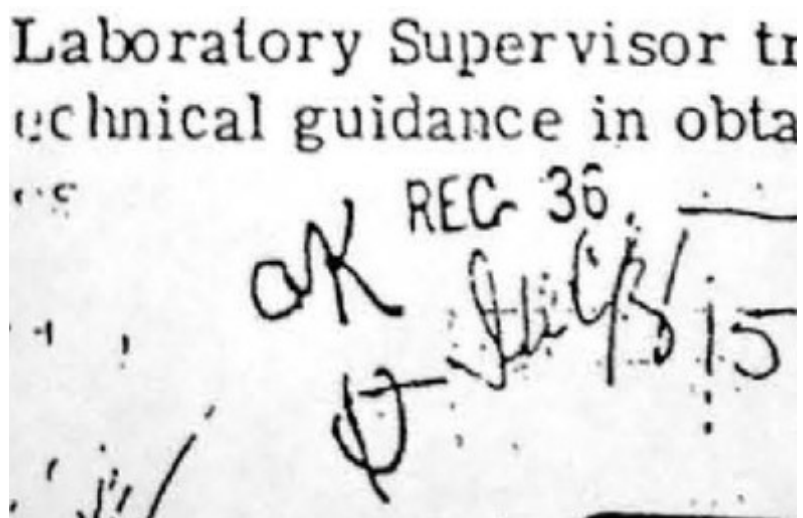


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# COINTELPRO order called off search for Omaha policeman's killer

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J. Edgar Hoover personally gave his approval to withhold evidence with an "OK" and his initial "H"  
*FBI document*

The 1970 bombing murder of Omaha Patrolman Larry Minard, Sr. landed two Black Panther leaders in prison where they are serving life sentences. Minard had been lured to his death by an anonymous 911 caller who reported a woman screaming in a vacant house. Without the knowledge of prosecutors, the Omaha police sent a copy of the 911 recording to the FBI Laboratory for vocal analysis under the unusual condition of no written report. However, before the examination could be conducted the Omaha FBI office cancelled the police request and no test was conducted to determine the identity of the deadly caller.

**Edward Poindexter** and **Mondo we Langa**, then David Rice, had been targeted for counterintelligence action under **COINTELPRO**, a massive clandestine operation of the Federal

Bureau of Investigation. Police, with the assistance of both the FBI and agents of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division, focused their investigation on the leaders of the National Committee to Combat Fascism, a Black Panther affiliate chapter. The two men were convicted of murder and are now known as the **Omaha Two**.



*Michael Richardson*

According to a confidential FBI memorandum to J. Edgar Hoover, written the day of Minard's death, August 17, 1970, Special Agent in-Charge Paul Young and Deputy Chief of Police Glen Gates conspired to withhold a report on a piece of crucial evidence the police had – the recorded voice of the anonymous caller captured by the 911 system. Gates asked Young if he could send the tape for FBI analysis to identify the unknown caller. However, the testing was conditional; no written report which might end up in court as evidence.

“[Deputy Chief Gates] inquired into the possibility of voice analysis of the individual making the call by the FBI Laboratory. He was advised the matter would be considered and that if such analysis were made and if subsequent voice patterns were transmitted for comparison, such analysis would have to be strictly informal, as the FBI could not provide any testimony in the matter; also, only an oral report of the results of such examination would be made to the Police Department. [Gates] stated he understood these terms and stated the Police Department would be extremely appreciative of any assistance in this matter by the FBI and would not embarrass the FBI at a later date, but would use such information for lead purposes only.”

“It should be noted that the police community is extremely upset over this apparent racially motivated, vicious and unnecessary murder. In slightly over three months this division has experienced more than ten bombings, probably all but a few of them being racially motivated. Of these bombings, four were directed at police facilities with extensive damage,” wrote Young.

“Any assistance rendered along the line mentioned above would greatly enhance the prestige of the FBI among law enforcement representatives in this area, and I thus strongly recommend that the request be favorably considered.”

“In view of the foregoing, it is requested that the FBI Laboratory examine enclosed tape recording and make an appropriate voice print to be retained for comparison against other tape recordings of suspects to be submitted at a later date,” ended the memorandum.

A cryptic, undated, partially illegible handwritten notation at the end of the memo reveals that the Assistant Special Agent in-Charge in Omaha cancelled the voice comparison before the FBI Laboratory even conducted an analysis of the 911 recording.

“Exam canceled per call from ASAC Tom [illegible] Identity of unknown caller determined [last three

words and signature illegible]”

Years later, in post-trial proceedings, the three men who prosecuted the case, County Attorney Donald “Pinky” Knowles, and assistant prosecutors Arthur O’Leary and Sam Cooper, all denied any knowledge of the FBI role in the case. The three prosecutors also denied knowledge of a front page *Omaha World-Herald* article the day after the bombing about a “voiceprint” being sent to the FBI Laboratory. None of the three were able to explain their failure to submit a copy of the recording to the defense despite two discovery requests.

J. Edgar Hoover’s dictatorial control of the FBI kept the headquarters and field offices linked in a tight chain of command that prohibited direct interaction between the laboratory and field without approval of the administrative division. Young’s request was routed to a FBI supervisor named William Bradley. Bradley wrote two letters to Ivan Willard Conrad, the FBI Laboratory director, regarding the Omaha tape recording and need to not issue a laboratory report. Both letters record Hoover’s complicity in the withholding of exculpatory evidence.

On the first Bradley memo, the laboratory chief added a handwritten notation that he talked with Hoover on the telephone and Hoover gave the “OK to do it.” The second Bradley memo, three days later, updates developments in the investigation and indicates Hoover’s approval. At the bottom of the memorandum is Hoover’s characteristic “OK” and his initial “H” meaning he read and approved of the text. The memo outlined Paul Young’s telephoned request for the FBI Laboratory to send an agent to Omaha to direct the police on obtaining vocal samples for the tape analysis.

Richard Anderson, the Chief of Police, was focused on an out-of-state job hunt and stayed out of the case leaving Gates in charge of the murder investigation. Gates worked closely with two subordinates, Lieutenant James Perry and Sergeant Jack Swanson. Perry disliked the FBI and was unaware of Gate’s arrangement with the FBI Laboratory. Swanson, head of the Intelligence Squad, was the liaison for the police with the FBI and worked closely with agents. COINTELPRO operatives had a direct pipeline into the Omaha Police Department. Swanson was already getting calls from a FBI agent named Hayes within hours of the bombing.

The decision to let the anonymous 911 caller get away with murder was made the same day Minard died. Paul Young and Glen Gates conspired to withhold a laboratory report to determine the identity of the 911 caller. Two days later, J. Edgar Hoover joined the conspiracy after a telephone call with Ivan Conrad about the unusual request. Hoover ordered Conrad to comply and not issue a written report on the identity of the caller. Paul Young sent Hoover another memorandum in October 1970 reminding that the Omaha police did not want any use of tape before the trial of the [Omaha Two](#) because the recording would be “prejudicial” to the police case.

The 911 recording was withheld from the defense and never heard by the jury that convicted the two men. The original recording was destroyed by James Perry several years after the trial. In 1980, a copy made by a dispatcher was located and in 2006 was submitted for scientific testing.

Internationally acclaimed audiologist Tom Owen tested the recording and determined that 15 year-old Duane Peak did not make the 911 call as claimed by police and prosecutors leaving an unidentified killer on the loose and unravelling the case against the Omaha Two.

[Ed Poindexter](#) and [Mondo we Langa](#) remain imprisoned at the maximum-security Nebraska State Penitentiary where both men are in poor health and continue to proclaim their innocence. State and federal courts have repeatedly denied the men a new trial despite the revelation of J. Edgar Hoover's tampering with evidence in the case.

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**Michael Richardson**

COINTELPRO Examiner