

Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the

FBI File
on
Robert F. Kennedy

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ROBERT F. KENNEDY, the younger brother of President John F. Kennedy, was one of the most influential and controversial political figures of the 1960s. Assassinated minutes after announcing victory in the Democratic presidential primary in California on June 4, 1968, his death contributed to the national political upheaval that manifested itself later that summer in Chicago.

Kennedy established his political reputation for fighting crime in the 1950s as chief counsel of the Permanent Investigations Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, when, under the chairmanship of John McClellan, it turned away from investigating alleged Communists to investigating organized crime. After his brother was elected president in 1960, Kennedy was appointed attorney general of the United States.

This file details the major feuds and issues that were part of the political fights between Kennedy and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director J. Edgar Hoover during the 1960s, and reveals the inner machinations of the Kennedy administration as it tried, on the strength of a slim electoral mandate, to implement its "New Frontier" ideas among old-style bureaucrats. Nowhere was the friction more intense and loathsome than in the Department of Justice, where the young "Bobby" Kennedy (as Hoover privately called the attorney general) battled an aging Hoover, who was losing touch with the forces and currents developing within both the mainstream and criminal elements of American society.

Despite persistent rumors to the contrary, the Kennedys did not replace Hoover as director of the FBI, mostly because their narrow political victory did not allow them to dismiss as popular a figure as Hoover. As attorney general under both his brother and President Lyndon B. Johnson (Kennedy resigned in September 1964), Kennedy was technically Hoover's "boss" in the Department of Justice.

Introduction

Yet Hoover's contempt for the "New Frontier" administration, and especially of "Bobby" Kennedy, grew steadily for many reasons. Hoover doubted the character of the Kennedys and was wary of their alleged ties to Mafia figures. He also was unwilling at first to support Kennedy's fight against organized crime (in particular the Cosa Nostra), battled vigorously against Kennedy to integrate the FBI, and argued against committing Bureau personnel to end segregation and racial violence in the South.

The FBI monitored RFK beginning in the summer of 1962, chronicling trip itineraries, television show appearances, and speeches. Hoover was approaching retirement in 1965 at age 70, but suspected that the Kennedys were working on plans to replace him. The file indicates that the Kennedys were thinking seriously about replacing Hoover with Los Angeles County Police Department Chief William H. Parker.

A public feud over wiretapping dominates the second half of the file, which started as a vicious debate within the department over who authorized Bureau agents to use wiretapping as a means to collect evidence in organized crime cases. Kennedy insisted that he had been misinformed about the use and extent of the wiretaps, but Hoover argued that Kennedy knew what was going on all the time, and released internal memorandums to the press that suggested Kennedy had authorized wiretapping as early as 1961. The argument did not end until Kennedy was killed in 1968, and its bitterness and intensity is evidenced by Hoover's many handwritten marginal notes on the Bureau memorandums within the file.

The types of documents included in this file are bureau memorandums, teletypes, letters and airtels, along with newspaper clippings. The file ends in 1971 (when Hoover, at the end of his career, included RFK and Ramsey Clark as two of "the worst" attorneys general he had ever served under).

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.

The roll notes that follow this introduction do not provide a complete inventory of the file; however, they give an indication of the types of materials available for research. They are listed using the following format: type of document, date of document, and what the document concerns.

Terry Lynch

ROLL NOTES

FBI File: Robert F. Kennedy

Bureau File No. 77-51387 (Special Inquiry File)

Section 1 **Roll 1, 0007-0172**

August 1962 - April 1963

Letter to Bureau complaining about Robert F. Kennedy's (hereafter RFK) habit of bringing his dog into the office against government regulations

Teletype dated 8/6/62 regarding RFK's visit to San Francisco

Memo dated 8/17/62 regarding RFK's appearance on "The Tennessee Ernie Ford Show"

Various Bureau memoranda regarding RFK's speeches and travels

Memo dated 8/29/62 reviewing RFK's book, *Just Friends and Brave Enemies*

Memo dated 10/24/62 reviewing the book *Robert F. Kennedy: The Brother Within*, by Robert E. Thompson and Hortense Myers

Memo dated 12/15/62 regarding RFK's trip to Brazil

Transcript of RFK's speech given 3/18/63 at Kentucky's Centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, Louisville

Teletype dated 4/23/63 regarding RFK's visit to Montgomery, Alabama, to meet with Alabama governor George Wallace

Teletype dated 4/26/63 regarding RFK's visit to Columbia, South Carolina
Newspaper clippings regarding Montgomery visit

Section 2 **Roll 1, 0173-0284**

April - November 1963

Teletype dated 4/30/63 regarding RFK's meeting with Governor Wallace in Montgomery

Newspaper clippings regarding meeting

Memo dated 4/30/63 detailing RFK's Montgomery visit

Reports of travels by RFK, spring 1963

Memo dated 6/24/63 regarding RFK's appearance on "Meet the Press"

Report dated 7/8/63 regarding RFK's visit to Youngstown, Ohio

Memo dated 10/25/63 regarding communism and the civil rights movement

News wire release dated 11/22/63 regarding RFK's reaction to the news of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy

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Section 3

Roll 1, 0285-0379

December 1963 - September 1964

Memo dated 12/12/63 regarding Department of Justice Christmas party, involving Bureau personnel

Telegram dated 12/27/63 regarding RFK's secret trip to Los Angeles, alleging that RFK told Los Angeles Police Department Chief William H. Parker that he would replace Bureau Director J. Edgar Hoover

Memo dated 2/5/64 regarding Martin Luther King, Jr.

Memos and airtels regarding RFK's travels, spring 1964

Memo dated 6/4/64 regarding William Manchester's interview of Hoover regarding the assassination of President Kennedy

Memo dated 7/14/64 regarding Frank A. Capell's book, *The Strange Death of Marilyn Monroe*, alleging an affair between Monroe and RFK

Memo dated 9/3/64 regarding alleged telephone call from Monroe to RFK shortly before her death

Section 4

Roll 1, 0380-0554

August 1964 - March 1965

Memo dated 8/24/64 regarding newspaper article about RFK written by James E. Clayton

Various memos regarding RFK's resignation in September 1964

Letter dated 11/23/63 from Hoover to RFK extending condolences over the death of RFK's brother

Memo dated 3/3/65 regarding invasion of privacy hearings and RFK's alleged "skullduggery" campaign against Jimmy Hoffa of the Teamsters' Union

Memo dated 8/3/65 regarding character assassination plot against RFK, Ted Kennedy, and Peter Lawford

Memo dated 7/22/65 regarding newspaper article about organized crime and La Cosa Nostra

Memo dated 12/20/65 regarding RFK's denial that wiretapping was used while compiling evidence against organized crime cases

Memo dated 8/17/61 regarding RFK's approval of wiretapping plan

Memo dated 1/17/66 regarding meeting with Senator Edward Long (D, Missouri), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure, about Bureau use of wiretapping

Memo dated 1/28/66 regarding wiretapping controversy and C. D. DeLoach's meeting with Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach

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Teletype dated 4/9/68 regarding RFK's reaction to assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Memo dated 5/18/68 regarding rumor that RFK authorized surveillance of King

Memo dated 6/3/68 regarding televised debate between RFK and Senator Eugene McCarthy

Telegram dated 6/6/68 from Hoover to Mrs. Kennedy extending condolences upon news of the assassination of RFK

Memo dated 6/19/69 regarding release of FBI files relating to Martin Luther King, Jr.

Various correspondence relating to Hoover's public feud with Attorney General Ramsey Clark from 1969-70

Newspaper clippings, 1969-1971, regarding Hoover's opinions about former attorneys general, including assertion that RFK was one of the three worst attorneys general he had ever served under

