

FBI March 26, 1965 and March 27, 1965 Statements



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

March 26, 1965

MARCH FROM SELMA TO
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA
MARCH 21 - 25, 1965

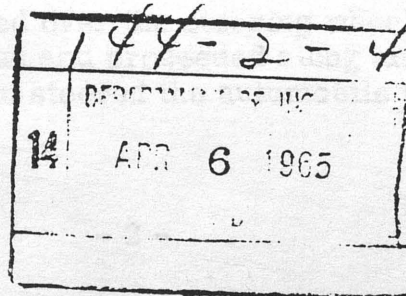
On March 25, 1965, the parade from St. Jude's, a Catholic Institution, started at approximately 10:10 a. m. Approximately 12, 000 marchers participated in this parade.

The program at the State Capitol commenced at 1:35 p. m., and lasted until approximately 4:10 p. m.

After the parade, twenty delegates designated to contact Governor George C. Wallace attempted to go to his office at the Capitol building. They were advised that the Governor's Office was closed and he would not see them on March 25, 1965. The delegates plan to return to see Governor Wallace on March 26, 1965.

Prior to the parade, officers of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office served papers on Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and associates which arose out of a civil action filed in Dallas County Court, Selma, Alabama. This suit was filed by the City of Selma and the Selma Bus Lines.

This civil action involves a claim by the Selma Bus Lines in the amount of \$9, 750 for the loss of revenue, and a notice of damage by the City of Selma in the amount of \$100, 000 for loss of revenue arising from demonstrations and other activities. The defendants were also enjoined from operating buses and other means to transport people in and about Selma, Alabama.



Information has been received that a Dr. Robert Wilken, Liza Senkler, Evans Johnson and two unidentified seminary students were attacked by unknown white persons in Montgomery, Alabama, just prior to their departure on a train for Washington, D. C.

These persons will be interviewed upon arrival in Washington, D. C., for complete details of the attack. Further action will be taken in accordance with the information furnished by the victims.

At approximately 8:00 p. m., on March 25, 1965, Mrs. Viola Liuzzo of Detroit, Michigan, was fatally shot in Lowndes County, approximately twenty miles from Selma, Alabama, on Highway 80 while driving her automobile, a 1963 Oldsmobile, from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

At the time the shooting occurred, Mrs. Liuzzo was accompanied by Mr. Leroy Jerome Moton, a nineteen-year-old Negro who resides in Selma, Alabama. Mrs. Liuzzo is white.

Mr. Moton had been coordinating transportation in Montgomery, Alabama, for demonstrators to return to Selma. Late in the afternoon, Mr. Moton and Mrs. Liuzzo picked up six passengers to return to Selma. They dropped off one passenger at the Montgomery, Alabama, Airport and then proceeded to Selma where the remaining passengers disembarked.

According to Mr. Moton, it was 7:34 p. m., when they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, to return to Montgomery. They proceeded on Highway 80 and prior to reaching the Lowndesboro Crossroads, which is an estimated twenty miles from Selma, an automobile believed to be a 1955 Ford pulled around them. As the car passed them, three shots were fired into Mrs. Liuzzo's automobile. After the shots were fired, Mrs. Liuzzo slumped over the steering wheel and the automobile went off the road and proceeded along an embankment across a ditch. Mr. Moton steered the automobile until it came

to a stop and subsequently secured a ride to Selma, Alabama, where he notified state authorities. He was uninjured.

An autopsy was performed by Dr. Paul Schoffertt, Assistant State Toxicologist, University of Auburn, Auburn, Alabama. He advised the bullet entered the left side of Mrs. Liuzzo's head near the ear and the junction of the jaw bone and passed through the spinal cord at the base of the brain causing almost instantaneous death. The bullet, which lodged at the base of the brain, appears to be a .38 caliber slug, rather badly damaged but having a few distinctive markings. Mrs. Liuzzo had puncture marks in her arm indicating recent use of a hypodermic needle. Dr. Schoffertt has taken blood samples to determine whether any unusual circumstances are present.

The entire facilities of the FBI are fully committed to an all-out investigation of this killing.



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March 27, 1965

MURDER OF VIOLA LIUZZO
LOWNDES COUNTY, ALABAMA
MARCH 25, 1965

Governor George C. Wallace of the State of Alabama contacted Spencer H. Robb, our Senior Resident Agent at Montgomery, Alabama, on the night of March 26, 1965, with regard to the fatal shooting of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo in Lowndes County, Alabama, on the night of March 25, 1965. Governor Wallace expressed complete disgust with the "cowardly act" perpetrated by the four men who have been charged with the crime or anyone else who would commit such an act of violence.

Governor Wallace advised that he had instructed Colonel Al Lingo, Director of the Alabama State Department of Public Safety to make available all of the resources of his department and to afford complete cooperation to the FBI in pursuing the investigation of the killing. He said he had also requested the State Toxicologist's Office at Auburn, Alabama, to cooperate fully with the FBI and he intends to contact the Circuit Solicitor, Lowndes County, Arthur Gamble, Jr., of Greenville, Alabama, to request that he also afford his full cooperation.

Governor Wallace requested that the Alabama state authorities be afforded the results of the FBI's investigation that would support the issuance of a warrant for murder as soon as it is completed. His request has been referred to the Department of Justice for appropriate consideration.

With regard to the four subjects, Eugene Thomas, William Orville Eaton, Gary Thomas Rowe, Jr., and Collie Leroy Wilkins, Jr., who were arrested in connection with this matter on March 26, 1965, my previous memorandum of March 26, 1965, stated that Thomas, Eaton and Wilkins were arraigned before a U. S. Commissioner on March 26, 1965, and held. Later on March 26, 1965, subject Rowe also was arraigned before the U. S. Commissioner in Birmingham, Alabama, and he also was held in lieu of \$50,000 bond.

MURDER OF VIOLA LIUZZO

At 9:18 p.m. on March 26, 1965, subjects Thomas, Eaton and Rowe were released from the Jefferson County Jail, Birmingham, after posting bond which was arranged for them by their attorney, Mr. Matt Murphy. Bond was also arranged for subject Wilkins by Mr. Murphy but he was not released as a Probation Violators Warrant on Wilkins in connection with a previous Federal Firearms Act violation in the Northern District of Alabama was delivered to the U. S. Marshal on March 26, 1965. Wilkins is presently being held on the Probation Violators Warrant.