

Did J. Edgar Hoover Order the Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr?

Powerful new evidence of a government-abetted conspiracy has prompted King family members to demand a reopening of the investigation into his murder.

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At 6:01 p.m. on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., was struck in the face by a bullet as he was leaning over the balcony of his room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

An hour later he was declared dead at nearby St. Joseph's Hospital.

King had come to Memphis as part of his poor people's campaign to support a sanitation workers strike. The civil rights leader was increasingly promoting socialist views, had become more outspoken in criticizing the war in Vietnam and had been running for president on an anti-war ticket with Benjamin Spock.^[1]

After King had given a speech denouncing the Vietnam War at New York's Riverside Church one year before his assassination, U.S. Army spies recorded Black radical Stokely Carmichael warning him: ["The man don't care you call ghettos concentration camps, but when you tell him his war machine is nothing but hired killers, you got trouble."](#)

Carmichael, unfortunately, was right.

Lone Assassin?

Police authorities fingered James Earl Ray—a career criminal from Alton, Illinois, who had escaped from the Jefferson City, Missouri, penitentiary in April 1967—as the lone assassin.^[2]

On May 6, 1968, syndicated columnist Drew Pearson wrote that the FBI was conducting "perhaps the most painstaking, exhaustive manhunt ever before undertaken in the United States. Its G-men have checked every bar ever patronized by James Earl Ray, every flop

house he ever stopped at, every cantina in Mexico, he ever visited. It has collected an amazing array of evidence, all linking Ray with the murder.”^[3]

Ray was supposedly motivated by race hate. He allegedly began stalking Dr. King on the weekend of March 17 in Los Angeles, arriving in Memphis on April 3 with the murder weapon and booking into a seedy rooming house owned by Bessie Brewer above Jim’s Grill right across from the Lorraine Motel.^[4]



Photo of rooming house above Jim’s Grill. [Source: tpaak.com]

Just before 6:00 p.m., Ray barricaded himself in a communal bathroom from where he pointed his rifle outside the window and shot King.

Afterwards in haste, Ray neglected to eject the spent cartridge. Back in his room, he wrapped his rifle along with an overnight bag in a bedspread and ran outside.

Ray was then spotted by another tenant in the rooming house, Charles Quitman Stephens—the state’s chief prosecution witness—who said that he saw Ray running out.

When Ray saw a stream of police cars rushing to the scene, he panicked, and dropped the bedspread with the rifle in the doorway of the Canipe Amusement Company on South Main Street.



Bedspread with rifle dropped by Ray allegedly in panic outside the Canipe Amusement Company.

[Source: tpaak.com]

He then fled in a white Mustang, making his way first to Atlanta, where he ditched the car, and then to Toronto, where he hid for a month, and then to Portugal and England, where he was apprehended two months later by authorities trying to board a flight to Brussels.

Ray's fingerprints had been found on the gun that allegedly killed King, scope, binoculars, beer can, and a copy of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* dropped in the bundle.

At his trial, Ray pled guilty and was sentenced to 99 years in prison.

House Select Committee on Assassinations and 1999 Civil Trial

The 1979 House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA)—which was convened to investigate the King and Kennedy assassinations—alleged that Ray carried out the killing to collect a bounty from two St. Louis racists, both dead at the time.



House Select Committee on Assassinations. [Source: [wikiwand.com](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/House_Select_Committee_on_Assassinations)]

In 2012, G. Robert Blakey, staff director to the HSCA, said, however, that he had been deceived by the CIA—which had failed to inform him that a government liaison to the HSCA, George Joannides, had a CIA background. Blakey told the Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion-Ledger* that “thoughtful people today, not just nuts, think that more people than James Earl Ray were involved [in King’s killing].”^[5]

In 1999, a mixed-race jury presiding over a [wrongful death civil suit](#) by the King family in Memphis reached a [unanimous verdict that King was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy involving the U.S. government](#).

King’s widow, Coretta Scott King, said afterwards that [“there is abundant evidence of a major, high-level conspiracy in the assassination of my husband.”](#) The jury found that the mafia and various local, state, and federal government agencies [“were deeply involved in the assassination.... Mr. Ray was set up to take the blame.”](#)^[6]

Case Not Closed

Three days after his sentencing, Ray fired his mob-connected attorney, Percy Foreman, and said that he was pressured into pleading guilty and had been set up as a patsy.^[7] Foreman was given 60% royalty rights on a book about Ray by William Bradford Huie, which would not have sold if it were about a non-assassin.^[8]

The FBI was [never able to match the bullet that killed King with the rifle](#) allegedly left by Ray on the steps of the Canipe Amusement Company.



Remington rifle that allegedly killed King; the bullets, however, were never matched to the fatal one that killed King. [Source: gunsamerica.com]

Ray's [fingerprints were also never identified in the room](#) he had rented at the rooming house.

A well-known crime scene investigator determined that the shot from the rooming house bathroom could not have struck King unless Ray had hung out the window or smashed a ten-inch-deep hole in the wall for his rifle to fit into—the angles were all wrong.^[9]

Memphis police officer Vernon Dollahite said that he arrived on Main Street [within one minute and fifty seconds of King's shooting](#) and did not see a fleeing Mustang or hear screeching tires, raising doubt that Ray could have gathered his stuff, dropped it in front of the Canipe Amusement Company—a detour from his car—and gotten away to escape notice by Dollahite.^[10]

Ray's decision to drop the bedsheet supposedly resulted from his panic at seeing a parked police car after exiting the boarding house. However, the car would have been blocked by a hedge which was cut down the day after King's death.^[11]

According to Guy Canipe, the bedsheet was dropped on the steps of Canipe Amusement Company approximately two to five minutes *before* King was shot. Canipe described the person dropping the bundle as having a "chunky build"—which did not match Ray.^[12]

Ray's old prison radio—which could be seen outside the bundle—supposedly fell out when the bundle was tossed in the doorway; however, it was not on its side, visibly cracked or broken.^[13]

The rifle was also [packed tightly—which a panicked killer in a hurry to get away could not](#)

[have done.](#)^[14]

The prosecution's main witness, Charles Quitman Stephens, had been [arrested 155 times mostly for alcoholism](#) and was [dead drunk](#) at the time of the shooting, according to his wife, landlady, a homicide detective who interviewed him (Tommy Smith) and a cab driver who picked him up.^[15]

He was looking to [obtain a \\$100,000 reward](#) for identifying the slayer of King. Later, [when shown a photo of Ray by a CBS journalist](#), Stephens said that he was [not the man he had observed running out of the boarding house](#).^[16]



Charles Quitman Stephens, center, before Ray's trial. [Source: outlet.historicalimages.com]

Stephens's cab driver, James McCraw, said the hall bathroom was open and bathroom empty as he approached and left Stephens's room—indicating that the shots did not come from there.^[17]

Stephens's common-law wife, [Grace Walden](#), also said that she heard the shot come from [outside her window in the rooming house, which opened onto the bushy area between the rooming house and motel](#).^[18] The only man she saw coming out of the rooming house was short with "salt and pepper hair," wearing an open army jacket and plaid sports shirt—which

did not fit Ray.^[19]

Two Mustangs and Ray's Alibi

When he was picking up Stephens, James McCraw said he noticed a delivery van and two white Mustangs parked within 50 yards of each other, one in front of Jim's Grill, the other just south of the Canipe Amusement Company.^[20]

Another witness, Charles Hurley, told Ray attorney William Pepper that, after arriving to pick up his wife at the rooming house at 4:45 p.m., he pulled up behind a Mustang with Arkansas plates parked in front of the rooming house and south of the Canipe amusement store.

Ray's Mustang had Alabama plates and was parked north of the Canipe store.^[21]

Ray said that he [got into the car between 5:45 and 5:50 p.m. and went to a local service station to have a spare tire repaired](#)—meaning that he was not at the rooming house when King was killed.

However, his brother, John Larry Ray, said that James lied and was waiting in his Mustang for his handler Raoul at the time King was shot, believing he was to be the getaway driver for some job.

Shortly after he heard the shot that killed King, Raoul jumped into the backseat of his vehicle and put a sheet over his head, and Ray drove off. After a few blocks, Raoul jumped out of the car and fled and Ray drove all night to Atlanta.^[22]

After making his way to Canada, Ray was assisted financially by a [mysterious "fat man,"](#) who provided him with money in Toronto. Researcher Peter Dale Scott suggests that [it was planned for Ray to be apprehended after Robert Kennedy's assassination to enable a restoration of confidence in the government in the wake of such a tragic event and the rioting that had followed King's killing.](#)

An Unlikely Assassin

[Ray did not have a clear motive](#) for killing King apart from a possible financial one. He could never have survived on the lam after his prison escape and in the two months after the King assassination without outside support. Ray had received money not only for travel and lodging, but also for fake identities, plastic surgery, and even dance and bartending classes and hypnosis.

A strong anti-communist who was otherwise apolitical, Ray was painted in the media as a racist. However, people close to him said he had had a Black girlfriend, and that evidence was planted by police to make him appear to be a racist when he was not.^[23]

Most significantly, Ray [had no expertise in firearms. During a stint in the Army, he was trained with an M-1 and obtained only the lowest level of ability.](#)^[24] The salesman who sold him the alleged murder weapon in Birmingham—which he had been told to buy by the mysterious Raoul (discussed below)—said that Ray “did not seem to know anything at all about firearms, I mean nothing.”^[25]

Shot from the Bushes

King's chauffeur Solomon Jones and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) attorney Chauncey Eskridge, who were both looking at King when he died, said [they saw King's body lurch upwards when he was shot](#)—and not downward—indicating that the shot could not have come from the rooming house bathroom.

Instead, it must have come from the bushes behind Jim's Grill and between the rooming house and motel.



View from Lorraine Motel balcony that shows brush area from where witnesses claimed the shots were fired. [Source: tpaak.com]

Ray's first lawyer, Arthur Hanes, Sr., noticed tree branches that would have been a formidable obstacle to shooting King from the rooming house bathroom—though these branches were cut down the next day by police to try to cover this up.^[26]

Several eyewitnesses reported [seeing a man crouching in the bushes and running away after](#)ward, and a sound like a firecracker coming from the bushes.^[27]

Harold "Cornbread" Carter, who was drinking wine in the bushes, told investigators that he [saw a man wearing a high-necked white sweater run away after with a long gun in his hand](#) after he had [heard a loud bang from the bushes](#).^[28]

Olivia Catling said that she saw a fireman standing near the wall below the bushes yelling at

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any

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Suspicious Happenings

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[Party—which proved to be phony and served as a diversion.](#)^[35]

Just before King was shot, someone else [called in a hoax from downtown that drew police attention to the northeastern side of the city.](#)^[36]

This hoax indicated an organized plot and that Ray could not have been a lone assassin.

Loyd Jowers and Jim's Grill.

Taxi driver James McCraw told William Pepper that, on the morning after the shooting, Loyd Jowers, the owner of Jim's Grill, showed him a rifle in a box on a shelf under the counter, which he said he had "found out back after the killing."

This account was corroborated by Betty Spates, a young Black waitress at Jim's Grill who implicated Jowers, her former lover, in the murder.

Spates said that, after hearing what sounded like a shot, she saw him run into the kitchen from the brush carrying a rifle. His hair was in disarray, and the knees of his trousers were wet and muddy as though he had been kneeling in the soggy grass or brush areas.^[37]

Jowers then wrapped his rifle in a tablecloth, put it under his apron, and slipped into the café behind the counter where he discreetly placed the rifle under a shelf and then asked customer Harold Parker, a taxi driver, if he heard anything.

The shooting had only happened one minute earlier. Subsequently, a sheriff's deputy came in and ordered Jowers to lock Jim's Grill and keep everyone inside.



[Source: historicalblindness.com]

Jowers later admitted to Willie Akins, his right-hand man, that he was the figure in the bushes—though he said someone else was the shooter.^[38] Akins said that his job was to kill this shooter who ran off to Florida before he could “pop him.”^[39]

Jowers had been a Memphis police officer from 1946 to 1948 who went into business running clubs and then bars and restaurants.

Bill Hamblin, James McCraw’s roommate, testified at the 1999 civil trial that McCraw had told him that Jowers had not only showed him the rifle that killed King but told him to get rid of it. McCraw in turn said that he drove on to the Memphis-Arkansas Bridge and threw it off.^[40]

Frank Liberto and Carlos Marcello

[In an ABC television interview in 1993, Jowers said he had received \\$100,000 from Frank Liberto, president of the Liberto, Liberto and Latch Produce Company in Memphis, to arrange Dr. King’s murder.](#)

John McFerren, a civil rights leader in 1968, told William Pepper how he heard Frank Liberto from the back of his store before King’s death say, “I told you not to call me here. Shoot the

son of a bitch when he comes on the balcony.”^[41]

Liberto—a member of the Carlos Marcello crime family—told the caller he should collect his money—\$5,000 was mentioned—from Liberto’s brother in New Orleans.

Frank Holt, a Black produce truck unloader whom Jowers had falsely tried to blame at one point for the murder, heard Liberto say to one of the “big-wheels” at the M.E. Carter Produce Company during the sanitation strike that “King is a trouble-maker and he should be killed. If he is killed, then he will cause no more trouble.”^[42]

Lavada Whitlock Addison, the manager of a pizza parlor near Liberto’s home, said that, one day between 1976 and 1982, Liberto leaned forward and told her, “I had Dr. Martin Luther King killed.”^[43]

Earl Clark and Marrell McCollough

Jowers identified the assassin as Memphis Police Lieutenant Earl Clark—who was regarded as the best shot on the MPD and was close to Liberto.^[44] Afterwards, Clark allegedly scaled down a wall adjacent to the Lorraine Motel before jumping into an escape vehicle.^[45]

Clark was involved in planning sessions at Jim’s Grill to prepare for the assassination with five other men, only two of whom Jowers could identify.

One of the men, unbeknownst to Jowers, was an undercover police officer and agent provocateur, Marrell McCollough, who was assigned to the MPD from the 11th Military Intelligence Group.

Born in Mississippi, McCollough had served in the military police in Vietnam and went on to work for the CIA in Central or South America. At the time of King’s slaying, McCollough was posing as a member of the Invaders, a militant Black political group, which gave him access to King and his circle. He was identified as the mysterious figure kneeling over Dr. King after he was shot.^[46]

Frank Strausser and Mozes Maschkivitzan

In April 2003, Lenny Curtis, a custodian at the MPD shooting range, identified King’s killer to William Pepper as MPD patrolman Frank Strausser. Curtis said that about four or five months before King’s death, he heard Strausser—a Vietnam veteran with a reputation for beating up Black people—say in the lounge of the rifle range that “somebody was going to blow [King’s] motherfucking brains out.”

Curtis identified Strausser as being in the gun range firing a rifle all day the day before and day of King’s assassination. At around 2:30 p.m., Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb (D), MPD Chief Frank Holloman (discussed below) and a number of MPD officers including Earl Clark—whom Curtis identified as the spotter in King’s shooting—went into a meeting in a room in the rifle range. Strausser then left around 3:30 p.m. wearing a white shirt and pair of sunglasses carrying the assassination rifle in a red Chevrolet convertible.^[47]

After the killing, investigators identified a size 13 shoe print in the bush behind the Lorraine

Motel. In October 2013, Pepper interviewed Strausser and got him to admit that he wore a size 13 shoe.^[48]

Mozes Maschkivitzan, whose likeness had been rendered in a police artists drawing, could have alternatively been the shooter in the bushes.

Maschkivitzan was a [Russian emigré who'd been a double agent in World War II who testified at the trial of Nazi quisling Marshall Philippe Pétain](#).

After the war, he [got into drug smuggling in Belgium](#), was [recruited as a Federal Bureau of Narcotics \(FBN\) informant](#) and became a [CIA contract killer identified by author Richard Mahoney, the son of a CIA Agent, as being part of the 1961 assassination plot against Congo's nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba](#).

Ray's Intelligence Background

Ray's brother John Larry believes that his brother's role as a patsy in the King killing had been planned for many years and originated with his Army service at the end of World War II.

After enlisting in 1946 at the age of 17, Ray served in the 7892nd Infantry Regiment and as a military policeman with the 382nd Military Police Battalion in Nuremburg, Germany. Subsequently, Ray was recruited into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He told John Larry that, "when you join the OSS, it's like joining the Mafia, you never leave."^[49]

Researcher Lyndon Barsten was told by an intelligence officer that four-digit Army units like the 7892nd Infantry Regiment were "often used for cover."^[50] The unit was based in Frankfurt, Germany—the European headquarters of the CIA, housed in the old I.G. Farben building which had been spared during the Allied bombing. Ray was given two serial numbers—which further indicated he was involved in something secret.^[51]

According to John Larry, James was haunted by an incident when he was in the military police when he shot a Black soldier named Washington who was accused of beating up Jews and raping an officer's family member—which was not true. James had been given lumbar punctures (or spinal taps) by Army doctors which can be used to administer drugs.

Gaps in Ray's military record further lead to suspicion that he was an unwitting victim of mind-control drug experiments carried out under the CIA's MK-ULTRA—which may have caused him to shoot the Black soldier.

FBI documents show that Ray saw two hypnotists in Los Angeles after his Army service was completed, one of whom, Xavier von Koss, had been an Army intelligence officer and was likely brought over under Operation Paperclip (which brought Nazi scientists to the U.S.).^[52]

James had told his family that the Feds were "messing with his mind," and his father felt that he had been drugged.^[53]

Between 1949 and 1952, James served as an undercover operator for FBI investigations into

communists in Chicago, earning him the nickname “the Mole.”^[54]

When Ray was arrested after committing a robbery, an intelligence operative was spotted in the rooming house where he was staying. There is a possibility that he was there because the government wanted Ray locked up so they could use him in a later operation—knowing he was a controllable personality.^[55]

Jeff City Escape

There is no better patsy than an escaped prisoner because he cannot go to the police for assistance and is dependent on his contacts for survival.

On April 23, 1967, Ray escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, where he was serving a 20-year sentence, by hiding in a breadbox in the back of a bakery truck.

The director of the Missouri State Prison system at the time, Fred T. Wilkinson, was a U.S. intelligence operative who handled the famous May 1960 spy exchange between U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, whose plane had been shot down over the Soviet Union, and a Soviet Colonel, Rudolf Abel, who had been imprisoned for setting up a spy network in the U.S.^[56]

The warden at Jeff City, Harold Swenson, also had an intelligence background. His predecessor, E.V. Nash, was said to have committed suicide—though the gun that killed him was found in a separate room in his house than his body.^[57]

After a failed escape attempt, Ray was seen by Dr. Donald B. Peterson, head of psychiatry for the Army’s Far East Command during the Korean War, the height of the brainwashing era. Peterson prescribed Ray with Librium, a drug listed in government documents as one used to strengthen narco-hypnosis.^[58]

Gene Barnes, a former inmate at Jeff City, signed an affidavit in the late 1970s which said that he had been told by Warden Donald Wyrick that Wyrick, Wilkinson and Swenson had allowed James to escape Jeff City so that the feds could later use him as the fall guy in King’s assassination.^[59]

The fingerprints the prison sent out after James’s escape were not his; they had been switched by Wilkinson and Swenson with another man’s—meaning that if Ray had been captured, the police would have had to set him free.

When Wilkinson retired, the inmate who talked Ray into escaping, Ronnie Westberg, committed “suicide” by hanging himself, though he was discovered with broken arms and legs, pointing to foul play.^[60]

The Mystery of Raoul

After James’s escape, he came in contact with a mysterious figure named Raoul, who provided Ray with phony documents in Montreal, Canada, after the two met at the Neptune Bar.

In exchange for the documents, Raoul had Ray assist him in smuggling contraband across

the border and then sent Ray to Birmingham, Alabama, where he purchased a 1966 white Mustang and a telescopic rifle that appears to have served as the fake murder weapon.^[61]

In Montreal, Ray was given the identity of Eric St. Vincent Galt—who happened to be a highly placed Canadian operative of U.S. Army intelligence.^[62]

Galt ran a warehouse for Union Carbide which housed a top-secret munitions project funded by the CIA, the U.S. Naval Surface Weapons Center, and the Army Electronics Research and Development Command.^[63]

At 3 p.m. on April 4, Ray met Raoul at Jim's Grill where he was told to go to the rooming house next to the Lorraine Motel. He then waited for him after the shooting and helped him flee from the scene, before Raoul jumped out of the car and abandoned him to his fate.^[64]

Raoul's real name may have been J.C. Harden, a man Ray had been in contact with and was believed to be an FBI snitch, or Raoul Coelho, a Portuguese immigrant identified by Glenda Grabow, or Raoul Esquivel whose number Ray called.

Esquivel was tracked by a *Los Angeles Times* reporter to a Louisiana State police barracks in the New Orleans-Baton Rouge area, a well-known staging ground for CIA-sponsored guerrilla operations against Fidel Castro.^[65]

Jules Ricco Kimble, a convicted killer who worked for organized crime, the Klu Klux Klan and CIA in the French separatist struggle in Quebec, told investigators that he flew Ray to Montreal and [brought him to a CIA identities specialist](#) who provided Ray with his aliases.

A retired CIA agent later said that the CIA identities specialist in Montreal was named Raoul Miora.^[66]

Ewen Cameron and MK-ULTRA

While serving as Ray's handler in Montreal, Kimble said that the two were ordered to go to McGill University's Memorial Institute to undergo hypnosis.^[67]

The Memorial Institute was the home of subproject 68 of the CIA's MK-ULTRA brainwashing program run by Dr. Ewen Cameron—the lead CIA mind-control expert in Canada.^[68]

An Inside Job

Kimble said that the assassination was carried out by a team of covert intelligence operatives who had an unmarked van with sophisticated electronic radio equipment that could oversee the crime scene and monitor and broadcast on police radio channels.

Two snipers with the team used rifles identical to Ray's, while other members obtained Memphis Police Department uniforms. The two snipers concealed themselves in the bushes behind the boarding house; one was a backup, the other shot King. The rifles were then concealed in a prearranged hiding place behind the boarding house where they were retrieved by other operatives.

The two snipers afterwards jumped down onto the sidewalk from the bushes and mingled with the other uniformed officers who were rushing about. A voucher had been established for the police imposters. If anyone asked who they were, they were told to call a certain police captain who would vouch for the “new men on the force.”^[69]

Secret Army Intelligence Team

The 902nd Military Intelligence Group under the command of Colonel John W. Downie—LBJ’s CIA Vietnam briefer—had been deployed to Memphis at the time of King’s visit with orders to shoot to kill him and aide Andrew Young [later mayor of Atlanta] on command.^[70] King was considered [“a Negro who repeatedly preached the message of Hanoi and Peking.”](#)

The 902nd Military Intelligence Group had been involved in gun-running with mobster Carlos Marcello; weapons stolen from Army bases were delivered to Marcello and the proceeds were used to help fund black operations.^[71] According to two sources, the 902nd included [“Klan guys who hated niggers.”](#) A Green Beret said that nobody in it had “any hesitancy about killing the two sacks of shit [King and Young].”^[72]

Another Green Beret who participated in a clandestine training course in riot control and surveillance identified a CIA/NSA agent whom he had recognized from his time in Vietnam climbing down a wall behind the Lorraine Motel just after King was shot.^[73]

A contact in the CIA had given Downie’s team a detailed area of operations map, pictures of cars used by the King group and Memphis police radio frequencies. It carried camera equipment and took up positions overlooking the Lorraine Motel and monitored King’s telephone conversations from Room 306 and other communications. They obtained pictures that caught the shooter as he was lowering his rifle and Jowers running back toward the rooming house. These were given to Colonel Downie and never revealed publicly.^[74] The secret agent who snapped the photos said that the shooter was not Ray.^[75]

Ties to Dallas ’63?

In the days after King’s killing, FBI agent Don Wilson came across a 1966 Mustang with Alabama plates in Atlanta and opened the car door. An envelope and some papers fell out, which he kept hidden for the next 29 years.

One piece came from a 1963 Dallas telephone directory. The telephone numbers on the page included those of the family of H.L. Hunt and had the name Raul, the letter J, and a Dallas telephone number, which turned out to be the number of the Vegas Club which, at the time, was run by Jack Ruby, the killer of Lee Harvey Oswald.

The second paper was a payoff list and included Raul’s name and a date for payment. A third piece of paper had a telephone number and extension of the Atlanta FBI field office.^[76]

FBI’s War Against King

Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg swore in an affidavit that, during a 1978 conversation with Brady Tyson, then an aide to UN Ambassador Andrew Young, Tyson said

that a group of off-duty and retired FBI officers, including a sharpshooter, working under the personal direction of J. Edgar Hoover, killed King and then covered it up.^[77]

According to Ron Adkins, Hoover's right-hand man, Clyde Tolson—who allegedly was routinely given money by Hoover to perform criminal deeds including local contract killings—planned King's assassination beginning in May 1964 on a cruise to Southampton, England, with Russell Adkins, Sr., Ron's father and a Memphis city engineer, Klansman, and fixer for the Dixie mafia.^[78]

Part of the plot involved Tolson's providing envelopes of money to be paid to informants and \$25,000 to the warden of the Missouri state prison, Harold Swenson, to arrange for Ray's escape.^[79]

Hoover had considered King an enemy of the state. In December 1963, less than a month after the assassination of President Kennedy, FBI officials had met in Washington to explore ways of "neutralizing King as an effective Negro leader."^[80]

Hidden microphones were placed in Dr. King's hotel rooms in an attempt to pick up evidence of extramarital sexual activity, break up his marriage, or blackmail him.

The Bureau also engaged in surreptitious activities and burglaries against Dr. King and SCLC.^[81] In a letter sent to King in 1964 calling King a "[colossal fraud](#)," the FBI even encouraged him to [commit suicide](#).

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Featured image: Left: MLK as target. [Source: [biography.com](#)] Right: J. Edgar Hoover firing a rifle. [Source: [theguardian.com](#)] Artwork courtesy of Steve Brown.

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