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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Warren Olney III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

DATE: December 7, 1954

FROM : Director, FBI

RECEIVED

DEC 10 1954

SUBJECT: DAN JOHNSON, et al;
WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM

CRIMINAL DIVISION


(Reference is made to _____ memorandum dated _____.)

There is enclosed one copy of the report of Special
Agent Joseph E. Iseman dated 11-30-54
at Detroit.

A. () Please advise whether you desire any further investigation.

B. (X) The investigation is continuing and you will be furnished copies of reports as they are received.

C. () The investigation which has been requested by you has now been completed. Please advise whether you desire further investigation.

Enclosure 

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DEC 10 1954

CIVIL RIGHTS SECTION

FILE - M.W.H.
NEW

144-20-188	
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
11	DEC 9 1954
RECORDS BRANCH	
CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.	

See 144-20-139 for
prior matters involving
subject Johnson plus 144-20-112

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAVANNAH

REPORT MADE AT DETROIT, MICHIGAN	DATE WHEN MADE 11/30/54	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 11/16/54	REPORT MADE BY JOSEPH E. ISEMAN EAB
TITLE DAN JOHNSON; JAMES DAVIS; WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM			CHARACTER OF CASE CIVIL RIGHTS

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

BENNIE F. HEAD, former inmate, Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia, states that DAN JOHNSON and JAMES DAVIS, officials at a Prison Highway Camp, killed WILLIE GUNN, an inmate and buried him. Thereafter GUNN was reported to have escaped Prison. Photograph of WILLIE GUNN, FBI number 569766 was shown to HEAD but he states this was not the man killed.

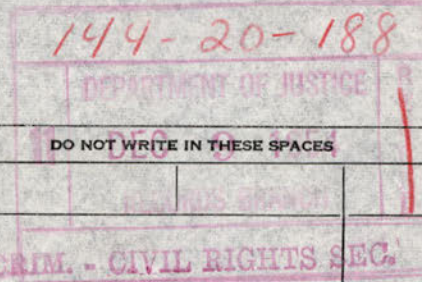
- RUC -

DETAILS:

This investigation was conducted by SA ROBERT E. BARRITT and the Reporting Agent:

BENNIE F. HEAD, Detroit City Rescue Mission, 931 Labrosse advised that in about June of 1952 he escaped from the Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia where he had been assigned Prison number 1536. At the time of his escape, he was a Trustee at a road camp maintained by the Prison near McRae, Georgia. After his escape in about March, 1953, HEAD was apprehended by the Detroit Police Department at which time he was returned to Peoria, Illinois where he was reportedly wanted on a check charge. While in Peoria, HEAD claims the Sheriff checked with Georgia Prison authorities who stated they no longer wanted HEAD.

M. P.



APPROVED AND FORWARDED:	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	
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3 - Bureau 3 - Savannah 1 - Detroit (44-178)		

HEAD told the following story:

He stated that about a month before he escaped, a prisoner he knew as WILLIE GUNN, who was a medium dark Negro, age about 30, about 5'5" and weighing 175 pounds, was also at this road camp. He stated that GUNN got in an argument with one of the guards and as a result, a guard named HILL, whose first name is unknown, put GUNN in the small building which was used for solitary confinement. This occurred in the late afternoon or early evening.

About 9:00 p.m. HEAD claims he saw DAN JOHNSON, who was Warden of the State Highway Camp, and JAMES DAVIS, who was a guard, enter the solitary shed. He stated that this shed was built so that he could not see into it but that he heard JOHNSON and DAVIS cursing GUNN and heard what sounded like someone being hit with a blackjack. He heard nothing to indicate any defense on the part of GUNN, but after a short time heard what he described as a pistol shot. Shortly after hearing the pistol shot, he saw DAVIS and JOHNSON leave the shed and heard one of them say, "That will hold him for a while". HEAD stated he did not see any weapons on either of the men as they left the solitary shed but had observed a pistol in DAVIS' holster when the two officials entered the shed.

Following this, HEAD states he observed DAVIS and JOHNSON go to the guard's shack. Later he stated he observed that JOHNSON and DAVIS took two colored prisoners in a pickup truck and left the prison camp. He stated he believes this was about 11:00 p.m.

He stated that he was sleeping in the Trusty Section of the living quarters and that CHARLIE BONNER slept next to him. After going to bed, he stated BONNER awakened him and told him that the men were back. HEAD claims to have looked out the window when he saw four men he described as DAVIS, JOHNSON and two colored prisoners take GUNN's body from the solitary shed.

At the time he states he thought they were going to take the man to a doctor. HEAD states that he does not know the name of one of the colored prisoners but the other was a fellow he called JUNIOR SHOEMAKER, who was known as the houseboy for JOHNSON. He states he thought the other fellow worked on the prison farm.

HEAD stated that about two Sundays later he talked with SHOEMAKER about this affair at which time SHOEMAKER stated, "They killed WILLIE and made us dig a grave". He stated that when WILLIE's body was taken from the shack he was dead. He stated that SHOEMAKER then walked with him from the enclosed prison camp and pointed out GUNN's grave to him.

HEAD described the prison camp as having a gate entering toward the highway with a gate going out the back of the camp. He stated that the grave was out the back gate of the camp through a large yard which had road building supplies in it, then through a field which had hay or peanuts in it, then a corn field and a field grown up with scrub bushes. He stated that at the edge of the scrub bushes, directly next to a second wooded area is where SHOEMAKER pointed out GUNN's grave.

HEAD stated he thereafter had occasion to be back at the Reidsville Prison when he asked an inmate what happened to WILLIE GUNN to which the inmate, who worked in the record room, stated that GUNN had been reported as an escapee. HEAD stated he knew nothing further, that he did not witness the killing, that he did not witness GUNN's body in the grave. He stated he did not know whether CHARLIE BONNER would verify any of the conversation and that he believes BONNER is still confined in the Reidsville Prison.

Records of the Detroit Office reveal that a WILLIE GUNN, FBI number 569766 was the Subject of an Unlawful Flight Warrant in 1948 since he had escaped from a Georgia Prison. The photograph of that WILLIE GUNN was displayed to Mr. HEAD at which time HEAD stated he remembered that man as an inmate but that that was not the man he was talking about.

The following descriptions were furnished
by HEAD:

Name	JAMES DAVIS
Race	White
Sex	Male
Age	25 to 27 years
Height	5'9" to 5'10"
Weight	190 lbs.

DE 44-178

Name
Race
Sex
Age
Weight
Height

DAN JOHNSON
White
Male
60 years
150 lbs.
6'2" to 6'3"

- RUC -

must
Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Warren Olney III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

DATE: December 16, 1954

FROM : Director, FBI

SUBJECT: DAN JOHNSON, et al.;
WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM
CIVIL RIGHTS

RECEIVED

DEC 23 1954

CRIMINAL DIVISION

(Reference is made to my memorandum dated 12-7-54.)

There is enclosed one copy of the report of Special
Agent Frank R. Southerland dated 12-10-54
at Atlanta.

A. ☒ Please advise whether you desire any further investigation.

B. ☐ The investigation is continuing and you will be furnished copies of reports as they are received.

C. ☐ The investigation which has been requested by you has now been completed. Please advise whether you desire further investigation.

Enclosure ✓

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DEC 23 1954

CIVIL RIGHTS SECTION

144-20-188	
26	DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
	DEC 22 1954
	RECORDS BRANCH
	CRIM - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.

Recd
File 1/3
12/21/54
[Signature]

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAVANNAH

REPORT MADE AT ATLANTA	DATE WHEN MADE 12-10-54	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 12-8,9-54	REPORT MADE BY FRANK R. SOUTHERLAND jjd
TITLE DAN JOHNSON; JAMES DAVIS; WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM			CHARACTER OF CASE CIVIL RIGHTS

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

State Board of Corrections, Atlanta, advised unable to identify any individual by name of WILLIE GUNN, except WILLIE GUNN, FBI # 569766 who State Board of Corrections' records indicate never served at PWC, McRae, Ga. and is presently still in custody. Description of latter individual similar to description of victim as furnished by BENNIE F. HEAD. State Board of Corrections records do not indicate HEAD ever served at PWC, McRae, Ga. J. B. HATCHETT, Assistant Director, State Board of Corrections, states no Negro prisoner ever shot or killed at PWC, McRae, Ga. to his knowledge.

- RUC -

DETAILS: AT ATLANTA, GEORGIA

ROBERT E. WARREN, Director, Georgia State Board of Corrections, Atlanta, and J. B. HATCHETT, Assistant Director, were contacted in connection with instant matter and expressed a desire to cooperate.

Mr. HATCHETT advised after a check of his records, that the only WILLIE GUNN he could find a record on was State Board of Corrections Number A-7072, FBI No. 569766. He stated that

APPROVED AND FORWARDED:	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT		<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 5px;">144-20-188</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 26 DEC 22 1954 RECORDS BRANCH </div> </div>	
3 - Bureau (AM) 3 - Detroit (44-178) 3 - Savannah (44-442) 1 - Atlanta (44-637)			

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AT 44-637

his records indicate that this individual was transferred from Putnam County Public Works Camp to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia in July, 1951 and was then transferred to Wayne County Public Works Camp, April 25, 1953, thereafter being transferred to Miller County Public Works Camp, August 31, 1953, where he is still incarcerated. He stated that his records do not reflect that this individual was ever assigned to the Public Works Camp at McRae, Georgia. Mr. HATCHETT stated that the above entitled individual is a Negro.

The only other similar name which Mr. HATCHETT could find in his records was a record of WILLIAM ANDREW GUNN, State Board of Corrections Number FM-8870 who was first assigned to Fulton County Public Works Camp, Atlanta, Georgia, March 26, 1947, being discharged August 14, 1947. This individual was again assigned State Board of Corrections Number FM-12893 and sent to Fulton County Public Works Camp November 8, 1950, being again released April 6, 1951. He was again assigned State Board of Corrections Number M-54196, being assigned under that number on August 11, 1952 to the Jefferson County Prison Branch and thereafter served in the DeKalb County Public Works Camp and the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville, Georgia from which institution he was discharged, on November 15, 1952. Mr. HATCHETT advised that his records indicate this individual is a white man.

In connection with WILLIE GUNN, FBI Number 569766, mentioned above, Mr. HATCHETT's records contained copy of an FBI fingerprint record which indicated GUNN has used the alias JESSIE HEAD, among other aliases, that he escaped from Miller County Public Works Camp, Colquitt, Georgia, June 3, 1948, where he was serving two twenty year sentences for burglary and rape; that an authorized complaint was filed and warrant issued by the U. S. Commissioner at Thomasville, Georgia, November 7, 1948, charging GUNN with violation of Section 408E, Title 18, USC; that he was subsequently arrested February 8, 1949 by Middletown, Ohio Police Department, waived extradition and removed by Georgia Authorities on February 16, 1949.

It was noted that BENNIE HEAD, in furnishing information concerning this matter to Detroit, stated that CHARLIE BONNER and JUNIOR SHOEMAKER had been at the Public Works Camp at McRae, Georgia, with him when victim was allegedly killed. Mr. HATCHETT advised that he was unable to identify JUNIOR SHOEMAKER without further information. He stated that CHARLIE

BONNER is probably identical with CHARLIE BONNER, State Board of Corrections Number A-22032, FBI # 4847074, who served at Telfair Prison Branch, McRae, Georgia, where he had been sent from Georgia State Prison at Reidsville, on March 25, 1952. This individual, according to the records, escaped from Telfair Prison Branch June 9, 1952, was recaptured on the same date and returned to the same place; was transferred on February 26, 1953 to the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville, Georgia and was ultimately discharged on June 30, 1954 from Rock Quarry Prison Branch, Buford, Georgia.

Insofar as BENNIE F. HEAD is concerned, Mr. HATCHETT made available the files concerning him and it was noted that he was further identified as State Board of Corrections Number A-7189, Georgia State Prison Number 1536, FBI Number 654571. The records indicate that he was originally sentenced in DeKalb County, Georgia on December 17, 1937, for robbery and was given a 15 year sentence. He was transferred to Dooly County Public Works Camp and escaped on August 2, 1938, being recaptured August 3, 1938 and given a sentence of 12 months to follow his original sentence. He was transferred to the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville, May 19, 1939, then to Paulding County Highway Camp September 19, 1939 and returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia, March 20, 1940. He was again transferred to Paulding County Highway Camp which was at that time located at Dallas, Georgia, April 11, 1941, returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, November 12, 1941; transferred to Cobb County Public Works Camp, Marietta, Georgia, June 19, 1942, returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia, August 4, 1942; transferred to Troup County Highway Camp, LaGrange, Georgia, November 22, 1942, returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia, January 9, 1943; transferred to DeKalb County Public Works Camp, Decatur, Georgia, June 6, 1944, returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, Georgia, April 16, 1945; transferred to Chatham County Public Works Camp, June 26, 1947, escaped September 28, 1947, recaptured Ashville, Alabama and returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, November 1, 1947. He was given a sentence on November 17, 1947 of one to one year consecutive to foregoing sentence in connection with this escape. He was transferred to Charlton Prison Branch, Folkston, Georgia, February 3, 1948, returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, May 12, 1948; transferred to Coffee County Public Works Camp, Douglas, Georgia, May 14, 1948, returned to Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, November 10, 1951, was discharged from that institution June 26, 1952. Mr. HATCHETT stated that according to his records, this individual never served time at the Public Works Camp located at McRae, Georgia and never served time under Warden DAN JOHNSON. Mr. HATCHETT further stated that to his knowledge, no Negro prisoner has ever been killed or shot at the Public Works Camp located at McRae, Georgia. He further

AT 44-637

stated that HEAD had been an extreme custodial problem during the time he served for the State of Georgia and is not presently wanted by the State, according to his records.

It is noted from the foregoing that the records indicate that during the time covering the period in which HEAD alleges that victim was killed, that he was actually incarcerated at the Georgia State Prison, Reidsville and not in any Public Works Camp and described victim WILLIE GUNN as being a medium dark Negro, age about 30, 5'5" tall, 175 pounds.

Although HEAD states that victim WILLIE GUNN is not identical with WILLIE GUNN, FBI # 569766, the following description of this latter individual is set forth from records of the State Board of Corrections:

Race:	Negro
Born:	2-9-04, Riverside, Alabama or West Point, Georgia
Height:	5'7"
Weight:	160
Eyes:	Black
Hair:	Black
Scars & marks:	Scar at right temple; gunshot scar left elbow; 2" cut scar left wrist; birthmark left side of neck; several dark spots right forearm.

The above description was taken during 1949.

- RUC -

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Warren Olney III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

DATE: December 22, 1954

FROM : Director, FBI

SUBJECT: DAN JOHNSON, et al.;
WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM
CIVIL RIGHTS

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DEC 27 1954

CRIMINAL DIVISION

(Reference is made to my memorandum dated 12-16-54.)

Agent There is enclosed one copy of the report of Special
James H. Applegate dated 12-16-54
at Savannah.

A. ☒ Please advise whether you desire any further investigation.

B. ☐ The investigation is continuing and you will be furnished copies of reports as they are received.

C. ☐ The investigation which has been requested by you has now been completed. Please advise whether you desire further investigation.

Enclosure ✓

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DEC 27 1954

CIVIL RIGHTS SECTION

144-20-188	
22	DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
	DEC 23 1954
	RECORDS BRANCH
CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.	

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAVANNAH

REPORT MADE AT SAVANNAH	DATE WHEN MADE 12-16-54	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 11-30-54	REPORT MADE BY JAMES H. APPLEGATE /rlf
TITLE DAN JOHNSON; JAMES DAVIS; WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM			CHARACTER OF CASE CIVIL RIGHTS

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

No record of WILLIE GUNN, escapee,
located at Georgia State Prison, or Georgia State Patrol,
Reidsville, Georgia.

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DETAILS

AT REIDSVILLE, GEORGIA

J. B. BROWNING, Captain of the Guard, Georgia State Prison, advised he had no record of an escapee named WILLIE GUNN. He stated he had a record concerning a WILLIE GUNN, negro, State Number A-7072, serving time for Burglary, who was admitted to the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville in July, 1951 and transferred to Wayne County Public Works Camp April 25, 1953.

Sergeant JOHNNIE W. ROBERTSON, NA, Georgia State Patrol, advised he had no record concerning a WILLIE GUNN, escapee from any of the Prison Camps in the State, and pointed out that his office maintained records concerning escaped prisoners who are still wanted.

- - - C - - -

APPROVED AND FORWARDED:	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 - Bureau 3 - Detroit (44-178) 1 - Savannah (44-442)		<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> 144-20-188 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 22 DEC 23 1954 RECORDS BRANCH CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC. </div>

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The Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

January 6, 1955.

WO:MMH:vmw

Warren Olney III, Assistant Attorney General,
Criminal Division

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JAN 11 1955

144-20-188

Typed 1-5-55

Dan Johnson, et al.;
Willie Gurn - Victim
Civil Rights

Reference is made to your memoranda of December 16 and 22, 1954, with the reports of Special Agents Frank R. Southerland and James H. Applegate attached thereto.

Under the circumstances as reflected in the reports, no further investigation is desired.

cc: Records ✓
C. R. Sec.
Hubbard
Chron.
USA, Savannah, Ga.

MMH
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144-20-188	
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
28	JAN 7 1955
RECORDS BRANCH	
FED. BU. OF INV.	

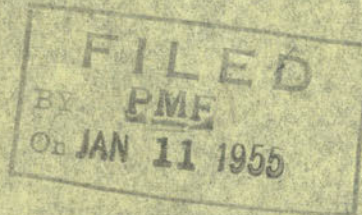
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COMMUNICATIONS SEC.
JAN 16 1955 C

WO:MMH:vmw

144-20-188 M. S.

typed 1-5-55

January 6, 1955.



William C. Calhoun, Esquire
United States Attorney
Savannah, Georgia

Re: Ian Johnson, et al.;
Willie Gurm - Victim
Civil Rights

Dear Mr. Calhoun:

We are enclosing herewith a copy of a self-explanatory memorandum to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the above matter. We are closing the matter unless you entertain an opinion contrary to that expressed in the memorandum.

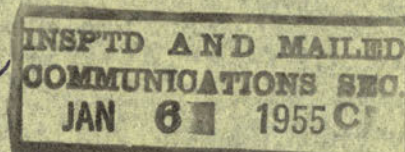
Sincerely,

WARREN OLNEY III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

By:
ARTHUR B. CALDWELL
Chief, Civil Rights Section

Enclosure No. 100370 ✓

cc: Records
C. R. Sec.
Hubbard
Chron.



Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Warren Olney III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

DATE: February 18, 1955

FROM : Director, FBI

SUBJECT: DAN JOHNSON; JAMES DAVIS;
WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM
CIVIL RIGHTS
(Your reference 144-20-188, MWH)

(Reference is made to _____ memorandum dated _____.)

There is enclosed one copy of the report of Special
Agent Joseph E. Iseman dated 2-11-55
at Detroit.

A. () Please advise whether you desire any further investigation.

B. () The investigation is continuing and you will be furnished copies of reports as they are received.

C. () The investigation which has been requested by you has now been completed. Please advise whether you desire further investigation.

There is enclosed one copy of the report of Special Agent Joseph E. Iseman for your information.

Enclosure

44-8347

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FEB 24 1955

CIVIL RIGHTS SECTION

FILE - M.W.H.

144-20-188	
DEPT. OF JUSTICE	
9	FEB 21 1955
RECORDS BRANCH	
CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.	

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAVANNAH

REPORT MADE AT DETROIT, MICHIGAN	DATE WHEN MADE 2/11/55	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 12/30/54; 1/13/55	REPORT MADE BY JOSEPH E. ISEMAN plr
TITLE DAN JOHNSON; JAMES DAVIS; WILLIE GUNN - VICTIM			CHARACTER OF CASE CIVIL RIGHTS

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

BENNIE F. HEAD reportedly furnished same information to Detroit newspaper as he previously had furnished this office. AUSA, Detroit desires to take no action against HEAD.

- RUC -

DETAILS:

At Detroit, Michigan:

Reverend JOHN BROOKE, Detroit City Rescue Mission, 931 LaBrosse, advised on December 30, 1954, that the previous day he received a phone call from a negro newspaper in Detroit. He did not get the name of the caller or the name of the paper. The caller asked Reverend BROOKE about instant story at which time Reverend BROOKE said he did not have any information and asked the caller to put HEAD on the phone. Reverend BROOKE said HEAD still resides at the Rescue Mission, but over the phone gave no explanation for going to a paper with his story nor for failing to consult him before doing so. HEAD upon his return to the Mission gave no reason for his action.

On January 13, 1955, instant matter was discussed with Chief Assistant United States Attorney GEORGE WOODS. He stated he desired to take no action against BENNIE F. HEAD for furnishing

144-20-188

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEB 21 1955

RECORDS BRANCH

CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.

RECORDED

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		<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; color: red;">144-20-188</p> <p style="color: red;">DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE</p> <p style="color: red;">FEB 21 1955</p> <p style="color: red;">RECORDS BRANCH</p> <p style="color: red;">CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.</p> <p style="color: red; transform: rotate(90deg); position: absolute; right: -20px; top: 50%;">RECORDED</p> </div>
COPIES OF THIS REPORT <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px;"> <p>3 - Bureau (44-8347)</p> <p>1 - USA, Detroit (ENCL-2)</p> <p>2 - Savannah (44-442)</p> <p>1 - Detroit (44-178)</p> </div>		

DE 44-178

information which appears to be unfounded. Assistant United States Attorney WOODS, in reference to paragraph 1001, Title 18, United States Code, stated that HEAD's living in a rescue mission and telling such a story indicated to him that HEAD was possibly not mentally competent to take into Federal Court. He, therefore, declined to take any prosecutive action.

ENCLOSURES: TO THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, DETROIT:

One (1) copy of report of SA FRANK R. SOUTHERLAND, Atlanta, dated December 10, 1954.

One (1) copy of report of SA JAMES H. APPELGATE, Savannah, dated December 16, 1954.

- RUC -

NOTICE TO CLOSE FILE

144-20-188

FILE NUMBER

Dan Johnson, et al.;
Willie Gunn - Victim

CASE TITLE

TO: RECORDS ADMINISTRATION BRANCH

YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THE ABOVE NUMBERED FILE HAS BEEN CLOSED
AS OF THIS DATE.

Macdonald
SIGNATURE

DATE

January 5, 1955

144-20-188	
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
26	JAN 7 1955
RECORDS BRANCH	

