ENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Director

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Florida Dr. Martin Luther KING, Jr. SUBJECT

2 MAY 1988

Reference is made to this Agency's out message number 94270 dated 25 April 1968 concerning the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther KING, Jr.

Roderick A 017-1-0] On 16 April Roderick Claflin BROWN, a Panamanian national born 1 July 1917 in British Honduras, voluntarily appeared at the Department of National Investigations (DENI) of the Republic of Panama and signed a deposition, the Venezuela highlights of which are as follows: 1811 dad Carasa

(1) On 26 October 1962 he served as cook/seaman aboard the Texaco S.S. Southhampton which docked at Mobile, Alabama.

(2) While on a shore visit to the Mobile airport on the morning of 26 October 1962 in the company of two maron fellow Panamanian seamen, he was approached by Marvin P. LITTRELL, owner of LITTRELL Motor Co., 921-25 South Clinton Street, Athens, Alabama, who after ascertaining BROWN was a Panamanian seaman, asked if he knew of Dr. Martin Luther KING, Jr.

(3) LITTRELL inquired whether BROWN was interested in employment, the details of which were unspecified. He went on to describe Dr. KING as "Our greatest problem who is causing us much trouble." He gave BROWN a business card to use in the event he was interested in pursuing the employment offer.

(4) On 28 January, 1963 BROWN wrome & ITERELL from New York City, stating he was interested in a job and

Docid: 32613900 Spanish language

requested \$75 for travel from New York City to Mobile. On 2 February 1963 BROWN received a reply from LITTRELL, restating that he had a job waiting for BROWN in Alabama, but questioning why \$75 was needed since the fare was less than \$40 by bus.

- (5) After discussions with a relative and friends in New York City, BROWN suspected that the LITTRELL job offer was related with assassination plans for Dr. KING. Therefore he did not respond to the LITTRELL letter and dismissed the incident until the death of Dr. KING in April 1968. BROWN returned to Panama in 1964.
- 3. Enclosed for your information is a copy of the LITTRELL letter and the Spanish language deposition made by BROWN, as well as an English translation of the deposition as described in paragraph 2 of the referenced out message.

FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PLANS:

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CSCI-316/01702-68

3 Enclosures

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ENCLOSURES TO CSCI 316/01702-68

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Report submitted by Roderick Claflin Brown

In Panama City at 2:45 p.m. on 18 April 1968, Roderick Claflin Brown appeared before the undersigned Chief of the Homicide Section of the National Investigation Department to submit a report dealing with the present investigation. Unsworn and without any hurry, and in complete liberty to answer or not the question put to him. Asked to identify himself, he said his name is as given, male, Honduran national, Negro, 50 years old, born on 1 July 1907 in British Honduras; married, barber by trade, son of Charles T. Brown (deceased) and Drucilla Elizabeth Castro de Brown, with personal Identity Card #E-3-2435, residing at Pueblo Nuevo, Calle 5, house # 4505, room #3, lower floor.

QUESTION: Declarant, explain the reason why you have come to the Homicide Section today? ANSWER: Because of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, about which I learned from the press, radio, and television in this country; after thinking over the problem that the United States was living through because of the crime against Dr. King, and having gone through an experience there in the United States, that may throw some light on that crime. I communicated to a friend of mine here in Panama City, and he advised me to talk to Inspector Cordoba, of the National Investigation Department; the latter suggested that I present and sign a declaration to that effect, and I gave him a letter which I am keeping to have a photo-copy made so that it can be added to my declaration. On 18 April 1962 I left Tocumen airport here in Panama City, for Port of Spain, where I was to go on board the SS SOUTHAMPTON TEXACO, on which I was to be the cook. I was employed on this ship for six months: I travelled throughout Africa, Venezuela, Trinidad, Canada, and Mobile, Alabama. We arrived in Alabama on 26 October 1962 around 10:30 in the morning. We left the pier toward the Mobile airport at 12:30 P.M. along with two friends who were also sailors on their way to Panama, Pedro ROUSE, son of Dr. Pedro ROUSE, and Victor RODMAN, who lives at #5268 1st St., Juan Diaz, here in Panama City.

While waiting for the airplane Mr. Marvin LITTRELL called me to his table in the airport cafeteria. Up to that moment I did not known is name nor had I met him. Later on he asked me to have a cup of coffee, and he asked the following question: "Are you students or tourists?" I replied that we were neither, only sailors on our way to Panama or home. He kept asking questions, and asked if I had visited the United States previously, and whether I liked the U.S. I answered that I did not like the United States, I simply adored it, which gave way to more questions.

He asked if I would like to stay. I asked how I could do that, and he replied: "My Party is in power." Besides, he owned one or two automobile dealerships, and owned real state.

For that reason he could get favors from the government at anytime. That is when he said: "I'll employ you, and get an apartment for you." But he then asked me a question: "Do you know Martin Luther King?" I replied that I did not, but that I had read something about him and his activities. Then Mr. Littrell said: "This man is the only problem that we have in our way; he is causing us a great deal of inconvenience." I said that our time at the airport was very limited, and we were to leave in ten or fifteen minutes, and for that reason we could not evaluate our conversation carefully.

At that moment he took one of his cards, and said: "As soon as you get to Panama write to me at this address

if you are interested in working for me."

When I left his table I told Pedro and Victor about the subject of conversation, and we all agreed that what this man wanted was for us to kill Dr. Luther King, and we reached that conclusion because of the conversation with Mr. Littrell.

On that occasion we returned to Panama, but upon reaching Miami, Florida, around 10:30 P.M., I was told at the airport that I could not leave for Panama because I needed a visa in order to return. I immediately went to Immigration at the airport and reported what was happening to me, and with the aid of Immigration I was able to find the agent of the ship in which I travelled, and he got me a room at the airport hotel.

Because this happened on a weekend I had to stay at the airport until Monday, when I got to the Panamanian Embassy and got a visa; arriving in Panama on 31 october

1962.

I was in Panama during the celebration of the national holidays, and on 5 November I got a visa for New York. I stayed in Panama until 23 December and left for New York at 12:05 on 24 December and arrived in the

airport in New York at 12:30 the same day.

I stayed in New York until 28 January 1963. While in New York I decided to write to Mr. Marvin P. LITTRELL to get more information about the job about which we had talked. It was then that I received the letter dated 2 February 1963, copy of which, signed by Mr. Littrell, is in the photocopy that I am giving to this office. I am keeping the original. In the letter that I sent him I asked him to send me \$75 (US), which I was to use on a trip to Mobile, Alabama.



I did not know how much the ticket from New York to Alabama was, but I thought that \$75 was sufficient for the trip, because I had previously travelled from New York to New Orleans by train and it had cost me only \$46, and thinking that Mobile, Alabama, was farther down than New Orleans, it was

going to cost more than \$45.

But this gentleman told me in his reply that he did not understand why I needed \$75, since bus fare from New York to Mobile was less than \$40. Then I took his letter and had a meeting with my relatives in New York, and they advised me not to answer the letter, let alone take the trip to Mobile, Alabama, to find out what kind of job it was. Because of the conversation that this man and I had at the airport, and this letter, my relatives understood that the only job that this man might give me was to murder Dr. Martin Luther King. If Itwere to go to Mobile and refuse the job I was sure that I would not leave Mobile, Alabama, alive.

It was then that I decided to follow the advice of my family. Nevertheless, I spoke with some other people in New York City to get their opinion. They had the same idea that my family had. I forgot about the matter after that, but I kept the letter.

I remained in New York until 30 May 1964, when I returned to Panama. I am not sure that this is the man who organized the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, but this may be a clue leading to the person or persons responsible for the act. He was asked the following: Has the declarant anything to add about which he has not been questioned during this inquiry? He answered: This is all that I have to say about this case.

And that being the case, this inquiry is declared completed. It was read and found in order and signed by all those concerned.

The informant

The investigator

(s) Roderick CLAFLIN Brown

Inspector Domitilo A. CORDOBA

(s) Inspector Tomas ROYAL P. Chief of the Homicide Section

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LITTRELL MOTOR CO.

Telephone 232-5692-3-4 921-25 So. Clinton St. - U. S. 72 By-Property ATHENS, ALABAMA

ATHENS, ALABAMA

OLDSMOBILE

February 2, 1963

Roderick C Brown c/o B.L.Brown 318 165 St Apt 2 B Bronx 53, N.Y.

Dear Rod:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 28th concerning our conversation at the Mobile Ala Airport last October.

Please be advised that I have a job waiting for you in Alabama as soon as you are able to make your arrangements to come here; however. I do not understand why you need \$ 75.00 when a bus ticket from New York to Alabama costs less than \$ 40.00.

I am willing to help you in any way that I can but I am not clear on this part of your letter and will expect to hear from you again.

Very truly yours,

M. F. Vellue C.

Marvin P. Littrell

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C. J.C.

Informativo rendido por: RODERICK CLAFTEN BROWN.

En la ciudad de Panama, siendo las dos y cuarenta. y cinco minutos de la tardo del día dieciseis de abril de mil novecientos sesenta y ocho, compareció ante el suscrito Jefe de la Sección de Homicidios del Departamento Nacional de Investigaciones, el señor ROMERICK CLAFLIN BROWN, a efecte de rendir un Informativo en la presente investigación. Sin juramento mi apre mio y en completa libertad para contestar o no a las preguntas que se le formulen. Interrogado para que identificara su persona, di jo llamaros como queda expresado, varón, hondureño, negro, de cincuenta años de edad, nacido el día l de Julio de 1917, en Honduras Britanicas, casado, barbero, hijo de CHARLES To BROWN (difunto) y de DEUCILIA ELIZABETH CASTRO de BROWN, portador de la Cédula de Identidad Personal No E - 3 - 2435, residente en Fasblo Nuevo, calle 5a, casa No 4505, cuarto No 3 bajos. INTERROGADO: Replique el declarante el motivo por el cual usted se ha acercado a la Sección de Homicidios en esta fecha ?. CONTESTO: A reiz del asesimato del Detter MARITH LUTHE KING y que he tenido conocimiento a travez de la Prensa, Radio y Televisión de este país y después de meditar sobre el problema que estaba viviendo los Estados Unidos por el crimen del Doctor King y habiendo vivido To una experiencia alla en los Estados Unidos y que puede dar luz en el esclarecimiento de ese crimen, se lo comunique a un amigo mio aqui en la ciudad de Panant y este me recomendo que hablara con el Inspector Cordoba del Departamento Maciomal de Investigaciones, pará ver que me sugería y después de hablar con el Inspector Córdoba, este me sugirió que suscribiera una declaración en ese sentido y le suministre una carta que guardo para que sacara una foto-cepla para que fuera agregada a mi declaración. El día 18 de abril de 1962, salf del aeropuerto de Tocumen aquí en la ciudad de Panamá, con destino a Puerto España, donde cogería el barco de la Texaco "S.S. SOUTHAMPTON", donde serviria de cocinero marinero. En éste barco estuve empléado durante seis meses; recorri Africa, Venezuela, Trinidad, Canada, Mobile-Alahama en Estados Unidos. Llegamos a Alabama el día 26 de Octubre de 1962, como a las diez y media de la mañana. Sallendo del Muelle hacia el aeropuerto de Mobile-Ale bama, como a las doce y media del día; juntamente con los compañeros vapo risos que veníamos hacia Panamá, PEDRO ROUSE hijo del Licenciado Pedro Rouse

Edmick C. Brown

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panameño; VICTOR RODMAR, de la casa No 5268, calle la Juan Díaz, equi em la ciudad de Panamá. Estando en el aeropuerto en espera del avión, mo llamó el señor MARVIM . LITTELL hacia su mesa en la cafetería del ... aeropuerto, hasta el momento lo no le sabía su nombre mi lo conocía, luego me brindó un calé y me hizo estas preguntas: "Que si nosotros éramos turistas o estudiantes"; Yo la contesté que no éramos ni estudiantes ni turistas, sino que éramos marinos en camino a Panamá o Dacia _la casa Comtinuó sus preguntas y me dijo que si Yo había visitado los Estados Unidos anteriormente y que si me gustaba los Estados Unidos Y Yo le contesté que no me gustaba los Estados Unidos, sino que me encantaba, dindole oportunidad para que me hiciera más preguntas; al one entonces me pregunto que si no me gustaria quedarme y lo le contesté ous que como se podría bacer ésto, el me contestó: "Mi Partido está trabajando chora mismo ca el Gobierno", además que el era duedo de una o des labrices de autombvil y que además tenta bienes y raices y que por esa rezon el podía ebtemer cualquier favor de parte del gobiorno on cualquier momento. Ahr fué cuando me dijo: "Yo le doy trobajo a usted, tambiém lo acomodo en su apartamento", pero entonces me hiso una pregunta: "Unted conoce al Doctor Martin Luther King 7", Vo le contesté que no lo conocía, pero que sí había leido algo sobre di y sus actividades; entonces me dijo el señor Literell: "Este hombre es el único problema que tememos por el medio, el cual mos está came sando muchas molestias"; entonces Yo le dije que nuestro tiempo en el aeropuerto estaba muy corte y que dentro de diez a quince minutos par tiriamos y que por esa rasón no nos quedaba suficiente tiempo para analizar nuestra conversacion mejor; en ese momento tomo una tarjeta, de cita de 61 y me dice, en cuanto llegue a Panamá escribame una carta a esta dirección, si en caso está decidido a trabajar para mí. Al retirarme de su mesa Yo le relaté a Pedro y a Victor de lo que se trataba la comversación y los tres quedamos de acuerdo, que el trabajo que este hombre quería darme era para matar al Doctor Luther King y esto lo sacamos en conclusión por la conversación del señor Littrello En esa ocasión regresamos a Panamá, pero al llegar a Miami-Florida, co

Vi'ene . . .

mo a las diez y media de la noche, en el aeropuerto se me hizo saber de que To no podía salir para Panamá porque me hacía dalta una Visa parapoder regresar; immediatamente me reporté en Migración del aeropuerto y informé de lo que me pasaba y por la ayuda de Migración localicé al Agente del barco donde Yo andaba y este me consiguió un hospedaje en el hotel en el aeropuerto; como era fin de semana, tuve que permanecer ahí en el aeropuerto hasta el Lunes, cuando localico a la Embajada Panamona para conseguir la Visa; 11 egando a Panama el día 31 de Octubro de 1962 Pass las fiestas patrias aquifen Panama hasta el día 5 de noviembro, cuando obtuve mi Visa para viajar a Nueva York. Permaneci on Panama hasta el día 23 de diciembre y salí de Panama para Nueva Terk a las doca y cinco minutos del día veinticuatro de diciembre; llegando al aeropuerto de Nueva York a las doce y media del día veinticuatro de diciembre de 1962 . Estando en Mueva York hasta el día 28 de Enero de 1963; de aní docidi essribirlo una-carta-al-senor-Marvin-Po-Littrell, para-ast informario alle del trabajo que me había hablado, fue entonces cuando recibi la corta fochoda el día 2 de Febrero de 1963 y cuyo texto está en la foto-comin quo entrego a ceto Despacho y firmada por el señor Littrell; el original lo guardo Yo. En la carta que Yo le envis le pedia la suma de SETENTA T CINCO DOLVES paro el pasaje que Yo utilizaría en mi viaje a Mobile-Alaboma, Yo no sabía cuánto costaba el pasaje de Nueva York a Alabama, pero penso que ese suma ero suficiente para hacer el viaje, porque To anteriormente había viajado trem de Mueva Tork a Mueva Orleans y solamente me había costado con re y seis dolares y pensando que Mobile-Alabama queda mas abajo de la leans, costaría más de los cuarenta y sels dolares. Pero este señor mo mam do a decir en su carta respuesta a la mía que el no comprendía por que zon Yo necesitaba setenta y cinco dolares, cuando un tiquete de bus de Euca York a Mobile costaba menos que cuarenta dolares. Tome Yo esta carta conton ces y conferencié con mi familia en Nueva York y en lo cual ellos me acon sejaron que ni contestara la carta, mucho menos pensara hacer el viaje a Mobile-Alabama para enterarme de qué clase de trabajo se trataba. Por motivo de que la converdación que Yo y el señor habíamos tenido en el aero

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puerto y esta carta, por lo que mis familiares tenfan entendido, que el único trabajo que este senor me daría sería el de ser el assesino del Doctor Martin Luther King, que B Yo me decidiera a ir a Mobile y no aceptara el trabajo, era seguro que Yo no iba a salir vivo de Mobile-Alabama; fué entonces cuando Yo decidí seguir los consejos de mi familia; sin embargo, hablé con algunas otras parsonas en la ciudad de Nueva York para obtener la opinion de ellos y esas personas tenían la misma idea que mi, familias. Dosde ese momento olvide el asunto, pero guarde La carte; quedendome en Nueva York hasta el día 30 de Mayo del año de 1966, cuando regreso para Panamá. To no estoy seguro quo sea esa la persona que haya organizado el asesinato del Doctor Luther King, pero ésta puede ser una pista para dar con el responsable colos responsables do este hecho INTERRO-GADD: Diga el declarante si tiene algo más que decir en la presente diligencia que no se le haya preguntado ?. CONTESTO: Es todo lo que tomgo que decir en el presente caso. En este colode so da por terminada la presente diligencia, la que leida y hallada conforme, se firma para constancia por todos los que en ella hea intervenido

El Informante.

Roderick Claflin Brown

Kl Investigador,

isp. Pemitile Δ. Cordob

Insp., Tolka Roys

Jefe de la Sacción de lon cidios

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