direct link between any of the FBI's specific efforts to promote violence and particular acts of violence that occurred. We have been able to establish beyond doubt, however, that high officials of the FBI desired to promote violent confrontations between BPP members and members of other groups, and that those officials condoned tactics calculated to achieve that end. It is deplorable that officials of the United States Government should engage in the activities described below, however dangerous a threat they might have considered the Panthers; equally disturbing is the pride which those officials took in claiming credit for the bloodshed that occurred.

##### *1. The Effort to Promote Violence Between the Black Panther Party and the United Slaves (US), Inc.*

FBI memoranda indicate that the FBI leadership was aware of a violent power struggle between the Black Panther Party and the United Slaves (US) in late 1968. A memorandum to the head of the FBI's Domestic Intelligence Division, for example, stated:

On 11/2/68, BPP received information indicating US members intended to assassinate Leroy Eldridge Cleaver . . .

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/26/70, pp. 1-2.

at a rally scheduled at Los Angeles on 11/3/68. A Los Angeles racial informant advised on 11/8/68 that [a BPP member] had been identified as a US infiltrator and that BPP headquarters had instructed that [name deleted] should be killed.

During BPP rally, US members including one [name deleted], were ordered to leave the rally site by LASS members (Los Angeles BPP Security Squad) and did so. US capitulation on this occasion prompted BPP members to decide to kill [name deleted] and then take over US organization. Members of LASS . . . were given orders to eliminate [name deleted] and [name deleted].<sup>11</sup>

This memorandum also suggested that the two US members should be told of the BPP's plans to "eliminate" them in order to convince them to become Bureau informants.<sup>12</sup>

In November 1968, the FBI took initial steps in its program to disrupt the Black Panther Party in San Diego, California by aggravating the existing hostility between the Panthers and US. A memorandum from FBI Director Hoover to 14 field offices noted a state of "gang warfare" existed, with "attendant threats of murder and reprisals," between the BPP and US in southern California and added:

In order to fully capitalize upon BPP and US differences as well as to exploit all avenues of creating further dissention in the ranks of the BPP, recipient offices are instructed to submit imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP.<sup>13</sup>

As the tempo of violence quickened, the FBI's field office in San Diego developed tactics calculated to heighten tension between the hostile factions. On January 17, 1969, two members of the Black Panther Party—Apprentice "Buckey" Carter and John Huggins—were killed by US members on the UCLA campus following a meeting involving the two organizations and university students.<sup>14</sup> One month later, the San Diego field office requested permission from headquarters to mail derogatory cartoons to local BPP offices and to the homes of prominent BPP leaders around the country.<sup>15</sup> The purpose was plainly stated:

The purpose of the caricatures is to indicate to the BPP that the US organization feels that they are ineffectual, inadequate, and riddled with graft and corruption.<sup>16</sup>

In the first week of March, the first cartoon was mailed to five BPP members and two underground papers, all in the San Diego area.<sup>17</sup> According to an FBI memorandum, the consensus of opinion within

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum from G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, 11/5/68.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* An earlier FBI memorandum had informed headquarters that "sources have reported that the BPP has let a contract on Karenga [the leader of US] because they feel he has sold out to the establishment." (Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/25/68, p. 1.)

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Baltimore Field Office (and 13 other field offices), 11/25/68.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/20/69.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/20/69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> See memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/12/69.

the BPP was that US was responsible and that the mailing constituted an attack on the BPP by US.<sup>18</sup>

In mid-March 1969, the FBI learned that a BPP member had been critically wounded by US members at a rally in Los Angeles. The field office concluded that shots subsequently fired into the home of a US member were the results of a retaliatory raid by the BPP.<sup>19</sup> Tensions between the BPP and US in San Diego, however, appeared to lessen, and the FBI concluded that those chapters were trying "to talk out their differences." The San Diego field office reported:

On 3/27/69 there was a meeting between the BPP and US organization. . . . Wallace [BPP leader in San Diego] . . . concluded by stating that the BPP in San Diego would not hold a grudge against the US members for the killing of the Panthers in Los Angeles (Huggins and Carter). He stated that he would leave any retaliation for this activity to the black community. . . .

On 4/2/69, there was a friendly confrontation between US and the BPP with no weapons being exhibited by either side. US members met with BPP members and tried to talk out their differences.<sup>20</sup>

On March 27, 1969—the day that the San Diego field office learned that the local BPP leader had promised that his followers "would not hold a grudge" against local US members for the killings in Los Angeles—the San Diego office requested headquarters' approval for three more cartoons ridiculing the BPP and falsely attributed to US. One week later, shortly after the San Diego office learned that US and BPP members were again meeting and discussing their differences, the San Diego field office mailed the cartoons with headquarters' approval.<sup>21</sup>

On April 4, 1969 there was a confrontation between US and BPP members in Southcrest Park in San Diego at which, according to an FBI memorandum, the BPP members "ran the US members off."<sup>22</sup> On the same date, US members broke into a BPP political education meeting and roughed up a female BPP member.<sup>23</sup> The FBI's Special Agent in Charge in San Diego boasted that the cartoons had caused these incidents:

The BPP members . . . strongly objected being made fun of by cartoons being distributed by the US organization (FBI cartoons in actuality) . . . [Informant] has advised on several occasions that the cartoons are "really shaking up the BPP." They have made the BPP feel that US is getting ready to move and this was the cause of the confrontation at Southcrest Park on 4/4/69.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/12/69, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/17/69.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 4/10/69.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/27/69.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 4/10/69, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

The fragile truce had ended. On May 23, 1969, John Savage, a member of the BPP in Southern California, was shot and killed by US member Jerry Horne, aka Tambuzi. The killing was reported in an FBI memorandum which stated that confrontations between the groups were now "ranging from mere harrassment up to and including beating of various individuals."<sup>25</sup> In mid-June, the San Diego FBI office informed Washington headquarters that members of the US organization were holding firearms practice and purchasing large quantities of ammunition:

Reliable information has been received . . . that members of the US organization have purchased ammunition at one of the local gun shops. On 6/5/69, an individual identified as [name deleted] purchased 150 rounds of 9 MM ammunition, 100 rounds of .32 automatic ammunition, and 100 rounds of .38 special ammunition at a local gun shop. [Name deleted] was tentatively identified as the individual who was responsible for the shooting of BPP member [name deleted] in Los Angeles on or about 3/14/69.<sup>26</sup>

Despite this atmosphere of violence, FBI headquarters authorized the San Diego field office to compose an inflammatory letter over the forged signature of a San Diego BPP member and to send it to BPP headquarters in Oakland, California.<sup>27</sup> The letter complained of the killing of Panthers in San Diego by US members, and the fact that a local BPP leader had a white girlfriend.<sup>28</sup>

According to a BPP bulletin, two Panthers were wounded by US gunman on August 14, 1969, and the next day another BPP member, Sylvester Bell, was killed in San Diego by US members.<sup>29</sup> On August 30, 1969, the San Diego office of US was bombed. The FBI believed the BPP was responsible for the bombing.<sup>30</sup>

The San Diego office of the FBI viewed this carnage as a positive development and informed headquarters: "Efforts are being made to determine how this situation can be capitalized upon for the benefit of the Counterintelligence Program. . . ." <sup>31</sup> The field office further noted:

In view of the recent killing of BPP member Sylvester Bell, a new cartoon is being considered in the hopes that it will assist in the continuance of the rift between BPP and US.<sup>32</sup>

The San Diego FBI office pointed with pride to the continued violence between black groups:

Shootings, beatings, and a high degree of unrest continues to prevail in the ghetto area of southeast San Diego. Although no specific counterintelligence action can be credited with contributing to this overall situation, *it is felt that a*

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 6/5/69, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 6/13/69.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Diego Field Office, 6/17/69.

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 6/6/69.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/20/69.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/18/69.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.



*substantial amount of the unrest is directly attributable to this program.* [Emphasis added.] <sup>33</sup>

In early September 1969, the San Diego field office informed headquarters that Karenga, the Los Angeles US leader, feared assassination by the BPP.<sup>34</sup> It received permission from headquarters to exploit this situation by sending Karenga a letter, purporting to be from a US member in San Diego, alluding to an article in the BPP newspaper criticizing Karenga and suggesting that he order reprisals against the Panthers. The Bureau memorandum which originally proposed the letter explained:

The article, which is an attack on Ron Karenga of the US organization, is self-explanatory. It is felt that if the following letter be sent to Karenga, pointing out that the contents of the article are objectionable to members of the US organization in San Diego, the possibility exists that some sort of retaliatory action will be taken against the BPP. . . .<sup>35</sup>

FBI files do not indicate whether the letter, which was sent to Karenga by the San Diego office, was responsible for any violence.

In January 1970, the San Diego office prepared a new series of counterintelligence cartoons attacking the BPP and forwarded them to FBI headquarters for approval.<sup>36</sup> The cartoons were composed to look like a product of the US organization.

The purpose of the caricatures is to indicate to the BPP that the US Organization considers them to be ineffectual, inadequate, and [considers itself] vitally superior to the BPP.<sup>37</sup>

One of the caricatures was "designed to attack" the Los Angeles Panther leader as a bully toward women and children in the black community. Another accused the BPP of "actually instigating" a recent Los Angeles Police Department raid on US headquarters. A third cartoon depicted Karenga as an overpowering individual "who has the BPP completely at his mercy. . . ." <sup>38</sup>

On January 29, 1970, FBI headquarters approved distribution of these caricatures by FBI field offices in San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The authorizing memorandum from headquarters stated:

US Incorporated and the Black Panther Party are opposing black extremist organizations. Feuding between representatives of the two groups in the past had a tendency to limit the effectiveness of both. The leaders and incidents depicted in the caricatures are known to the general public, particularly among the Negroes living in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco.

The leaders and members of both groups are distrusted by a large number of the citizen within the Negro commu-

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/3/69.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 11/12/69.

<sup>36</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/23/70.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

nities. Distribution of caricatures is expected to strengthen this distrust.<sup>39</sup>

Bureau documents provided to the Select Committee do not indicate whether violence between BPP and US members followed the mailing of this third series of cartoons.

In early May 1970, FBI Headquarters became aware of an article entitled "Karenga King of the Bloodsuckers" in the May 2, 1970, edition of the BPP newspaper which "vilifies and debases Karenga and the US organization."<sup>40</sup> Two field offices received the following request from headquarters:

[s]ubmit recommendation to Bureau . . . for exploitation of same under captioned program. Consider from two aspects, one against US and Karenga from obvious subject matter; the second against BPP because inherent in article is admission by BPP that it has done nothing to retaliate against US for killing of Panther members attributed to US and Karenga, an admission that the BPP has been beaten at its own game of violence.<sup>41</sup>

In response to this request, the Special Agent in Charge in Los Angeles reported that the BPP newspaper article had already resulted in violence, but that it was difficult to induce BPP members to attack US members in Southern California because they feared US members.<sup>42</sup> The Los Angeles field office hoped, however, that "internecine struggle" might be triggered through a skillful use of informants within both groups:

The Los Angeles Division is aware of the mutually hostile feelings harbored between the organizations and the first opportunity to capitalize on the situation will be maximized. It is intended that US Inc. will be appropriately and discretely advised of the time and location of BPP activities *in order that the two organizations might be brought together and thus grant nature the opportunity to take her due course.* [Emphasis added.]<sup>43</sup>

The release of Huey P. Newton, BPP Minister of Defense, from prison in August 1970 inspired yet another counterintelligence plan. An FBI agent learned from a prison official that Newton had told an inmate that a rival group had let a \$3,000 contract on his life. The Los Angeles office presumed the group was US, and proposed that an anonymous letter be sent to David Hilliard, BPP Chief of Staff in Oakland, purporting to be from the person holding the contract on Newton's life. The proposed letter warned Hilliard not to be around when the "unscheduled appointment" to kill Newton was kept, and cautioned Hilliard not to "get in my way."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Diego Field Office, 1/29/70.

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles and San Francisco Field Offices, 5/15/70.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/26/70.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/10/70.

FBI headquarters, however, denied authority to send the letter to Hilliard. Its concern was not that the letter might cause violence or that it was improper action by a law enforcement agency, but that the letter might violate a Federal statute:

While Bureau appreciates obvious effort and interest exhibited concerning anonymous letter . . . studied analysis of same indicates implied threat therein may constitute extortion violation within investigative jurisdiction of Bureau or postal authorities and may subsequently be embarrassing to Bureau.<sup>45</sup>

The Bureau's stated concern with legality was ironic in light of the activities described above.

## *2. The Effort To Promote Violence Between the Blackstone Rangers and the Black Panther Party*

In late 1968 and early 1969, the FBI endeavored to pit the Blackstone Rangers, a heavily armed, violence-prone organization, against the Black Panthers.<sup>46</sup> In December 1968, the FBI learned that the recognized leader of the Blackstone Rangers, Jeff Fort, was resisting Black Panther overtures to enlist "the support of the Blackstone Rangers."<sup>47</sup> In order to increase the friction between these groups, the Bureau's Chicago office proposed sending an anonymous letter to Fort, informing him that two prominent leaders of the Chicago BPP had been making disparaging remarks about his "lack of commitment to black people generally." The field office observed:

Fort is reportedly aware that such remarks have been circulated, but is not aware of the identities of the individual responsible. He has stated that he would "take care of" individuals responsible for the verbal attacks directed against him.

Chicago, consequently, recommends that Fort be made aware that [name deleted] and [name deleted] together with other BPP members locally, are responsible for the circulation of these remarks concerning him. It is felt that if Fort were to be aware that the BPP was responsible, it would lend impetus to his refusal to accept any BPP overtures to the Rangers and *additionally might result in Fort having*

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<sup>45</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles Field Office, 9/30/70.

<sup>46</sup> There is no question that the Blackstone Rangers were well-armed and violent. The Chicago police had linked the Rangers and rival gangs in Chicago to approximately 290 killings from 1965-69. Report of Captain Edward Buckney, Chicago Police Dept., Gang Intelligence Unit, 2/23/70, p. 2. One Chicago police officer, familiar with the Rangers, told a Committee staff member that their governing body, the Main 21, was responsible for several ritualistic murders of black youths in areas the gang controlled. (Staff summary of interview with Renault Robinson, 9/25/75.)

<sup>47</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/16/68. Forte also had a well-earned reputation for violence. Between September 1964 and January 1971, he was charged with more than 14 felonies, including murder (twice), aggravated battery (seven times), robbery (twice), and contempt of Congress. (Select Committee staff interview of FBI criminal records.) A December 1968 FBI memorandum noted that a search of Forte's apartment had turned up a .22 caliber, four-shot derringer pistol. (Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/12/68, p. 2.)

*active steps taken to exact some form of retribution toward the leadership of the BPP. [Emphasis added.]*<sup>48</sup>

On about December 18, 1968, Jeff Fort and other Blackstone Rangers were involved in a serious confrontation with members of the Black Panther Party.

During that day twelve members of the BPP and five known members of the Blackstone Rangers were arrested on Chicago's South Side.<sup>49</sup> A report indicates that the Panthers and Rangers were arrested following the shooting of one of the Panthers by a Ranger.<sup>49a</sup>

That evening, according to an FBI informant, around 10:30 p.m., approximately thirty Panthers went to the Blackstone Rangers' headquarters at 6400 South Kimbark in Chicago. Upon their arrival Jeff Fort invited Fred Hampton, Bobby Rush and the other BPP members to come upstairs and meet with him and the Ranger leadership.<sup>49b</sup> The Bureau goes on to describe what transpired at this meeting:

. . . everyone went upstairs into a room which appeared to be a gymnasium, where Fort told Hampton and Rush that he had heard about the Panthers being in Ranger territory during the day, attempting to show their "power" and he wanted the Panthers to recognize the Rangers "power." Source stated that Fort then gave orders, via walkie-talkie, whereupon two men marched through the door carrying pump shotguns. Another order and two men appeared carrying sawed off carbines then eight more, each carrying a .45 caliber machine gun, clip type, operated from the shoulder or hip, then others came with over and under type weapons. Source stated that after this procession Fort had all Rangers present, approximately 100, display their side arms and about one half had .45 caliber revolvers. Source advised that all the above weapons appeared to be new.

Source advised they left the gym, went downstairs to another room where Rush and Hampton of the Panthers and Fort and two members of the Main 21 sat by a table and discussed the possibility of joining the two groups. Source related that Fort took off his jacket and was wearing a .45 caliber revolver shoulder holster with gun and had a small caliber weapon in his belt.

Source advised that nothing was decided at the meeting about the two groups actually joining forces, however, a decision was made to meet again on Christmas Day. Source stated Fort did relate that the Rangers were behind the Panthers but were not to be considered members. Fort wanted the Panthers to join the Rangers and Hampton wanted the opposite, stating that if the Rangers joined the Panthers, then together they would be able to absorb all the other Chicago gangs. Source advised Hampton did state that they couldn't let the man keep the two groups apart. Source ad-

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/16/68, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Letter Head Memorandum, 12/20/68.

<sup>49a</sup> From confidential FBI interview with inmate at the House of Correction, 26th and California St. in Chicago, 11/12/69.

<sup>49b</sup> Letterhead Memorandum, 12/20/68.

vised that Fort also gave Hampton and Rush one of the above .45 caliber machine guns to "try out."

Source advised that based upon conversations during this meeting, Fort did not appear over anxious to join forces with the Panthers, however, neither did it appear that he wanted to terminate meeting for this purpose.<sup>49c</sup>

On December 26, 1968 Fort and Hampton met again to discuss the possibility of the Panthers and Rangers working together. This meeting was at a South Side Chicago bar and broke up after several Panthers and Rangers got into an argument.<sup>49d</sup> On December 27, Hampton received a phone call at BPP Headquarters from Fort telling him that the BPP had until December 28, 1968 to join the Blackstone Rangers. Hampton told Fort he had until the same time for the Rangers to join the BPP and they hung up.<sup>49e</sup>

In the wake of this incident, the Chicago office renewed its proposal to send a letter to Forte, informing FBI headquarters:

As events have subsequently developed . . . the Rangers and the BPP have not only not been able to form any alliance, but enmity and distrust have arisen, to the point where each has been ordered to stay out of the other territory. The BPP has since decided to conduct no activity or attempt to do recruiting in Ranger territory.<sup>50</sup>

The proposed letter read:

Brother Jeff:

I've spent some time with some Panther friends on the west side lately and I know what's been going on. The brothers that run the Panthers blame you for blocking their thing and *there's supposed to be a hit out for you*. I'm not a Panther, or a Ranger, just black. From what I see these Panthers are out for themselves not black people. I think you ought to know what they're up to, I know what I'd do if I was you. You might hear from me again.

(sgd.) A black brother you don't know.  
[Emphasis added.]<sup>51</sup>

The FBI's Chicago office explained the purpose of the letter as follows:

It is believed the above may intensify the degree of animosity between the two groups and occasion Forte to take retaliatory action which could disrupt the BPP or lead to reprisals against its leadership.

Consideration has been given to a similar letter to the BPP alleging a Ranger plot against the BPP leadership; however, it is not felt this would be productive principally because the BPP at present is not believed as violence prone as the Rangers to whom violent type activity—shooting and the like—is second nature.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49c</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>49d</sup> FBI Special Agent Informant Report, 12/30/68.

<sup>49e</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/10/69.

<sup>51</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/13/69, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

On the evening of January 13, 1969, Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush appeared on a Chicago radio talk show called "Hot Line." During the course of the program Hampton stated that the BPP was in the "process of educating the Blackstone Rangers."<sup>52a</sup> Shortly after that statement Jeff Fort was on the phone to the radio program and stated that Hampton had his facts confused and that the Rangers were educating the BPP.<sup>52b</sup>

On January 16, Hampton, in a public meeting, stated that Jeff Fort had threatened to blow his head off if he came within Ranger territory.<sup>52c</sup>

On January 30, 1969, Director Hoover authorized sending the anonymous letter.<sup>53</sup> While the Committee staff could find no evidence linking this letter to subsequent clashes between the Panthers and the Rangers, the Bureau's intent was clear.<sup>54</sup>

### *B. The Effort To Disrupt the Black Panther Party by Promoting Internal Dissension*

#### *1. General Efforts to Disrupt the Black Panther Party Membership*

In addition to setting rival groups against the Panthers, the FBI employed the full range of COINTELPRO techniques to create rifts and factions, within the Party itself which it was believed would "neutralize" the Party's effectiveness.<sup>55</sup>

Anonymous letters were commonly used to sow mistrust. For example, in March 1969 the Chicago FBI Field Office learned that a local BPP member feared that a faction of the Party, allegedly led by Fred Hampton and Bobby Rush, was "out to get" him.<sup>56</sup> Headquarters approved sending an anonymous letter to Hampton which was drafted to exploit dissension within the BPP as well as to play on mistrust between the Blackstone Rangers and the Chicago BPP leadership:

Brother Hampton:

Just a word of warning. A Stone friend tells me [name deleted] wants the Panthers and is looking for somebody to get you out of the way. Brother Jeff is supposed to be interested. I'm just a black man looking for blacks working together, not more of this gang banging.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52a</sup> Memorandum from Special Agent to SAC, Chicago, 1/15/69.

<sup>52b</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52c</sup> Memorandum from Special Agent to SAC, Chicago, 1/28/69, reporting on informant report.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago Field Office, 1/30/69.

<sup>54</sup> There are indications that a shooting incident between the Rangers and the Panthers on April 2, 1969, in a Chicago suburb may have been triggered by the FBI. According to Bobby Rush, coordinator of the Chicago BPP at the time, a group of armed BPP members had confronted the Rangers because Panther William O'Neal—who has since surfaced as an FBI informant—had told them that a Panther had been shot by Blackstone Rangers and had insisted that they retaliate. This account, however, has not been confirmed. (Staff summary of interview with Bobby Rush, 11/26/75.)

<sup>55</sup> The various COINTELPRO techniques are described in detail in the Staff Report on COINTELPRO.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/24/69.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago Field Office, 4/8/69.

Bureau documents indicate that during this time an informant within the BPP was also involved in maintaining the division between the Panthers and the Blackstone Rangers.<sup>57a</sup>

In December 1968, the Chicago FBI Field Office learned that a leader of a Chicago youth gang, the Mau Mau's, planned to complain to the national BPP headquarters about the local BPP leadership and questioned its loyalty.<sup>58</sup> FBI headquarters approved an anonymous letter to the Mau Mau leader, stating:

Brother [deleted]:

I'm from the south side and have some Panther friends that know you and tell me what's been going. I know those two [name deleted] and [name deleted] that run the Panthers for a long time and those mothers been with every black outfit going where it looked like they was something in it for them.

The only black people they care about is themselves. *I heard too they're sweethearts* and that [name deleted] has worked for the man that's why he's not in Viet Nam. *Maybe that's why they're just playing like real Panthers.* I hear a lot of the brothers are with you and want those mothers out but don't know how. The Panthers need real black men for leaders not freaks. Don't give up brothers. [Emphasis added.]<sup>59</sup>

A black friend.

The FBI also resorted to anonymous phone calls. The San Diego Field Office placed anonymous calls to local BPP leaders naming other BPP members as "police agents." According to a report from the field office, these calls, reinforced by rumors spread by FBI informants within the BPP, induced a group of Panthers to accuse three Party members of working for the police. The field office boasted that one of the accused members fled San Diego in fear for his life.<sup>60</sup>

The FBI conducted harassing interviews of Black Panther members to intimidate them and drive them from the Party. The Los Angeles Field Office conducted a stringent interview program

in the hope that a state of distrust [sic] might remain among the members and add to the turmoil presently going on within the BPP.<sup>61</sup>

The Los Angeles office claimed that similar tactics had cut the membership of the United States (US) by 50 percent.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57a</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/28/69.

<sup>58</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/30/68.

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago Field Office, 1/30/69.

<sup>60</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/12/69.

The FBI had success with this technique in other cases. For example, the FBI placed another anonymous call to Stokely Carmichael's residence in New York City. Carmichael's mother was informed falsely that several BPP members were out to kill her son, and that he should "hide out." The FBI memorandum reporting this incident said that Mrs. Carmichael sounded "shocked" on hearing the news and stated that she would tell Stokely when he came home. The memorandum observed that on the next day, Stokely Carmichael left New York for Africa. (Memorandum from New York Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/9/68, p. 2.)

<sup>61</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/17/69, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/3/69.

FBI agents attempted to convince landlords to force Black Panther members and offices from their buildings. The Indianapolis Field Office reported that a local landlord had yielded to its urgings and promised to tell his Black Panther tenants to relocate their offices.<sup>63</sup> The San Francisco office sent an article from the Black Panther newspaper to the landlord of a BPP member who had rented an apartment under an assumed name. The article, which had been written by that member and contained her picture and true name, was accompanied by an anonymous note stating, “(false name) is your tenant (true name)”<sup>64</sup> The San Francisco office secured the eviction of one Black Panther who lived in a public housing project by informing the Housing Authority officials that she was using his apartment for the BPP Free Breakfast Program.<sup>65</sup> When it was learned that the BPP was conducting a Free Breakfast Program “in the notorious Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco,” the Bureau mailed a letter to the owners of the building:

Dear Mr. (excised):

I would call and talk to you about this matter, but I am not sure how you feel, and I do not wish to become personally embroiled with neighbors. It seems that the property owners on (excised) Street have had enough trouble in the past without bringing in Black Panthers.

Maybe you are not aware, but the Black Panthers have taken over (address deleted). Perhaps if you drive up the street, you can see what they are going to do to the property values. They have already plastered a nearby garage with big Black Panther posters.

—A concerned property owner.<sup>66</sup>

The Bureau also attempted to undermine the morale of Panther members by attempting to break up their marriages. In one case, an anonymous letter was sent to the wife of a prominent Panther leader stating that her husband had been having affairs with several teenage girls and had taken some of those girls with him on trips.<sup>67</sup> Another Panther leader told a Committee staff member that an FBI agent had attempted to destroy his marriage by visiting his wife and showing photographs purporting to depict him with other women.<sup>68</sup>

## *2. FBI Role in the Newton-Cleaver Rift*

In March 1970, the FBI initiated a concerted program to drive a permanent wedge between the followers of Eldridge Cleaver, who was then out of the country and the supporters of Huey P. Newton, who

<sup>63</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/8/69. The FBI discovered that the Indianapolis BPP would have difficulty in new quarters because of its financial plight, a fact which was discovered by monitoring its bank account. (Memorandum from Indianapolis Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/23/69.)

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/15/69.

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/21/70.

<sup>66</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/22/70.

<sup>67</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 11/26/68.

<sup>68</sup> The Bureau documents presented to the Committee do not record of this contact.



was then serving a prison sentence in California.<sup>69</sup> An anonymous letter was sent to Cleaver in Algeria stating that BPP leaders in California were seeking to undercut his influence. The Bureau subsequently learned that Cleaver had assumed the letter was from the then Panther representative in Scandinavia, Connie Matthews, and that the letter had led Cleaver to expel three BPP international representatives from the Party.<sup>70</sup>

Encouraged by the apparent success of this letter, FBI headquarters instructed its Paris Legal Attache to mail a follow-up letter, again written to appear as if Matthews was the author, to the Black Panther-Chief-of-Staff, David Hilliard, in Oakland, California. The letter alleged that Cleaver "has tripped out. Perhaps he has been working too hard," and suggested that Hilliard "take some immediate action before this becomes more serious." The Paris Legal Attache was instructed to mail the letter:

At a time when Matthews is in or has just passed through Paris immediately following one of her trips to Algiers. The enclosed letter should be held by you until such an occasion arises at which time you are authorized to immediately mail it in Paris in such a manner that it cannot be traced to the Bureau.<sup>71</sup>

In early May, Eldridge Cleaver called BPP national headquarters from Algeria and talked with Connie Matthews, Elbert Howard, and Roosevelt Hilliard. A Bureau report stated:

Various items were discussed by these individuals with Hilliard. Connie Matthews discussed with Hilliard "those letters" appearing to relate to the counterintelligence letters, which have been submitted to Cleaver and Hilliard purportedly by Matthews. . . .

It appears . . . that [Elbert Howard] had brought copies of the second counterintelligence letter to David Hilliard with him to Algiers which were then compared with the . . . letter previously sent to Cleaver in Algiers and that . . . discussed this situation. . . .<sup>72</sup>

The San Francisco Field Office reported that some BPP leaders suspected that the CIA or FBI had sent the letters, while others suspected the Black Panther members in Paris. A subsequent FBI memorandum indicated that suspicion had focused on the Panthers in Europe.<sup>73</sup>

On August 13, 1970—the day that Huey Newton was released from prison—the Philadelphia Field Office had an informant distribute a fictitious BPP directive to Philadelphia Panthers, questioning New-

<sup>69</sup> In September 1969, FBI Headquarters had encouraged the field offices to undertake projects aimed at splitting the BPP on a nationwide basis. (Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Newark, New York, and San Francisco Field Offices, 9/18/69.)

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Legat, Paris and San Francisco Field Office, 4/10/70.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/8/70.

<sup>73</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters 5/28/70.

ton's leadership ability.<sup>74</sup> The Philadelphia office informed FBI Headquarters that the directive:

stresses the leadership and strength of David Hilliard and Eldridge Cleaver while intimating Huey Newton is useful only as a drawing card.

It is recommended this directive . . . be mailed personally to Huey Newton with a short anonymous note. The note would indicate the writer, a Community Worker in Philadelphia for the BPP, was incensed over the suggestion Huey was only being used by the Party after founding it, and wanted no part of this Chapter if it was slandering its leaders in private.<sup>75</sup>

Headquarters approved this plan on August 19, 1970.<sup>76</sup>

FBI officials seized on several incidents during the following months as opportunities to advance their program. In an August 1970 edition of the BPP newspaper, Huey Newton appealed to "oppressed groups," including homosexuals, to "unite with the BPP in revolutionary fashion."<sup>77</sup> FBI headquarters approved a plan to mail forged letters from BPP sympathizers and supporters in ghetto areas to David Hilliard, protesting Newton's statements about joining with homosexuals, hoping this would discredit Newton with other BPP leaders.<sup>78</sup>

In July and August 1970, Eldridge Cleaver led a United States delegation to North Korea and North Vietnam. *Ramparts* editor Robert Scheer, who had been a member of the delegation, held a press conference in New York and, according to the Bureau, glossed over the Panther's role in sponsoring the tour.<sup>79</sup> The New York office was authorized to send an anonymous letter to Newton complaining about Sheer's oversight to strain relations between the BPP and the "New Left."<sup>80</sup> On November 13, 1970, the Los Angeles field office was asked to prepare an anonymous letter to Cleaver criticizing Newton for not aggressively obtaining BPP press coverage of the BPP's sponsorship of the trip.<sup>81</sup>

In October 1970, the FBI learned that Timothy Leary, who had escaped from a California prison where he was serving a sentence for possessing marijuana, was seeking asylum with Eldridge Cleaver in Algiers. The San Francisco field office, noting that the Panthers were officially opposed to drugs, sent Newton an anonymous letter calling his attention to Cleaver "playing footsie" with Leary.<sup>82</sup> In January when Cleaver publicly condemned Leary, FBI headquarters approved sending Newton a bogus letter from a Berkeley, California commune condemning Cleaver for "divorcing the BPP from white revolutionaries."<sup>83</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Memorandum from Philadelphia Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/13/70.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Philadelphia and San Francisco Field Offices, 8/19/70.

<sup>77</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/31/70.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 9/9/70.

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/21/70.

<sup>80</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco and New York Field Office, 10/29/70.

<sup>81</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles Field Office, 11/3/70.

<sup>82</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/28/70.

<sup>83</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco and New York Field Offices, 2/5/71.

In December 1970, the BPP attempted to hold a Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention (RPCC) in Washington, D.C. The Bureau considered the convention a failure and received reports that most delegates had left it dissatisfied.<sup>84</sup> The Los Angeles FBI field office suggested a letter to Cleaver designed to

provoke Cleaver to openly question Newton's leadership . . . It is felt that distance and lack of personal contact between Newton and Cleaver do offer a counterintelligence opportunity that should be probed.

In view of the BPP's unsuccessful attempt to convene a Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention (RPCC), it is suggested that each division which had individuals attend the RPCC write numerous letters to Cleaver criticizing Newton for his lack of leadership. It is felt that, if Cleaver received a sufficient number of complaints regarding Newton it might . . . create dissension that later could be more fully exploited.<sup>85</sup>

FBI headquarters approved the Los Angeles letter to Cleaver and asked the Washington field office to supply a list of all organizations attending the RPCC.<sup>86</sup> A barrage of anonymous letters to Newton and Cleaver followed:

Two weeks later, the San Francisco office mailed Newton an anonymous letter, supposedly from a "white revolutionary," complaining about the incompetence of the Panthers who had planned the conference.<sup>86a</sup> The New York office mailed a complaint to the BPP national headquarters, purportedly from a black student at Columbia University who attended the RPCC as a member of the University's student Afro-American Society.<sup>86b</sup> The San Francisco office sent a letter containing an article from the *Berkeley Barb* to Cleaver, attacking Newton's leadership at the RPCC. Mailed with the article was a copy of a letter to Newton criticizing the RPCC and bearing the notation:

Mr. Cleaver,

Here is a letter I sent to Huey Newton. I'm sincere and hope you can do something to set him right and get him off his duff.<sup>86c</sup>

In January 1971, the Boston office sent a letter, purportedly from a "white revolutionary," to Cleaver, stating in part:

<sup>84</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington Field Offices, 12/15/70.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/3/70, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington Field Offices, 12/15/70. A list of 10 organizations whose members attended the RPCC was forwarded to the FBI offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and San Francisco. (Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Atlanta (and 5 other Field Offices), 12/31/70.) There is no indication concerning how the Bureau obtained this list.

<sup>86a</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 12/16/70.

<sup>86b</sup> Memorandum from New York Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/14/70.

<sup>86c</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 1/6/71.

Dear Revolutionary Comrade:

The people's revolution in America was greatly impeded and the stature of the Black Panther Party, both nationally and internationally, received a major setback as an outcome of the recent Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention. . . .

The Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention did little, if anything, to organize our forces to move against the evils of capitalism, imperialism and racism. Any unity or solidarity which existed between the Black Panther Party and the white revolutionary movement before the Convention has now gone down the tube. . . .

The responsibility of any undertaking as meaningful and important to the revolution . . . should not have been delegated to the haphazard ways of [name deleted] whose title of Convention Coordinator . . . places him in the . . . position of receiving the Party's wrath . . . Huey Newton himself (should) have assumed command. . . .

The Black Panther Party has failed miserably. No longer can the Party be looked upon as the "Vanguard of the Revolution."

Yours in Revolution,  
Lawrence Thomas,  
Students for a Democratic Society.

Memorandum from Boston Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/8/71. This letter was sent to Cleaver through Oakland BPP headquarters to determine whether the BPP in California would forward the letter to him. (*Ibid.*)

One letter to Cleaver, written to appear as if it had come from Connie Matthews, Newton's personal secretary read in part:

Things around headquarters are dreadfully disorganized with the comrade commander not making proper decisions. The newspaper is in a shambles. No one knows who is in charge. The foreign department gets no support . . . I fear there is rebellion working just beneath the surface. . . .

We must either get rid of the Supreme Commander [Newton] or get rid of the disloyal members.<sup>87</sup>

In a January 28, 1971, evaluation, FBI headquarters noted that Huey Newton had recently disciplined high BPP officials and that he prepared "to respond violently to any question of his actions or policies." The Bureau believed that Newton's reaction was in part a "result of our counterintelligence projects now in operation."

<sup>87</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/18/70. FBI headquarters authorized this letter on January 21, 1971 stating that the Bureau must now seize the time and "immediately" send the letter. (Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 1/21/71, p. 2.) Shortly afterward, a letter was sent to Cleaver from alleged Puerto Rican political allies of the BPP in Chicago, The Young Lords.

What do we get. A disorganized Convention, apologetic speakers and flunkys who push us around, no leadership, no ideas, no nothing. . . . [Y]our talk is nice, but your ideas and action is nothing. . . . You are gone, those you left behind have big titles but cannot lead, cannot organize, are afraid to even come out among the people. The oppressed of Amerikka cannot wait. We must move without you. . . . (Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/19/71; memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago and San Francisco Field Offices, 1/27/71.)

The present chaotic situation within the BPP must be exploited and recipients must maintain the present high level of counterintelligence activity. You should each give this matter priority attention and immediately furnish Bureau recommendations . . . designed to further aggravate the dissension within BPP leadership and to fan the apparent distrust by Newton of anyone who questions his wishes.<sup>88</sup>

The campaign was intensified. On February 2, 1971, FBI headquarters directed each of 29 field offices to submit within eight days a proposal to disrupt local BPP chapters and a proposal to cause dissension between local BPP chapters and BPP national headquarters. The directive noted that Huey Newton had recently expelled or disciplined several "dedicated Panthers" and

This dissension coupled with financial difficulties offers an exceptional opportunity to further disrupt, aggravate and possibly neutralize this organization through counterintelligence. In light of above developments this program has been intensified . . . and selected offices should . . . increase measurably the pressure on the BPP and its leaders.<sup>89</sup>

A barrage of anonymous letters flowed from FBI field offices in response to the urgings from FBI headquarters. A fictitious letter to Cleaver, signed by the "New York 21," criticized Newton's leadership and his expulsion of them from the BPP.<sup>90</sup> An imaginary New York City member of the Youth Against War and Facism added his voice to the Bureau's fictitious chorus of critics of Newton and the RPCC.<sup>91</sup> An anonymous letter was sent to Huey Newton's brother, Melvin Newton, warning that followers of Eldridge Cleaver and the New York BPP chapter were planning to have him killed.<sup>92</sup> The FBI learned that Melvin Newton told his brother he thought the letter had been written by someone "on the inside" of the BPP organization because of its specificity.<sup>93</sup> Huey Newton reportedly remarked that he was "definitely of the opinion there is an informer in the party right in the ministry."<sup>93a</sup>

On February 19, 1971, a false letter, allegedly from a BPP official in Oakland, was mailed to Don Cox, a BPP official close to Cleaver in Algeria. The letter intimated that the recent death of a BPP member in California was the result of BPP factionalism (which the Bureau knew was not the case.) The letter also warned Cleaver not to allow his wife, Kathleen, to travel to the United States because of the possibility of violence.<sup>94</sup>

A letter over the forged signature of "Big Man" Howard, editor of the BPP newspaper, told Cleaver:

<sup>88</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Boston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco Field Offices, 1/28/71.

<sup>89</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to 29 Field Offices, 2/2/71.

<sup>90</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to New York and San Francisco Field Offices, 2/3/71.

<sup>91</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to New York Field Office, 2/3/71.

<sup>92</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 2/10/71.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/12/71.

<sup>93a</sup> The FBI was able to be specific because of its wiretaps on the phones of Huey Newton and the Black Panther headquarters.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 2/19/71.

Eldridge:

[Name deleted] told me Huey talked with you Friday and what he had to say. I'm disgusted with things here and the fact that you are being ignored. . . . It makes me mad to learn that Huey now has to lie to you. I'm referring to his fancy apartment which he refers to as the throne. . . .

I can't risk a call as it would mean certain expulsion. You should think a great deal before sending Kathleen. If I could talk to you I could tell you why I don't think you should.<sup>95</sup>

The San Francisco office reported to headquarters that because of the various covert actions instituted against Cleaver and Newton since November 11, 1970:

fortunes of the BPP are at a low ebb. . . . Newton is positive there is an informant in Headquarters. Cleaver feels isolated in Algeria and out of contact with Newton and the Supreme Commander's [Newton's] secretary (Connie Matthews) has disappeared and been denounced.<sup>96</sup>

On April 8, 1976 in Executive Testimony Kathleen Cleaver testified that many letters, written to appear as if they had come from BPP members living in California caused disruption and confusion in the relationship between the Algerian Section and the BPP leadership in Oakland. She stated:

We did not know who to believe about what, so the general effect, not only of the letters but the whole situation in which the letters were part was creating uncertainty. It was a very bizarre feeling.<sup>96a</sup>

On February 26, 1971, Eldridge Cleaver, in a television interview, criticized the expulsion of BPP members and suggested that Panther Chief-of-Staff David Hilliard be removed from his post. As a result of Cleaver's statements, Newton expelled him and the "Inter-communal Section of the Party" in Algiers, Algeria.<sup>97</sup>

On March 25, 1971, the Bureau's San Francisco office sent to various BPP "Solidarity Committees" throughout Europe bogus letters on "facsimiles of BPP letterhead" stating:

<sup>95</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 2/24/71. The phone call from Cleaver to Newton mentioned in this letter had been intercepted by the FBI. An FBI memorandum commented that the call had been prompted by an earlier Bureau letter purporting to come from Connie Matthews: "The letter undoubtedly provoked a long distance call from Cleaver to Newton which resulted in our being able to place in proper perspective the relationship of Newton and Cleaver to obtain the details of the Geronimo [Elmer Pratt] Group and learn of the disaffections and the expulsion of the New York group." (Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/25/71.)

<sup>96</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/25/71.

<sup>96a</sup> Kathleen Cleaver testimony, 4/8/76, p. 34.

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/2/71. FBI headquarters instructed the SAC, San Francisco to mail Cleaver a copy of the March 6 edition of the BPP newspaper which announced his expulsion from the BPP, along with an anonymous note saying, "This is what we think of punks and cowards." (Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 3/10/71.)

To Black Panther Embassies,

You have received copies of February 13, 1971 issue of The Black Panther declaring [three BPP members] as enemies of the People.

The Supreme Servant of the People, Huey P. Newton, with concurrence of the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party, has ordered the expulsion of the entire Intercommunal Section of the Party at Algiers. You are advised that Eldridge Leroy Cleaver is a murderer and a punk without genitals. D.C. Cox is no better.

Leroy's running dogs in New York have been righteously dealt with. Anyone giving any aid or comfort to Cleaver and his jackanapes will be similarly dealt with no matter where they may be located.

[Three BPP international representatives, names deleted] were never members of the Black Panther Party and will never become such.

Immediately report to the Supreme Commander any attempts of these elements to contact you and be guided by the above instructions.

Power to the People  
David Hilliard, Chief of Staff  
For Huey P. Newton  
Supreme Commander.<sup>98</sup>

On the same day, FBI headquarters formally declared its counter-intelligence program aimed at "aggravating dissension" between Newton and Cleaver a success. A letter to the Chicago and San Francisco Field Offices stated:

Since the differences between Newton and Cleaver now appear to be irreconcilable, no further counterintelligence activity in this regard will be undertaken at this time and now new targets must be established.

David Hilliard and Elbert "Big Man" Howard of National Headquarters and Bob Rush of Chicago BPP Chapter are likely future targets. . . .

Hilliard's key position at National Headquarters makes him an outstanding target.

Howard and Rush are also key Panther functionaries; and since it was necessary for them to affirm their loyalty to Newton in "The Black Panther" newspaper of 3/20/71, they must be under a certain amount of suspicion already, making them prime targets.

San Francisco and Chicago furnish the Bureau their comments and recommendations concerning counterintelligence activity designed to cause Newton to expell Hilliard, Howard and Rush.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> This letter was contained in a memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/16/71, pp. 1-2.

<sup>99</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco and Chicago Field Offices, 3/25/71.

*C. Covert Efforts To Undermine Support of the Black Panther Party and to Destroy the Party's Public Image*

*1. Efforts To Discourage and To Discredit Supporters of the Black Panthers*

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's program to "neutralize" the Black Panther Party included attempts to deter individuals and groups from supporting the Panthers and, when that could not be accomplished, often extended to covert action targeted against those supporters.

The Bureau made a series of progressively more severe efforts to destroy the confidence between the Panthers and one of their major California supporters, Donald Freed, a writer who headed an organization of white BPP sympathizers called "Friends of the Panthers." In July 1969, the Los Angeles Field Office sent the local BPP office a memorandum bearing Freed's name and address to "Friends of the Panthers." Written in a condescending tone and including a list of six precautions whites should keep in mind when dealing with Panthers, the memorandum was calculated to cause a "rift between the Black Panther Party and their assisting organizations."<sup>100</sup> A few days later, the Bureau had leaflets placed in a park near a BPP-sponsored national conference in Oakland, California, alleging that Freed was a police informant.<sup>101</sup>

The FBI viewed with favor an intensive local investigation of Freed for "harboring" and "possession of illegal firearms."

It is felt that any prosecution or exposure of either Freed or [name deleted] will severely hurt the BPP. Any exposure will not only deny the Panthers money, but additionally, would cause other white supporters of the BPP to withdraw their support. It is felt that the Los Angeles chapter of the BPP could not operate without the financial support of white sympathizers.<sup>102</sup>

The Bureau's Los Angeles Division also arranged for minutes of a BPP support group to be provided to the BPP when it was learned that statements of members of the support group were critical of Panther leaders.<sup>103</sup>

The FBI attempted to disaffect another BPP supporter, Ed Pearl of the Peace and Freedom Party, by sending him a cautionary letter bearing a fictitious signature. A Bureau memorandum describing the letter says:

The writer states that although he is not a member of the BPP, he is a Mexican who is trusted by BPP members. The writer advises that he has learned from BPP members that certain whites in the PFP who get in the way of the Panthers will be dealt with in a violent manner. The object sought in this letter is to cause a breach between the PFP and the BPP. The former organization had been furnishing money and support to the latter.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles Field Office, 7/25/69.

<sup>101</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 7/28/69.

<sup>102</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/24/69.

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/29/69.

p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Memorandum from G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, 12/27/68.



Famous entertainment personalities who spoke in favor of Panther goals or associated with BPP members became the targets of FBI programs. When the FBI learned that one well-known Hollywood actress had become pregnant during an affair with a BPP member, it reported this information to a famous Hollywood gossip columnist in the form of an anonymous letter. The story was used by the Hollywood columnist.<sup>105</sup> In June 1970, FBI headquarters approved an anonymous letter informing Hollywood gossip columnist Army Archerd that actress Jane Fonda had appeared at a BPP fund-raising function, noting that "It can be expected that Fonda's involvement with the BPP cause could detract from her status with the general public if reported in a Hollywood 'gossip column.'"<sup>106</sup> The wife of a famous Hollywood actor was targeted by the FBI when it discovered that she was a financial contributor and supporter of the BPP in Los Angeles.<sup>107</sup> A caricature attacking her was prepared by the San Diego FBI office.<sup>108</sup>

A famous entertainer was also targeted after the Bureau concluded that he supported the Panthers. Two COINTELPRO actions against this individual were approved because FBI headquarters "believed" they:

would be an effective means of combating BPP fund-raising activities among liberal and naive individuals.<sup>109</sup>

The Bureau also contacted the employers of BPP contributors. It sent a letter to the President and a Vice-President of Union Carbide in January 1970 after learning that a production manager in its San Diego division contributed to the BPP. The letter, which centered around a threat not to purchase Union Carbide stock, stated in part:

Dear Mr. [name deleted]:

I am writing to you in regards to an employee in your San Diego operation, [name deleted]. . . .

I am not generally considered a flag-waving exhibitionist, but I do regard myself as being a loyal American citizen. I, therefore, consider it absolutely ludicrous to invest in any corporation whose ranking employees support, assist, and encourage any organization which openly advocates the violent overthrow of our free enterprise system.

It is because of my firm belief in this self-same free enterprise, capitalistic system that I feel morally obligated to bring this situation to your attention.

Sincerely yours,

T. F. Ellis

Post Office Box —.

San Diego, California <sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office, to FBI Headquarters, 6/3/70.

<sup>106</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles Field Office, 6/25/70.

<sup>107</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/3/70.

<sup>108</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/2/70.

<sup>109</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 3/5/70.

<sup>110</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/22/70. The name "T. F. Ellis" is completely fictitious and the Post Office Box could not have been traced to the FBI.

The response of Union Carbide's Vice President was reported in a San Diego Field Office memorandum:

On 3/21/70, a letter was received from Mr. [name deleted], Vice President of the Union Carbide Corporation, concerning a previously Bureau-approved letter sent to the Union Carbide Corporation objecting to the financial and other support to the BPP of one of their employees, [name deleted]. The letter indicated that Union Carbide has always made it a policy not to become involved in personal matters of their employees unless such activity had an adverse affect upon that particular employee's performance.<sup>111</sup>

One of the Bureau's prime targets was the BPP's free "Breakfast for Children" program, which FBI headquarters feared might be a potentially successful effort by the BPP to teach children to hate police and to spread "anti-white propaganda."<sup>112</sup> In an admitted attempt "to impede their contributions to the BPP Breakfast Program," the FBI sent anonymous letters and copies of an inflammatory Black Panther Coloring Book for children to contributors, including Safeway Stores, Inc., Mayfair Markets, and the Jack-In-The-Box Corporation.<sup>113</sup>

On April 8, 1976 in Executive Testimony a former member of the BPP Central Steering Committee stated that when the coloring book came to the attention of the Panther's national leadership, Bobby Seale ordered it destroyed because the book "did not correctly reflect the ideology of the Black Panther Party . . ." <sup>114</sup>

Churches that permitted the Panthers to use their facilities in the free breakfast program were also targeted. When the FBI's San Diego office discovered that a Catholic Priest, Father Frank Curran, was permitting his church in San Diego to be used as a serving place for the BPP Breakfast Program, it sent an anonymous letter to the Bishop of the San Diego Diocese informing him of the priest's activities.<sup>115</sup> In August 1969, the San Diego Field Office requested permission from headquarters to place three telephone calls protesting Father Curran's support of the BPP program to the Auxiliary Bishop of the San Diego Diocese:

All of the above calls will be made from "parishioners" objecting to the use of their church to assist a black militant cause. Two of the callers will urge that Father Curran be removed as Pastor of the church, and one will threaten suspension of financial support of the church if the activities of the Pastor are allowed to continue.

Fictitious names will be utilized in the event a name is requested by the Bishop. It is felt that complaints, if they do not effect the removal of Father Curran . . . will at least result in Father Curran becoming aware that his Bishop is

<sup>111</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 6/1/70.

<sup>112</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 7/30/69.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*; Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 11/30/70.

<sup>114</sup> K. Cleaver, 4/8/76, p. 16.

<sup>115</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/29/69; memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Diego Field Office, 9/9/69.

cognizant of his activities and will thus result in a curtailment of these activities.<sup>116</sup>

After receiving permission and placing the calls, the San Diego office reported: "the Bishop appeared to be . . . quite concerned over the fact that one of his Priests was deeply involved in utilization of church facilities for this purpose."<sup>117</sup>

A month later, the San Diego office reported that Father Curran had been transferred from the San Diego Diocese to "somewhere in the State of New Mexico for permanent assignment."

In view of the above, it would appear that Father Curran has now been completely neutralized.

The BPP Breakfast Program, without the prompting of Father Curran, has not been renewed in the San Diego area. It is not anticipated at this time that any efforts to re-establish the program will be made in the foreseeable future.<sup>118</sup>

In another case, the FBI sent a letter to the superior of a clergyman in Hartford, Connecticut who had expressed support for the Black Panthers, which stated in part:

Dear BISHOP:

It pains me to have to write this letter to call to your attention a matter which, if brought to public light, may cause the church a great deal of embarrassment. I wish to remain anonymous with regard to the information because in divulging it I may have violated a trust. I feel, however, that what I am writing is important enough that my conscience is clear.

Specifically, I'm referring to the fact that Reverend and Mrs. [name deleted] are associating with leaders of the Black Panther Party. I recently heard through a close friend of Reverend [name deleted] that he is a revolutionist who advocates overthrowing the Government of the United States and that he has turned over a sizable sum of money to the Panthers. I can present no evidence of fact but is it possible Reverend [name deleted] is being influenced by Communists? Some statements he has made both in church and out have led me to believe he is either a Communist himself, or so left-wing that the only thing he lacks is a card.

I beseech you to counsel with Reverend [name deleted] and relay our concern over his political philosophies which among other things involves association with a known revolutionist, [name deleted], head of the Black Panther Party in New Haven. I truly believe Reverend [name deleted] to be a good man, but his fellow men have caused him to go overboard and he now needs a guiding light which only you can provide.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Christian.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/29/69.

<sup>117</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/18/69.

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/6/69,

p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> Memorandum from New Haven Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 11/12/69, p. 3.

Anonymous FBI mailings were also sent to public officials and persons whose help might sway public opinion against the BPP. In December 1969, the FBI mailed Bureau-reproduced copies of BPP "Seasons Greetings" cards to ten FBI field offices<sup>120</sup> with the following instructions:

Enclosed for each office are 20 copies of reproductions of three types of Black Panther Party (BPP) "seasons greetings cards" which depict the violent propensities of this organization. You should anonymously mail these cards to those newspaper editors, public officials, responsible businessmen, and clergy in your territory who should be made aware of the vicious nature of the BPP.<sup>121</sup>

The San Francisco office mailed its cards to several prominent local persons and organizations.<sup>122</sup>

The Bureau also targeted attorneys representing Black Panther members. In July 1969, the Los Angeles Field Office suggested that a break between the BPP membership and Charles Garry, an attorney who frequently represented BPP members, might be accomplished by planting a rumor that Garry, Bobby Seale, and David Hilliard were conspiring to keep BPP leader Huey Newton in jail.<sup>123</sup> This proposal was rejected by FBI headquarters out of concern that the Bureau might be recognized as the source of the rumor.<sup>124</sup> Headquarters did suggest, however:

Los Angeles should review the ideas set forth . . . especially as they pertain to Charles Garry, Bobby Seale, and David Hilliard, and prepare a specific counterintelligence proposal designed to create a breach between the BPP and Garry. Consider such things as anonymous communications and anonymous telephone calls as well as cartoons and other logical methods of transporting your idea.<sup>125</sup>

When the San Francisco Division learned that Garry intended to represent Bobby Seale at the Chicago 7 trial, it sent the Chicago office transcripts of hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the California State Senate's Report on Un-American Activities, which allegedly showed that Garry was connected with the Communist Party. It was intended to distribute this material "to cooperative news media in that city."<sup>126</sup>

<sup>120</sup> The offices were Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Newark, New Haven, New York, San Diego, and San Francisco.

<sup>121</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Baltimore (and 9 other Field Offices), 12/24/69, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> These included the Mayor; the Glide Foundation (church foundation); Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco; Episcopal Diocese of California; Lutheran Church; Editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*; Editor, *San Francisco Examiner*; United Presbyterian Church, San Francisco Conference of Christians and Jews; San Francisco Chamber of Commerce; San Francisco Bar Association; and San Francisco Board of Supervisors. (Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/12/70.)

<sup>123</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 7/1/69.

<sup>124</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles Field Office, 7/14/69.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/6/69.

Similarly, when two local BPP leaders filed suit against the San Diego Police Department charging harassment, illegal arrest, and illegal searches, the San Diego Field Office reviewed its files

to determine if any public source information is available which describes [the attorney's] activities in behalf of CP (Communist Party) activities. If so, an appropriate request will be forwarded to the Bureau concerning a possible letter to the editor and/or an editorial.<sup>127</sup>

The FBI also sought to destroy community support for individual BPP members by spreading rumors that they were immoral. This idea was originally advanced in an August 1967 memorandum from FBI headquarters to all major field offices:

Many individuals currently active in black nationalist organizations have backgrounds in immorality, subversive activity, and criminal records. Through your investigation of key agitators, you should endeavor to establish their unsavory backgrounds. Be alert to determine evidence of misappropriation of funds or other types of personal misconduct on the part of militant nationalist leaders so any practical or warranted counterintelligence may be instituted.<sup>128</sup>

An example of "successful" implementation of this program was a 1970 report from the San Diego Field Office that it had anonymously informed the parents of a teenage girl that she was pregnant by a local Panther leader:

The parents showed extreme concern over a previously unknown situation and [name deleted] was forced to resign from the BPP and return home to live. It also became general knowledge throughout the Negro community that a BPP leader was responsible for the difficulty being experienced by [name deleted].<sup>129</sup>

The field office also considered the operation successful because the mother of another girl questioned the activities of her own daughter after talking with the parent the agents had anonymously contacted. She learned that her daughter, a BPP member, was also pregnant, and had her committed to a reformatory as a wayward juvenile.<sup>130</sup>

## *2. Efforts To Promote Criticism of the Black Panthers in the Mass Media and To Prevent the Black Panther Party and Its Sympathizers from Expressing Their Views*

The FBI's program to destroy the Black Panther Party included a concerted effort to muzzle Black Panther publications to prevent Panther members and persons sympathetic to their aims from expressing their views, and to encourage the mass media to report stories unfavorable to the Panthers.

<sup>127</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/2/70.

<sup>128</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Albany (and 22 other Field Offices), 8/25/67, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/17/70, p. 3.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

In May 1970, FBI headquarters ordered the Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New Haven, New York, San Diego, and San Francisco field offices to advance proposals for crippling the BPP newspaper, *The Black Panther*. Immediate action was deemed necessary because:

The Black Panther Party newspaper is one of the most effective propaganda operations of the BPP.

Distribution of this newspaper is increasing at a regular rate thereby influencing a greater number of individuals in the United States along the black extremist lines.

Each recipient submit by 6/5/70 proposed counterintelligence measures which will hinder the vicious propaganda being spread by the BPP.

The BPP newspaper has a circulation in excess of 100,000 and has reached the height of 139,000. It is the voice of the BPP and if it could be effectively hindered it would result in helping to cripple the BPP. Deadline being set in view of the need to receive recommendations for the purpose of taking appropriate action expeditiously.<sup>131</sup>

The San Francisco Field Office submitted an analysis of the local *Black Panther* printing schedules and circulation. It discouraged disruption of nationwide distribution because the airline company which had contracted with the Panthers might lose business or face a law suit and recommended instead:

a vigorous inquiry by the Internal Revenue Service to have "The Black Panther" report their income from the sale of over 100,000 papers each week. Perhaps the Bureau through liaison at SOG [seat of government] could suggest such a course of action. It is noted that Internal Revenue Service at San Francisco is receiving copies of Black Panther Party funds and letterhead memoranda.

It is requested that the Bureau give consideration to discussion with Internal Revenue Service requesting financial records and income tax return for "The Black Panther."<sup>132</sup>

The San Diego Field Office, while noting that the BPP newspaper had the same legal immunity from tax laws and other state legislation as other newspapers, suggested three California statutes which might be used against *The Black Panther*. One was a State tax on printing equipment; the second a "rarely used transportation tax law"; and the third a law prohibiting business in a residential area.<sup>133</sup>

The San Diego Field Office had a more imaginative suggestion however; spray the newspaper printing room with a foul-smelling chemical:

The Bureau may also wish to consider the utilization of "Skatol", which is a chemical agent in powdered form and when applied to a particular surface emits an extremely noxious odor rendering the premises surrounding the point of application uninhabitable. Utilization of such a chemical of

<sup>131</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago (and seven other Field Offices), 5/15/70.

<sup>132</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/22/70.

<sup>133</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/20/70.

course, would be dependent upon whether an entry could be achieved into the area which is utilized for the production of "The Black Panther."<sup>134</sup>

The San Diego Division also thought that threats from another radical organization against the newspaper might convince the BPP to cease publication:

Another possibility which the Bureau may wish to consider would be the composition and mailing of numerous letters to BPP Headquarters from various points throughout the country on stationary [sic] containing the national emblem of the Minutemen organization. These letters, in several different forms, would all have the common theme of warning the Black Panthers to cease publication or drastic measures would be taken by the Minutemen organization. . . .

Utilization of the Minutemen organization through direction of informants within that group would also be a very effective measure for the disruption of the publication of this newspaper.<sup>135</sup>

On another occasion, however, FBI agents contacted United Airlines officials and inquired about the rates being charged for transporting the Black Panther magazine. A Bureau memorandum states that the BPP was being charged "the General Rate" for printed material, but that in the future it would be forced to pay the "full legal rate allowable for newspaper shipment." The memorandum continued:

Officials advise this increase . . . means approximately a forty percent increase. Officials agree to determine consignor in San Francisco and from this determine consignees throughout the United States so that it can impose full legal tariff. They believe the airlines are due the differences in freight tariffs as noted above for past six to eight months, and are considering discussions with their legal staff concerning suit for recovery of deficit. . . . (T)hey estimate that in New York alone will exceed ten thousand dollars.<sup>136</sup>

In August 1970, the New York Field Office reported that it was considering plans:

directed against (1) the production of the BPP newspaper; (2) the distribution of that newspaper and (3) the use of information contained in particular issues for topical counter-intelligence proposals.

The NYO [New York Office] realizes the financial benefits coming to the BPP through the sale of their newspaper. Continued efforts will be made to derive logical and practical plans to thwart this crucial BPP operation.<sup>137</sup>

A few months later, FBI headquarters directed 39 field offices to distribute copies of a column written by Victor Riesel, a labor columnist,

<sup>134</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/20/70, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>136</sup> Memorandum from New York Field Office to FBI Headquarters and San Francisco Field Office, 10/11/69.

<sup>137</sup> Memorandum from New York Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 8/19/70.

calling for a nationwide union boycott against handling the BPP newspaper.

Enclosed for each office are 50 reproductions of a column written by Victor Riesel regarding the Black Panther Party (BPP).

Portions of the column deals with proposal that union members refuse to handle shipments of BPP newspapers. Obviously if such a boycott gains national support it will result in effectively cutting off BPP propaganda and finances, therefore, it is most desirable this proposal be brought to attention of members and officials of unions such as Teamsters and others involved in handling of shipments of BPP newspapers. These shipments are generally by air freight. The column also deals with repeated calls for murder of police that appear in BPP paper; therefore, it would also be desirable to bring boycott proposal to attention of members and officials of police associations who might be in a position to encourage boycott.

Each office anonymously mail copies of enclosed to officials of appropriate unions, police organizations or other individuals within its territory who could encourage such a boycott....

Handle promptly and advise Bureau of any positive results noted. Any publicity observed concerning proposed boycott should be brought to attention of Bureau.

Be alert for any other opportunities to further exploit this proposal.<sup>138</sup>

Bureau documents submitted to the Select Committee staff do not indicate the outcome of this plan.

On one occasion the FBI's Racial Intelligence Section concocted a scheme to create friction between the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam by reducing sales of the NOI paper, *Muhammed Speaks*:

While both papers advocate white hate, a noticeable loss of revenue to NOI due to decreased sales of their paper caused by the BPP might well be the spark to ignite the fuel of conflict between the two organizations. Both are extremely money conscious.

We feel that our network of racial informants, many of whom are directly involved in the sale of the NOI and BPP newspapers, are in a position to cause a material reduction in NOI newspaper sales. Our sources can bring the fact of revenue loss directly to NOI leader, Elijah Muhammad, who might well be influenced to take positive steps to counteract the sale of BPP papers in the Negro community. We feel that with careful planning and close supervision an open dispute can be developed between the two organizations.<sup>139</sup>

FBI headquarters promptly forwarded this suggestion to the field offices in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco with the express hope that Elijah Muhammed might be influenced "to take positive

<sup>138</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to SAC's in 39 cities, 11/10/70.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum from G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, 6/26/70.



steps to counteract the sale of BPP newspapers in the Negro community.”<sup>140</sup> The following month, the Chicago Field Office advised against using informants for this project because animosity was already developing between the BPP and NOI, and any revelation of a Bureau attempt to encourage conflict might serve to bring the BPP and NOI closer together.<sup>141</sup>

Numerous attempts were made to prevent Black Panthers from airing their views in public. For example, in February 1969, the FBI joined with the Chicago police force to prevent the local BPP leader, Fred Hampton, from appearing on a television talk show. The FBI memorandum explaining this incident states:

the [informant] also enabled Chicago to further harass the local BPP when he provided information the afternoon of 1/24/69 reflecting that Fred Hampton was to appear that evening at local TV studio for video tape interview. . . . The tape was to be aired the following day.

Chicago was aware a warrant for mob action was outstanding for Hampton in his home town and the above information . . . was provided the Maywood Police Department with a suggestion that they request the Chicago Police Department to serve this arrest warrant. This was subsequently done with Hampton arrested at television studio in presence of 25 BPP members and studio personnel. This caused considerable embarrassment to the local BPP and disrupted the plans for Hampton's television appearance.<sup>142</sup>

Headquarters congratulated the Chicago Field Office on the timing of the arrest “under circumstances which proved highly embarrassing to the BPP.”<sup>143</sup>

The Bureau's San Francisco office took credit for preventing Bobby Seale from keeping a number of speaking engagements in Oregon and Washington. In May 1969, while Seale was traveling from a speaking engagement at Yale University to begin his West Coast tour, a bombing took place in Eugene, Oregon which the FBI suspected involved the Black Panthers. The San Francisco Field Office subsequently reported:

As this was on the eve of Seale's speech, this seemed to be very poor advance publicity for Seale. . . . It was . . . determined to telephone Mrs. Seale [Bobby Seale's mother] claiming to be a friend from Oregon, bearing the warning that it might be dangerous for Seale to come up. This was done.

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Seale reported this to BPP headquarters, claiming an unknown brother had sent a warning to Bobby from Oregon. Headquarters took this very seriously and when Bobby arrived shortly thereafter, he decided not to go north with “all the action going on up there.” He subsequently cancelled a trip to Seattle. It is believed that the

<sup>140</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago, New York, and San Francisco Field Offices, 6/26/70.

<sup>141</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 7/15/70.

<sup>142</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/10/69.

<sup>143</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Chicago Field Office, 2/20/69.

above mentioned telephone call was a pivotal point in persuading Seale to stay home.<sup>144</sup>

The San Francisco office reported that not only had Seale been prevented from making his appearances, but that he had lost over \$1,700 in "badly needed" fees and that relations between Seale and "New Left" leaders who had been scheduled to appear with him had become strained.

In December 1969, FBI headquarters stressed to the San Francisco Field Office the need to prevent Black Panther speaking engagements:

Several recent communications received at the Bureau indicate the BPP is encouraging their branches to set up speaking engagements at schools and colleges and the showing of films in order to raise money. . . . San Francisco should instruct [local FBI] office covering to immediately submit to the Bureau for approval a counterintelligence proposal aimed at preventing the activities scheduled. . . .

The BPP in an effort to bolster its weak financial position is now soliciting speaking engagements and information has been developed indicating they are reducing their monetary requirements for such speeches. We have been successful in the past through contacts with established sources in preventing such speeches in colleges or other institutions.<sup>145</sup>

In March 1970, a representative of a Jewish organization contacted the San Francisco FBI Field Office when it learned that one of its local lodges had invited David Hilliard, BPP Chief-of-Staff, and Attorney Charles Garry to speak. San Francisco subsequently reported to headquarters:

Public source information relating to David Hilliard, Garry, and the BPP, including "The Black Panther" newspaper itself, was brought to [source's] attention. He subsequently notified the [FBI] office that the [name deleted] had altered their arrangements for this speech and that the invitation to Hilliard was withdrawn but that Charles Garry was permitted to speak but his speech was confined solely to the recent case of the Chicago 7.<sup>146</sup>

The FBI exhibited comparable fervor in disseminating information unfavorable to the Black Panthers to the press and television stations. A directive from FBI headquarters to nine field offices in January 1970 explained the program:

To counteract any favorable support in publicity to the Black Panther Party (BPP) recipient offices are requested to submit their observations and recommendations regarding contacts with established and reliable sources in the television and/or radio field who might be interested in drawing up a program for local consumption depicting the true facts regarding the BPP.

<sup>144</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5/26/69.

<sup>145</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 12/4/69.

<sup>146</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/18/70.

The suggested program would deal mainly with local BPP activities and data furnished would be of a public source nature. This data could be implemented by information on the BPP nationally if needed. . . .

All offices should give this matter their prompt consideration and submit replies by letter.<sup>147</sup>

Soon afterward, the Los Angeles office identified two local news reporters whom it believed might be willing to help in the effort to discredit the BPP and received permission to

discreetly contact [name deleted] for the purpose of ascertaining his amenability to the preparation of a program which would present the true facts about the Black Panther Party as part of a counterintelligence effort.<sup>148</sup>

Headquarters also suggested information and materials to give to a local newsman who expressed an interest in airing a series of programs against the Panthers.<sup>149</sup>

In July 1970, the FBI furnished information to a Los Angeles TV news commentator who agreed to air a series of shows against the BPP, "especially in the area of white liberals contributing to the BPP."<sup>150</sup> In October, the Los Angeles Division sent headquarters a copy of an FBI-assisted television editorial and reported that another newsman was preparing yet another editorial attack on the Panthers.<sup>151</sup>

In November 1970, the San Francisco Field Office notified the Director that Huey Newton had "recently rented a luxurious lakeshore apartment in Oakland, California." The San Francisco office saw "potential counterintelligence value" in this information since this apartment was far more elegant than "the ghetto-like BPP 'pads' and community centers utilized by the Party." It was decided not to "presently" leak "this information to cooperative news sources," because of a "pending special investigative technique."<sup>152</sup> The information was given to the *San Francisco Examiner*, however, in February 1971, and an article was published stating that Huey P. Newton, BPP Supreme Commander, had moved into a \$650-a-month apartment

<sup>147</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office (and 8 other offices), 1/23/70. The San Diego office had already made efforts along the lines proposed in this memorandum. In November 1969 it requested permission from headquarters to inform two newscasters "for use in editorials" that the sister and brother-in-law of a Communist Party member were believed to be members of the local Black Panthers. The office also proposed preparing "an editorial for publication in the Copley press." (Airtel from SAC, San Diego to Director, FBI, 11/12/69.) The San Francisco office had also leaked information to a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter, who wrote a front-page story complete with photographs concerning "the conversion by the BPP of an apartment into a fortress." (Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 1/21/70.)

<sup>148</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/6/70; memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles Field Office 3/5/70 (this memorandum bears Director Hoover's initials).

<sup>149</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to Los Angeles and San Francisco Field Offices, 5/21/70.

<sup>150</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 9/10/70, p. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Memorandum from Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 10/23/70.

<sup>152</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 11/24/70.

overlooking Lake Merritt in Oakland, California, under the assumed name of Don Penn.<sup>153</sup> Headquarters approved anonymously mailing copies of the article to BPP branches and ordered copies of the article for "divisions with BPP activity for mailing to newspaper editors."<sup>154</sup>

The San Francisco office informed FBI headquarters later in February that

BPP Headquarters was besieged with inquiries after the printing of the San Francisco Examiner article and the people at headquarters refuse to answer the news media or other callers on this question. This source has further reported that a representative of the Richmond, Virginia BPP contacted headquarters on 2/18/71, stating they had received a xeroxed copy of . . . the article and believed it had been forwarded by the pigs but still wanted to know if it was true.<sup>155</sup>

#### *D. Cooperation Between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Local Police Departments in Disrupting the Black Panther Party*

The FBI enlisted the cooperation of local police departments in several of its covert action programs to disrupt and "neutralize" the Black Panther Party. The FBI frequently worked with the San Diego Police Department, supplying it with informant reports to encourage raids on the homes of BPP members, often with little or no apparent evidence of violations of State or Federal law.<sup>156</sup>

Examples are numerous. In February 1969, the San Diego Field Office learned that members of the local BPP chapter were following each other to determine if police informants had infiltrated their organization. The field office passed this information to the San Diego police with the suggestion that BPP members engaged in these surveillances might be followed and arrested for violations of "local

<sup>153</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/12/71.

<sup>154</sup> Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Francisco Field Office, 2/8/71.

<sup>155</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/18/71. In a February 1971 report on recent COINTELPRO activity, the San Francisco Division described the *San Francisco Examiner* article as one of its "counterintelligence activities." This report said that because of the article, Newton had given an interview to another San Francisco daily to try to explain his seemingly expensive lifestyle. The report also states that copies of the article were sent to "all BPP and NCCF [National Committee to Combat Fascism] offices in the United States and to three BPP contacts in Europe." (Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/25/71.)

<sup>156</sup> The suggestion of encouraging local police to raid and arrest members of so-called "Black Nationalist Hate Groups" was first put forward in a February 29, 1968 memorandum to field offices. This memorandum cited as an example of successful use of this technique: "The Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). a pro-Chinese Communist group, was active in Philadelphia, Pa., in the summer of 1967. The Philadelphia office alerted local police who then put RAM leaders under close scrutiny. They were arrested on every possible charge until they could no longer make bail. As a result, RAM leaders spent most of the summer in jail and no violence traceable to RAM took place." (Memorandum from G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, 2/29/68, p. 3.)

Motor Vehicle Code laws.”<sup>157</sup> When the San Diego Field Office received reports that five BPP members were living in the local BPP headquarters and “having sex orgies on almost a nightly basis,” it informed the local police with the hope that a legal basis for a raid could be found.<sup>158</sup> Two days later, the San Diego office reported to headquarters:

As a result of the Bureau-approved information furnished to the San Diego Police Department regarding the “sex orgies” being held at BPP Headquarters in San Diego, which had not previously been known to the Police Department, a raid was conducted at BPP Headquarters on 11/20/69. [Name deleted], San Diego Police Department, Intelligence Unit, advised that, due to this information, he assigned two officers to a research project to determine if any solid basis could be found to conduct a raid. His officers discovered two outstanding traffic warrants for [name deleted], a member of the BPP, and his officers used these warrants to obtain entry into BPP Headquarters.

As a result of this raid [6 persons] were all arrested. Seized at the time of the arrests were three shotguns, one of which was stolen, one rifle, four gas masks and one tear gas canister.

Also as a result of this raid, the six remaining members of the BPP in San Diego were summoned to Los Angeles on 11/28/69. . . . Upon their arrival, they were informed that due to numerous problems with the BPP in San Diego, including the recent raid on BPP Headquarters, the BPP Branch in San Diego was being dissolved.

Also, as a direct result of the above raid [informants] have reported that [name deleted] has been severely beaten up by other members of the BPP due to the fact that she allowed the officers to enter BPP Headquarters the night of the raid.<sup>159</sup>

A later memorandum states that confidential files belonging to the San Diego Panthers were also “obtained” during this raid.<sup>160</sup>

In March 1969, the San Diego Field Office informed Bureau headquarters:

information was made available to the San Diego Police Department who have been arranging periodic raids in the

<sup>157</sup> The San Diego office reported to headquarters: “As of one week ago, the BPP in San Diego was so completely disrupted and so much suspicion, fear, and distrust has been interjected into the party that the members have taken to running surveillances on one another in an attempt to determine who the ‘police agents’ are. On 2/19/69, this information was furnished to the San Diego Police Department with the suggestion that possibly local Motor Vehicle Code laws were being violated during the course of these surveillances.” (Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters 2/27/69.)

<sup>158</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 11/10/69. Headquarters told the San Diego office that if there was no legal basis for a raid, it should “give this matter further thought and submit other proposals to capitalize on this information in the counterintelligence field.” (Memorandum from FBI Headquarters to San Diego Field Office, 11/18/69, p. 1.)

<sup>159</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/3/69, pp. 2-3.

<sup>160</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 2/17/70.

hope of establishing a possession of marijuana and dangerous drug charge [against two BPP members]. . . .

The BPP finally managed to rent the Rhodesian Club at 2907 Imperial Avenue, San Diego, which will be utilized for a meeting hall. A request will be forthcoming to have the San Diego Police Department and local health inspectors examine the club for health and safety defects which are undoubted by [*sic*] present.<sup>161</sup>

The San Diego office also conducted "racial briefing sessions" for the San Diego police. Headquarters was informed:

It is also felt that the racial briefing sessions being given by the San Diego Division are affording tangible results for the Counterintelligence Program. Through these briefings, the command levels of virtually all of the police departments in the San Diego Division are being apprised of the identities of the leaders of the various militant groups. It is felt that, although specific instances cannot be attributed directly to the racial briefing program, police officers are much more alert for these black militant individuals and as such are contributing to the over-all Counterintelligence Program, directed against these groups.<sup>162</sup>

The Committee staff has seen documents indicating extensive cooperation between local police and the FBI in several other cities. For example, the FBI in Oakland prevented a reconciliation meeting between Huey Newton's brother and former Panthers by having the Oakland police inform one of the former Panthers that the meeting was a "set up." The San Francisco office concluded:

It is believed that such quick dissemination of this type of information may have been instrumental in preventing the various dissidents from rejoining forces with the BPP.<sup>163</sup>

Another Bureau memorandum reflected similar cooperation in Los Angeles:

The Los Angeles office is furnishing on a daily basis information to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office Intelligence Division and the Los Angeles Police Department Intelligence and Criminal Conspiracy Divisions concerning the activities of the black nationalist groups in the anticipation that such information might lead to the arrest of these militants.<sup>164</sup>

Information from Bureau files in Chicago on the Panthers was given to Chicago police upon request, and Chicago Police Department files were open to the Bureau.<sup>165</sup> A Special Agent who handled liaison between the FBI's Racial Matters Squad (responsible for monitoring BPP activity in Chicago) and the Panther Squad of the Gang Intelligence Unit (GIU) of the Chicago Police Department from 1967 through July 1969, testified that he visited GIU between three and

<sup>161</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 3/26/69.

<sup>162</sup> Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/15/69.

<sup>163</sup> Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 4/21/69.

<sup>164</sup> Memorandum Los Angeles Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/1/69.

<sup>165</sup> Special Agent deposition, 2/26/75, p. p. 90.

five times a week to exchange information.<sup>166</sup> The Bureau and Chicago Police both maintained paid informants in the BPP, shared informant information, and the FBI provided information which was used by Chicago police in planning raids against the Chicago BPP.<sup>167</sup>

According to an FBI memorandum, this sharing of informant information was crucial to police during their raid on the apartment occupied by several Black Panther members which resulted in the death of the local Chairman, Fred Hampton, and another Panther:

[Prior to the raid], a detailed inventory of the weapons and also a detailed floor plan of the apartment were furnished to local authorities. In addition, the identities of BPP members utilizing the apartment at the above address were furnished. This information was not available from any other source and subsequently proved to be of tremendous value in that it subsequently saved injury and possible death to police officers participating in a raid . . . on the morning of 12/4/69. The raid was based on the information furnished by the informant . . .<sup>168</sup> [Emphasis added.]

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<sup>166</sup> Special Agent deposition, 2/26/75, p. 84. The Agent also testified that other FBI agents in the Racial Matters Squad were also involved in the "free flow of information between the Racial Matters Squad and GIU," and that at one time or another, every agent had exchanged information with GIU.

<sup>167</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/3/69, p. 2; memorandum from Special Agent to Chicago Field Office, 12/12/69.

<sup>168</sup> Memorandum from Chicago Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 12/8/69.

