



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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File No.

New Orleans, Louisiana  
February 24, 1965

DEACONS FOR DEFENSE  
AND JUSTICE

On February 22, 1965, a confidential source advised the following information concerning the captioned matter:

LA Source stated that it was learned that on the night of February 21, 1965, six Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE) members appeared at Bogalusa, at which time they held a meeting at the Negroes Labor Hall. This meeting was attended by several Bogalusa Negro leaders, namely, Robert Hicks, Albert Z. Young, McCloury Sampson, Charles Sims, Alton Davis, and one or two others not identified. He identified the CORE members as Reverend Frederick B. Kirkpatrick, Charles Fenton, Steven Miller, William Yates, Ernest Thomas, and another unidentified Negro. CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY

Source stated that Miller and Yates are well known to Bogalusa as they have been participating recently in desegregation activities; however, Kirkpatrick, Fenton, Thomas, along with the unidentified Negro, are believed to come from the vicinity of Jonesboro, Louisiana.

Source reported the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss an organization now being put together in Louisiana known as the Deacons for Defense and Justice (DDJ). The main speaker of the evening was believed to have been Ernest Thomas who discussed the fact that membership in the DDJ (strictly Negro), would cost \$10 initiation fee and \$2 per month. Ten per cent of the monies obtained from the local chapters would be channelled into the headquarters of the state organization which is now believed to be at Jonesboro, Louisiana.

It was explained the purpose of the money was to buy radio equipment, including walkie-talkies, citizens band equipment for automobiles, as well as ammunition, literature, and other equipment not identified. Discussed in considerable length was the putting of mobile citizens band radios into

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automobiles of Negro members, principally in Bogalusa. It was reported that Thomas went on to explain the DDJ intended to establish a code system whereby a state-wide communications set up could be created in order that, if Negroes in one community have difficulty, the Negroes could immediately call on the radio for assistance and get assistance. Thomas talked at length about the use and advantages of walkie-talkies and equipment for communication purposes.

Thomas then discussed a tendency on the part of Negroes to buy cheap weapons like a .22 caliber. Thomas pointed out that Negroes should buy substantial weapons, including a .306 caliber rifle. Thomas suggested that 12 or 16 gage shotguns were good for "close in work." Thomas said that if standardized gages were obtained, the Negroes in communities could buy shells by the case. Thomas said that Negroes should keep plenty of ammunition in their cars, in their homes, as they never knew when they would need the ammunition, and they were to be expected to be ready whenever they were called upon.

Thomas said that his group has contacts in Chicago and Houston for automatic weapons and mentioned a .50 caliber and .30 caliber machine gun.

Thomas stated, referring to the Ku Klux Klan and white people generally, that if the Ku Klux Klan or white people wanted violence, that "they intended to combat violence with violence; that they had no intention of starting anything themselves but wanted to be ready."

Thomas discussed at considerable length the advantages of having roving Negro patrols in the various communities so that should any Negro be arrested by a police officer, that the roving patrol, as witnesses to any arrest, could immediately defend the position of the arrested person. Thomas said that if police officers see Negroes who are armed as the police are, the police could be expected to probably back away and not affect the arrest of the individual.

Thomas discussed the need for members of this group, if they should join, to get together with their Negro leaders, the preachers, school teachers, and other responsible persons, and preach to and emphasize to their leaders that if their

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leaders do not go along with this activity, that they were not fit in the first place. Thomas pointed out if the local members of the DDJ were not successful in working on Negro leaders in the community and convincing them that they, referring to CORE, would do it for them.

A further membership meeting of the DDJ is scheduled at Bogalusa on Sunday, February 28, 1965, and all prospective members were requested to bring money, dues, and initiation fees.

Source advised that based upon this information, the Bogalusa City Administration felt that the DDJ would not be too successful from the stand point of membership and dues but were concerned about the difficulties discussions of this type would have among the Negro population in the Bogalusa community.

On the night of February 22, 1965, it was reported that Robert Hicks, a Negro leader in Bogalusa and active in CORE work, spoke before the Bogalusa Voters League at a meeting called to lend support to the Bogalusa Negro Communities Cooperation with the City Administration. Hicks discussed at great length the DDJ information as discussed the previous evening by Ernest Thomas. Hicks pointed out to the people in attendance, who were mostly teenage children, the advantages of arming themselves and discussed hand grenades, walkie-talkies, and explained generally what was stated the previous night by Ernest Thomas.

Hicks went into great detail concerning how young Negroes could defend themselves by converging on police officers if the police were trying to arrest Negroes and cause difficulty at the time of the arrest and prevent the Negro from being arrested.

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