

Guide to  
the Microfilm Edition  
of the

FBI File  
on the  
Atlanta Child Murders

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## Introduction

Between the summer of 1979 and the spring of 1981 thirty black children and young adults were reported missing and later found murdered in the Atlanta, Georgia, metropolitan area. The slayings captured national and international headlines, and an investigation ensued. In June 1980 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) started its own inquiry, separate from city and state investigations. The FBI also sent as many of its minority agents as possible to Atlanta in order to deflect public criticism and defuse racial tensions.

After a detailed investigation, which included fiber analysis, lie detector tests, and forensic studies, the FBI was able to gather enough evidence to arrest Wayne Bertram Williams, 23, a free-lance photographer and self-described talent scout who used his agency to meet the children and adolescents whom he murdered. Despite the reams of fiber analysis information used by the FBI, it never had conclusive fingerprint evidence. Williams was convicted on two counts of murder in February 1982, after a year-long trial. Although the FBI was satisfied that Williams was the killer, none of the other cases was brought to trial.

The FBI had provided only technical and lab assistance to the Atlanta police until June 1980, when an inquiry began into possible violations of the Federal Kidnapping Statute. Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti authorized the investigation in November. ( At the time, the bodies of all the missing children had not yet been discovered.) Twenty-five agents were allotted to begin the investigation, and as many as forty-five were assigned to Atlanta at the time Williams was arrested. Unofficially, there was concern about white extremists being responsible for the killings, and racial tensions were exacerbated by the abductions. The atmosphere in the afflicted neighborhoods of Atlanta was so tense that "bat patrols," or bat-wielding groups of vigilantes, were seen combing the streets in search of the killer.

The evidenciary material in this file is detailed, and there is a full prosecutive report of investigation compiling evidence against Williams. The file also contains memorandums, letters, teletypes, newspaper clippings, reports on laboratory tests and chemical and fiber analyses, a detailed Bureau recapitulation of the

trial of Williams, a detailed surveillance report on Williams, and a list of questions and answers related to a Senate inquiry into the conduct of the child murders investigation. Because of the media coverage, astrologers from around the nation sent unsolicited material concerning the murders to the Atlanta field office; this is also included.

The documents reproduced here were drawn from the Washington files of the FBI and have been released under the Freedom of Information Act; certain documents or portions of documents have been deleted by the FBI pursuant to provisions of that legislation. The material has been filmed in the exact order and condition in which it was released, and every effort has been made to publish the most legible copies available.

The file is in chronological order, and the FBI did not index documents. The Roll Notes is not a complete inventory of the file; however, it gives an indication of the types of materials or specific documents that may be particularly worthwhile for research.

## ROLL NOTES

### FBI File on the Atlanta Child Murders (Wayne B. Williams)

Bureau File Number 7-18251

#### Section 1:

*June - December 1980*

**Roll 1, 0001-0235**

Telegram regarding the abduction of Latonya Wilson on 6/22/80  
Telegram regarding the abduction of Earl Lee Terrell on 7/30/80  
Request by the Atlanta Police Department for Bureau assistance  
Report of the Criminal Investigative Division, 11/4/80  
Teletype from Atlanta field office to Director William Webster  
Teletype authorizing preliminary investigation  
Synopsis of investigation, 11/22/80  
Teletype regarding requests of Atlanta officials for more Bureau assistance  
Teletype requesting thirty-three special agents and one supervisor from other field offices, with first preference to be given to minority agents  
Newspaper clipping regarding Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson's allegation that the Bureau was not helping to solve the case  
Telegram from Jackson to the Bureau requesting help  
Department of Justice press release dated 11/6/80 announcing Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti's authorization of a preliminary investigation  
Memo to the file from Webster  
Memo from Civiletti to Webster authorizing preliminary investigation, 11/6/80  
Chemical analysis reports  
Memo from Webster regarding monitoring of private conversations in investigations, 12/12/80  
Telegram from Jackson to President Jimmy Carter requesting FBI assistance

#### Section 2:

*December 1980 - January 1981*

**Roll 1, 0236-0400**

Letter to Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio in response to a constituent's letter urging additional Bureau assistance

Memos regarding monitoring of conversations for investigation  
Teletype requesting permission to interview witnesses to the murder  
of Anthony Bernard Carter  
Memo from Civiletti to Webster  
Teletype from Atlanta field office to Webster  
Teletype regarding the search for and location of the remains of an  
unidentified child  
Memo regarding the request for a support information system  
Reports of the Latent Fingerprint Section, Identification Division  
Laboratory reports of voice comparisons  
Memo regarding psychic information

Section 3: Enclosure 1 of 2

*January - February 1981*

**Roll 1, 0401-0576**

Teletype reporting the discovery of the body of an unidentified  
black male  
Teletype requesting 60-day extension of the investigation, includ-  
ing case-by-case synopsis, 1/15/81  
Laboratory reports on evidence  
Teletype reporting that bodies found on 1/9/81 were those of  
Christopher Richardson and possibly Earl Lee Terrell  
Report on hypnotic interview of child involved in alleged kidnap-  
ping; hunt for "prestige license plate"  
Report on consultations with astrologer  
Laboratory tests on evidence found at crime scene

Section 3: Enclosure 2 of 2

*January - February 1981*

**Roll 1, 0577-0755**

Memo reporting the location of another body in Rockdale County  
Collection of fifteen memos summarizing investigation to 2/13/81  
Report of the Latent Fingerprint Section, Identification Division  
Report on Bureau involvement in the case to 2/5/81  
Teletype reporting the discovery of the remains of Lubie Geter  
Laboratory analyses of evidence found at the site  
Teletype reporting the discovery of the remains of Terry Lorenzo  
Pue

Section 4:

*February - March 1981*

**Roll 1, 0756-0951**

Request by Atlanta field office for more information

Reports on telephone call of man claiming to be the murderer

Sketches of suspect in alleged kidnapping

Request by Atlanta field office that no more psychic material be sent

Voice analysis of telephone call

Status report from the Atlanta field office

Section 5:

*March - April 1981*

**Roll 1, 0952-1143**

Theory sheet and statistical analysis suggesting that possible motive of murderer is to disrupt black power structure in Atlanta

Teletype regarding understaffed Charlotte field office

Letter received in American embassy, London

Reports on the formation of local vigilante group known as the "Bat Patrol"

Section 6:

*April 1981*

**Roll 1, 1144-END Roll 1**

**Roll 2, 0001-0060**

Reports of the Latent Fingerprint Section, Identification Division

Teletype regarding the location of a possible suspect

Teletype reporting the discovery of the body of Eddie Duncan

Teletype regarding controversies surrounding the "Bat Patrol"

Teletype regarding the retrieval of synthetic fibers from the bodies of victims

News releases

Status of investigation; list of twenty-five victims

Newspaper clippings

Section 7:

*April - May 1981*

**Roll 2, 0061-0238**

Teletype reporting the discovery of the remains of Larry Rogers

Laboratory report on Larry Rogers

Press releases expressing concern on behalf of the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami and the Rockland Minority Business Association

Teletype regarding the recording of incoming telephone calls to the  
Atlanta Police Department  
Teletype reporting the discovery of the body of Jimmy Ray Payne  
Telegram from parents and relatives of victims to Webster urging  
assistance  
Reports of the Latent Fingerprint Section  
Laboratory report of examination of William Barrett's body  
Memo from the attorney general to Webster  
Teletype regarding interviews of suspects  
Newspaper clippings regarding alleged "casual press statements"  
made by Webster  
Teletype regarding institution of bridge surveillance technique  
Teletype requesting 60-day extension of investigation  
Teletype reporting the discovery of Michael Cameron McIntosh's  
body  
Teletype reporting the discovery of Yusef Bell's body

Section 8:

*May 1981*

**Roll 2, 0239-0371**

Teletype regarding background information on Payne  
Teletype regarding background information on Barrett  
Summary of investigation, 5/10-15/81  
Teletype reporting the discovery of Nathaniel Cater's body  
Newspaper clippings  
Report of the Latent Fingerprint Section  
Action memo from Director to the attorney general regarding the  
questioning of Wayne Bertram Williams  
Synopsis of investigation, 5/24-28/81  
News releases  
Teletype detailing the detainment of Williams  
Teletype detailing surveillance of Williams

Section 9: Enclosure 1 of 2

*May - June 1981*

**Roll 2, 0372-0454**

Memo regarding coordination of Atlanta investigation  
Reports detailing Bureau activities  
News releases  
Teletype regarding Williams's request for a restraining order on  
comments made by law enforcement officials



Letter from Georgia Attorney General Arthur Bolton to Webster  
requesting surveillance equipment

Section 9: Enclosure 2 of 2

*June 1981*

**Roll 2, 0455-0619**

Prosecutive Report of Investigation Concerning Wayne Bertram  
Williams

- Report on questioning on the morning of May 22
- Statements made by Williams upon questioning
- Microscopic evidence matching fibers
- Statements of witnesses
- Later statements made by Williams

Section 10:

*May - June 1981*

**Roll 2, 0620-0702**

Memos regarding additional analysis of carpet fiber and dog hair  
evidence

Teletype linking green nylon fibers to carpet in Williams's home

Teletype regarding the preliminary hearing for Williams

Teletype regarding witness statement linking Yusef [Joseph  
Eugene] Bell with Williams

Memos regarding the surveillance of Williams's home

Section 11:

*June - July 1981*

**Roll 2, 0703-0884**

Memo regarding factual errors in *New York Times* article

Report on the arrest of Wayne B. Williams, 6/21/81

Memos regarding alleged "inappropriate" comments made by FBI  
official to the press

Report on Williams being charged with the murders of Nathaniel  
Cater and Jimmy Ray Payne, 7/17/81

Section 12:

*June - July 1981*

**Roll 2, 0885-0937**

Laboratory report worksheets

Memos regarding chemical analyses of carpet fibers, body tissue  
samples

Memo regarding the toxicological work completed during the  
investigation

Teletype regarding the denial of Williams's request for bond

Section 13:

*June - July 1981*

**Roll 2, 0938-1000**

Memo from Atlanta field office to Webster regarding the indictment of Williams for the murders of Cater and Payne

Teletype regarding carpet analysis of samples taken from Williams's home

Report of the Latent Fingerprint Section, Identification Division

Memo regarding the stopping and questioning of Williams at the James-Jackson Parkway Bridge

Memo regarding the cost of the investigation to 6/29/81

Section 14:

*July 1981*

**Roll 2, 1001-1035**

Report of the Bureau laboratory, including lists of evidence

Prosecutive Report of Investigation Concerning Wayne Bertram Williams

Section 15:

*July 1981*

**Roll 2, 1036-1140**

Prosecutive Report of Investigation Concerning Wayne Bertram Williams, continued

Section 16:

*July - August 1981*

**Roll 2, 1141-END Roll 2**

Analysis of carpet fiber evidence

Lists of evidence compiled by the Bureau

Teletype reporting Judge Clarence Cooper's imposition of a gag rule on proceedings, 8/27/81

Copy of order restricting extrajudicial statements

Memos regarding the Task Force on Missing and Murdered Children

Section 17:

*September - October 1981*

**Roll 3, 0001-0144**

Laboratory reports on carpet fiber evidence

Teletype regarding subpoenas served to three Bureau agents

Letter to Gordon Miller, assistant district attorney of Fulton County,

regarding the significance of carpet fiber analysis  
News releases  
Teletype regarding defense motion to suppress evidence acquired  
in search of Williams's home  
Supplemental Prosecutive Report of Investigation, 10/21/81

Section 18:

*December 1981 - March 1982* **Roll 3, 0145-0313**  
Defense attorney subpoenas eighteen special agents to testify  
Teletype regarding strategy of Assistant District Attorney Gordon  
Miller in the trial  
Testimony of witnesses for the prosecution  
Question and answer sheet from Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont  
regarding the Bureau investigation  
Jury finds Williams guilty of the murders of Cater and Payne

Section 19:

*March 1982* **Roll 3, 0314-END**  
Letter from Mildred Glover, Georgia state representative, alleging  
civil rights abuses  
File closed, 3/19/82