

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Gallagher

DATE: 10/31/75

FROM : B. H. Cooke

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
NOVEMBER 22, 1963
DALLAS, TEXAS

- 1 - Mr. Callahan
- 1 - Mr. Adams
- 1 - Mr. Jenkins
- 1 - Mr. Gallagher
- 1 - Mr. O'Connell
- 1 - Mr. Cooke
- 1 - Mr. Nettles
- 1 - Mr. Mintz
- 1 - Mr. Moore
- 1 - Mr. Wannall

Dep. AD Adm.

Dep. AD Inv.

Asst. Dir.:

Admin.

Comp. Syst.

Ext. Affairs

Files & Com.

Gen. Inv.

Ident.

Inspection

Intell.

Laboratory

Legal Coun.

Plan. & Eval.

Spec. Inv.

Training

Telephone Rm.

Director Sec'y

REC 8

SYNOPSIS: On 10/30/75, "New York Times" article attributes information to ex-FBI official to effect that FBI tapped Marina Oswald's telephones and bugged her living quarters in Texas and at hotel in Washington, D.C. Stated no information developed regarding motives of Lee Harvey Oswald or supporting suspicions that Oswald was involved in a conspiracy which the ex-official said prompted the coverage. Two former Warren Commission staff members stated they could not remember ever being told of the coverage but another said he recalled being told of bugging at Marina Oswald's hotel room. Files reflect J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of Warren Commission, expressed concern to Director Hoover on 2/24/64, about Marina Oswald running out before further testimony obtained. He asked about a stakeout on her. Director Hoover suggested a telephone tap could also be considered. Approval for tap obtained from Attorney General Kennedy on 2/25/64. Microphone coverage approved internally 2/27/64. Telephone coverage established at residence in Richardson, Texas, 2/29/64. Microphone coverage established there 3/2/64.

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REC 8

Coverage resulted in uncovering of negotiations between Marina Oswald and her attorney which was considered undesirable. No significant results obtained along lines of purpose of coverage. Inspector J. R. Malley discussed discontinuance with Rankin on 3/6/64, and he said there was no objection. Coverage removed 3/12/64. The pertinent information that was obtained was furnished to Warren Commission when received. Report covering coverage was prepared but not sent to Warren Commission since if it was made part of public record it would be readily apparent the information came from technical coverage. No indications found of bugging of Marina Oswald's hotel room. A Washington Field Office letterhead memorandum was sent to Warren Commission which contained information regarding long-distance telephone calls obtained from [redacted] which could be mistaken for telephone tap.

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DETAILS: The 10/30/75, edition of the "New York Times" newspaper carries an article by John M. Crewdson on page 34 entitled "Tap On Marina Oswald's Room Reported by Ex-FBI Official." Information in the article, attributed to an unnamed former FBI official, says the FBI tapped Marina Oswald's telephone and bugged her living quarters after the assassination of President Kennedy. The article states the coverage continued for some months but to the best of the recollection of the ex-official, no information was developed which bore directly on Lee Harvey Oswald's motives or supported suspicions held by some FBI officials that Oswald was involved in a conspiracy against the President's life. These suspicions prompted the Bureau to initiate its electronic coverage of Mrs. Oswald, according to the ex-official. Also according to the official, the FBI failed to report either the fact of the surveillance or its product to investigators for the Warren Commission.

The article set forth interviews of two Warren Commission staff members who said they could not remember having been told of the coverage. Another staff member said he recalled having been told that the FBI had bugged the hotel room that Mrs. Oswald occupied on her visit to Washington to testify before the Commission.

The bugging of the hotel room was also confirmed by the ex-FBI official who said it produced nothing apparently related to the investigation at hand.

The FBI is quoted as saying that it had "conducted an electronic surveillance of Marina Oswald's residence from 2/29/64, to 3/12/64, based upon written approval of the Attorney General of the United States." The article says the FBI denied having conducted electronic eavesdropping on Mrs. Oswald at her Washington hotel (A copy of the newspaper article is attached, numbered one).

The General Investigative Division has developed the following information regarding this matter. On 2/24/64, Director J. Edgar Hoover prepared a memorandum relating to a conversation he had on that date with J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of the Warren Commission. Mr. Rankin expressed concern that Mrs. Oswald might run out on the Commission before they had an opportunity to get her back for further testimony. He said he was wondering about a stakeout on her which would watch her and see who is visiting her for a while. According to the memorandum, Mr. Hoover suggested a telephone tap could be considered in addition to the

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stakeout since there would not be a trial so any information would not be excluded (A copy of Mr. Hoover's 2/24/64, memorandum is attached. The comments regarding a telephone tap are on page six. Filed in 105-126032-66, numbered two).

On 2/24/64, a memorandum was prepared for the Attorney General stating the FBI had received a request from the President's Commission on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy for a technical surveillance regarding Marina Oswald. The Attorney General was requested to authorize installation of a technical surveillance at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Declan P. Ford in Dallas, Texas (where Marina Oswald was living at the time), or at any other address to which Marina Oswald may move in the future. Attorney General Robert Kennedy signed his approval to this memorandum on 2/25/64. (A copy of this Attorney General approval is attached. Filed in National Security Electronic Surveillance File maintained by the Intelligence Division, numbered three).

By memorandum from Mr. Sullivan to Mr. Belmont 2/27/64, microphone surveillance was requested and approved for the residence of Mrs. Oswald, 629 Beltline Road, Richardson, Texas. She had rented this residence and was expected to move there from the Ford residence on the weekend of 2/29 to 3/1/64. (Copy of 2/27/64, memorandum attached. Kept in Special File Room, 105-82555-2400, numbered four).

On 2/28/64, the Director sent a letter to Mr. Rankin which referenced the discussion of 2/24/64, in which Mr. Rankin requested the FBI to conduct appropriate investigation to determine the contacts and activities of Marina Oswald. Information was set forth in the letter which came from a physical surveillance which was instituted after the 2/24/64, discussion. (The 2/28/64, letter to Rankin attached, 105-126032-80, numbered five). No installations were made at the Declan Ford residence since Marina Oswald was moving from there shortly after the approvals were granted. They were made at Mrs. Oswald's new residence in Richardson, Texas. The telephone surveillance was established at 4:35 p.m., 2/29/64. The microphone installation was completed and placed in operation at 4:30 p.m., 3/2/64. (See attached 3/2/64, Dallas airtel enclosing two FD-142s both captioned "Recommendation For Installation of Technical or Microphone Surveillance." Kept in Special File Room, 105-82555-2363, numbered six).

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By memorandum of 3/5/64, from W. A. Branigan to W. C. Sullivan, it was recommended that Inspector J. R. Malley discuss with Mr. Rankin the fact that the technical surveillance (telephone) and the associated lookout and physical surveillance had uncovered details of Mrs. Oswald's negotiations with her attorney, William McKenzie, which from a legal standpoint was undesirable and raised the possibility that the Bureau could be criticized for this coverage. Additionally, the technical, microphone, and physical surveillances had not developed commensurate significant results concerning her contacts and activities. It was recommended that Inspector Malley advise Mr. Rankin the physical and technical surveillances were being discontinued. It was additionally recommended that the microphone surveillance be discontinued on our own authority since we had not advised the Commission of the microphone surveillance. Mr. Hoover approved both recommendations. (Copy of 3/5/64, memorandum attached. Maintained in 105-82555-2588, numbered seven).

By A. Rosen to Mr. Belmont memorandum of 3/6/64, Inspector Malley reported that he had discussed the discontinuance of the physical and technical surveillances with Mr. Rankin on 3/6/64, and Mr. Rankin advised there was no objection to the discontinuance of the surveillances. (Copy of 3/6/64, memorandum attached. Filed in 105-82555-2587, numbered eight).

The physical surveillance was discontinued at 10:00 a.m., 3/9/64. (See attached 3/9/64, Dallas airtel. Filed in 105-82555-2582, numbered nine).

Removal of the technical and microphone installations from Mrs. Oswald's residence and the nearby surveillance location was completed at 2:30 p.m., 3/12/64. (See attached Dallas airtel of 3/18/64. Filed in 105-82555-2688, numbered ten).

By memorandum W. A. Branigan to Mr. Sullivan of 4/7/64, it was stated that a report had been prepared at Dallas by Special Agent Milton L. Newsom, dated 3/23/64, which set forth the results of the technical and microphone surveillances of Marina Oswald. It was recommended that the report not be sent to the Warren Commission since the pertinent information from the sources had been sent to the Commission by separate letter as the information was received. The point was made that there was no objection to giving the report to the Commission but if it was made a part of

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the public record, it would be apparent to a reader that the information came from a technical surveillance. Mention was made that even though the coverage was placed in response to the Commission's request, it did not appear that the Commission specifically asked for the technical surveillance. Therefore, if there was public criticism it would be directed at the FBI rather than the Commission.

Director Hoover wrote on the memorandum "I agree reluctantly because Commission seems to be intensively alert to embarrass FBI as evidence in recent list of interrogations addressed to us by the Commission." (Copy of 4/7/64, memorandum is attached. Maintained in Special File Room, 105-82555-3144, numbered eleven).

Regarding the allegation that the FBI bugged Mrs. Oswald's hotel room while she was in Washington to testify before the Warren Commission, no indication has been found of this. Appropriate files have been reviewed and checks have been made by Supervisor H. W. Porter, Analytical Research Unit of the Intelligence Division.

What the Warren Commission staff member may have had in mind when he told the "New York Times" that he recalled being told that Mrs. Oswald's hotel room was bugged when she was in Washington is that the Washington Field Office prepared a series of letterhead memoranda regarding Mrs. Oswald's stay at the Willard Hotel in February, 1964, which were furnished to the Warren Commission. The source of most of the information in the letterhead memoranda was [redacted] at the hotel. He was identified in the letterhead memoranda as "WF T-1." One of the letterhead memoranda, dated 2/20/64, set forth extensive information attributed to "WF T-1" regarding long-distance telephone calls made during the stay by Mrs. Oswald's business manager, Jim Martin, and her lawyer, John M. Thorpe, who were with her on the trip. The information obtained was of the type readily available to [redacted] but to someone unfamiliar with investigative techniques it might appear as having come from a telephone "bug." (Copy of the Washington Field Office letterhead memorandum of 2/20/64, and its cover airtel are attached. Filed in 105-82555-2223, numbered twelve).

ACTION: For information.

VM JKH

JGD

- 5 -

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MC

PC

The Warren Commission was advised of the FBI
wiretap placed on Marina Oswald's residence.

above furnished
to [redacted]
10-27-75 12:00
M: [redacted]

Approved
by
C MK
10-31-75