FBI joins murder probe

BOSTON — The bizzare Stuart murder case took another twist Feb. 23 with the news that the FBI is investigating whether Boston police intimidated witnesses into implicating a Black ex-convict initially suspected in the case.

U.S. Attorney Wayne Budd asked federal agents to conduct the preliminary inquiry after several residents of Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood said police pressured and threatened them into giving damaging testimony against William Bennett, 39.

Mr. Budd would not comment on the request for an FBI probe.

The FBI probe will examine whether Boston police violated the civil rights of the witnesses, allegedly by threatening some of them with criminal charges and 20-year-prison terms.

Mr. Bennett was never formally charged in the Stuart shooting.

Charles Stuart and his pregnant wife, Carol, were shot in Mission Hill last October after they left a birthing class at a downtown hospital. Mr. Stuart, who called authorities for help over his car phone, told police the attacker was a Black gunman.

Mr. Stuart jumped to his death Jan. 4, 1990, as police were about to arrest him after his brother Matthew went to police with evidence that incriminated the Boston furrier.

Ford goes on trial

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — A lawyer for Rep. Harold Ford, D-Tenn., said federal fraud and conspiracy charges against the state's only Black congressman in history are really part of a Republican effort to dump him from office.

"This case is an attack on his personal life. This is an attack on his political life," defense lawyer William McDaniels said in an opening statement Feb. 28 to begin the trial.

But Assistant U.S. Attorney Gary Humble said the eight-term lawmaker, whose political machine controls Memphis elections, abused his power and took $1.5 million in bribes disguised as loans from a candidate for governor.

SELMA, AL—Hundreds of marchers streamed across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in a re-enactment of "Bloody Sunday."

Selma's 'Bloody Sunday' re-enacted in march

SELMA, Ala. — Old soldiers in the struggle for civil rights returned to a city that became a symbol of their movement, marking the "Bloody Sunday" confrontation 25 years ago that spurred passage of the 1965 voting rights act.

They came from throughout the nation for Sunday's silver anniversary re enactment of the attack that marred the Selma to Montgomery march.

The assault on about 600 civil rights marchers by Alabama state troopers and a mounted posse hastened the adoption of the voting rights act, what many Americans view as the 20th century's most important social legislation.

"Many of us were hurt that day," said Rep. John Lewis, D.-Ga. "I saw women and helpless children run down by men on horses."

Lewis, who was himself beaten unconscious by lawmen that day, recalled the events of 25 years ago as he spoke at Sunday services at Drown Chapel AME Church, the staging ground for the march.

Lewis, the son of an Alabama sharecropper, spoke movingly of the days of segregation throughout the Deep South.

"It was a closed society," he said. "I found nothing but closed doors."

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who led the 1965 movement for voting rights in Selma, happened not to be in town on Sunday, March 7, when the marchers were attacked on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, named for a Confederate general in the Civil War.

On Sunday, Jesse Jackson and other prominent civil rights leaders led the trek across the infamous bridge, where smoke bombs were used as symbolic tear gas to remind marchers of what happened there 25 years ago.

Lewis, speaking to a crowd at the Drown Chapel, described a confrontation with Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark, a legendary segregationist, on "Bloody Sunday."

Lewis said Clark called him an "outside agitator." Lewis said he responded, "I may be an agitator, but I'm not an outsider," referring to his Alabama roots.

Lewis's stemwinding sermon touched on the fact that more than 3,000 residents of Selma were arrested in the struggle for civil rights. During the movement, Lewis was arrested more than 40 times.

The congregation joined hands and swayed while singing the anthem of the civil rights movement, "We Shall Overcome."

Those words are being sung again in Selma, a central Alabama town of 27,000 where Blacks are demonstrating again, this time for what they call "justice in education." They contend the White dominated school board's refusal to extend the contract of Selma's first Black school superintendent was racially based.

The dispute led to closure of the schools for five days last month and prompted officials to call in National Guard military police to maintain order.

Community backs students

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Civil rights leaders threw their support behind 150 students who occupied administrative offices at historically Black Tennessee State University.

The protest was the second within a week at Tennessee State to complain about what students say are filthy dormitories with cockroaches, rats and leaky roofs.

Community leaders and ministers went to the campus to show support for the protest, bringing donations and food, and students from other Tennessee colleges rallied behind the occupation

State higher education officials have acknowledged many of the student complaints are legitimate because Tennessee State traditionally lagged behind the state's mostly White universities in funding.

But they contend they are working to improve building upkeep with capital outlays of $30 million in 1987, $22 million in 1988 and $23 million last year.

Mayors back new rights legislation

WASHINGTON — the nation's mayors lined up on March 1 behind proposed legislation aimed at reversing a series of Supreme Court decisions last year that sharply narrowed the nation's civil rights laws.

Indianapolis Mayor William Hudnut, testifying on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, told the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources that "affirmative action plans are working well in the city governments" but last year's rulings by the Supreme Court "departed radically" from the consensus on civil rights built up over the past 20 years.

"If we don't have policies in both the public and private sectors which provide opportunities for women and minorities, the unfortuante fact of the matter is that the 'good ol' boy' network will prevail and most of the (unemployment) decisions will favor White males," Mr. Hudnut said.

Congress is considering the proposed Civil Rights Act of 1990, which would overturn Supreme Court Rulings in five cases. The rulings shift the burden of proof in bias cases to those claiming they were victims of discrimination and allows Whites to file reverse discrimination suits long after an affirmative action plan is in place.

The Bush administration which first labeled the ruling "technical" and said it saw no need for remedial legislation, has more recently indicated it would support overturning two of the five cases.

The High Court ruling addressed by Mr. Hudnut, Martin vs. Wilks, allows White employees to challenge affirmative action plans as reverse discrimination.

"The effect of Martin vs. Wilks has been to increase uncertainty among many employers, particularly public employers, about the legality of their affirmative action programs and to encourage needless, time-consuming and expensive litigation," Mr. Hudnut said.

Critics of bill

WASHINGTON — Critics charge that civil rights legislation seeking to reverse a string of Supreme Court decisions goes too far and could force employers to set hiring quotas to avoid costly lawsuits.

Supporters of the measure, however, disputed those claims and argued the legal changes are needed.

Discussions grew somewhat heated at times during a Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee hearing on the bill, particularly concerning a provision that would force employers to meet tougher standards in defending their hiring and promotion practices.

"In the guise of introducing minor adjustments in the law, this bill is one of the most radical and extreme intrusions into the private sector autonomy introduced in recent times," said Charles Fried, a Harvard Law School professor.

Young Black men most likely to be jailed

WASHINGTON — Nearly a quarter of all young Black men in America are behind bars or under supervision for criminal violations, the highest percentage ever recorded, a new study says.

The report, based on an analysis of 1989 figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics by The Sentencing Projects, also concluded the cost of incarcerating and controlling these 609,000 young men, ages 20 to 29, is at least $2.5 billion a year.

"These new findings should be disturbing to all Americans," said Marc Mauer, the study's author and assistant director of The Sentencing Project, a private group. "We now risk the possibility of writing off an entire generation of Black men from leading productive lives."

The 11-page report, "Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System: A Growing National Problem," said the 609,000 figure or 23 percent of the total young Black male population — is the highest percentage ever recorded and far exceeds the number of Black males of all ages enrolled in higher education, 436,000.

By comparison, the study said one in 16 Whites and one in 10 Hispanics are under control of the criminal justice system, meaning they are in prison or jail, on probation or under parole.

The Sentencing Project, a non-profit group, supports reform of sentencing laws and the development of alternative sentencing programs.

Mr. Mauer's study also found that while women enter the criminal justice system at much lower rates than men, the racial disparities are similar.

Of women in their 20s, the report said 2.7 percent of Blacks were under criminal justice control, 1 percent of Whites and 1.8 percent of Hispanics.

Mr. Mauer said the report understates the impact of present policies because the figures show the rates for a single day in mid-1989. He said the number of people processed through the system in a given year would be higher.

"For the Black community in general, nearly one-fourth of its young men are under control of the criminal justice system at a time when their peers are beginning families, learning constructive life skills and starting careers."

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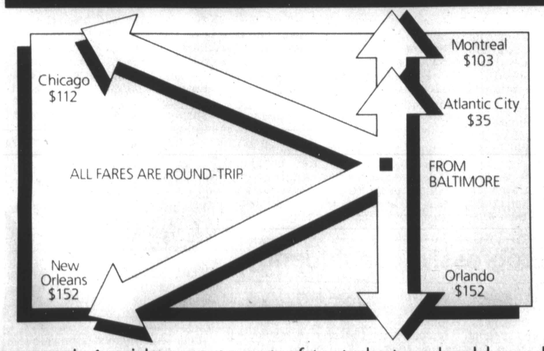

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Mandela urges Congress to keep sanctions

CONGRESSMEN RON DELLUMS (left) and William Gray arrive in South Africa to assess recent reforms of the apartheid system there. The lawmakers' three-day visit followed meetings with Black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela and officials of the African National Congress in Lusaka, Zambia.

LUSAKA, Zambia — South African Black leader Nelson Mandela told the architects of U.S. sanctions against Pretoria they must push the White minority government to the negotiating table and maintain the punitive measures.

Mandela and leaders of the African National Congress also expressed concern March 1 over unconfirmed reports that Vice President Dan Quayle would visit South Africa when he attends Namibia's independence celebrations March 21.

ANC Foreign Affairs Secretary Thabo Mbeki said such a visit would be "ill-timed and premature."

Ten members of Congress, scheduled to go to South Africa on March 2 for talks with President Frederik de Klerk, faced Mandela and the 35-member executive body of the ANC in a Lusaka convention center for an hour.

They asked the movement's leaders what course they believed U.S. policy should take in the wake of Mr. de Klerk's bold racial reform measures announced a month ago and aimed at ending the country's protracted racial conflict.

As part of Mr. de Klerk's package of racial reforms, Mr. Mandela, 71, was released from prison Feb. 11 after spending 27 years in prison. He was convicted on sabotage charges in 1964 and during his imprisonment grew to be the anti - apartheid movement's living symbol.

Rev. William Gray, D.-Pa., leader of the delegation and the highest - ranking Black in the House leadership, extended a rare invitation to Mandela to address a joint session of Congress when he is able to travel to the United States.

The ANC was in Lusaka, established as its headquarters during the 30 years it was banned in South Africa, to determine what role Mr. Mandela would assume in the organization and discuss growing demands it renounced its armed struggle against the White - minority South African government.

In an opening speech, Mr. Mandela declared the U.S. comprehensive anti-apartheid act of 1986 that imposed stinging sanctions against South Africa a "tremendous achievement" by "the most powerful and influential legislative body in the world."

The sanctions law, which cuts direct flights to South Africa and sharply curbed bilateral trade and exchanges of technology, was approved by Congress over President Reagan's veto.

"Our message, which we hope you will accept in the spirit in which we make it, is that you must continue to maintain sanctions against the country," Mr. Mandela told the legislators.

Rep. Stephen Solarz, D.-N.Y., told the ANC in Lusaka there was general agreement in Congress "that it would be inappropriate and counter-productive for us to lift sanctions at this point in time."

But he indicated some members of Congress wanted to provide Mr. de Klerk with "encouragement" if he meets ANC conditions for power-sharing negotiations by lifting a 44-month state of emergency and freeing all political prisoners.

Nelson Mandela

In London, organizers said Mr. Mandela will visit Britain next month to attend a massive charity concert by Tracy Chapman, Neil Young and other performers.

Zulu chief calls for end to strife

WASHINGTON — A South African tribal chief met with President Bush at the White House Feb. 22 and backed Nelson Mandela's call for an end to the fighting between their respective Black followers.

"We Blacks must get our act together," Gatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi said following talks with Mr. Bush about how the United States could help achieve a negotiated end to South Africa's racial policy of apartheid.

"I fear that the biggest obstacle to negotiations taking off are these cleavages within the Black community," said Mr. Buthelezi, leader of Inkatha, a conservative Zulu group.

For three years, members of the United Democratic Front, which backs Mr. Mandela, the Black nationalist leader, have been fighting with Inkatha supporters. So far, the "Zulu wars" have claimed as many as 3,000 lives

Mr. Mandela pleaded for an end to the violence.

South African president Frederik de Klerk has said the fighting is one of the factors against his complete lifting of South Africa's 44 - month - old state of emergency.

"I can't be a prophet and say it (the violence) will end," Mr. Buthelezi said. "But clearly if it does not, we cannot have negotiations."

Kenya bans protest

NAIROBI, Kenya — President Daniel Arap Moi has banned demonstrations in Kenya after mourning processions for the country's late foreign minister a week ago turned violent, national newspapers reported.

In an impassioned speech at a bus stop in the Kenyan capital, where he inaugurated a new fleet of buses, Moi also lashed out at those he said were spreading rumors and sedition.

The president accused former Assistant Minister for Planning Andrew Ngumba and former Rift Valley police chief James Mungai of spreading lies and hatching plots in luxury hotels and clubs around the country.

Mr. Ngumba has only recently returned to Kenya, having spent three years in self-imposed exile in Scandinavia.

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