

The Attorney General

June 12, 1975

Director, FBI

REC-1

ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
JOHN F. KENNEDY

- 1 - Mr. Adams
- 1 - Mr. Gebhardt
- 1 - Mr. Cooke
- 1 - Mr. Nettles
- 1 - Mr. Wannall

Reference is made to a June 6, 1975, telephone call from Mr. John J. Buckley, Jr., Special Assistant to the Attorney General, to Mr. J. B. Adams, Assistant to the Director - Deputy Associate Director of the FBI. In that call Mr. Buckley advised that he had received a telephone call from an individual identifying himself as Richard Popkin, a professor at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Mr. Popkin indicated he had been approached by an ex-Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent by the name of Richard C. Nagell who claimed to have written a letter to the FBI in September, 1963, warning that Lee Harvey Oswald was going to kill President Kennedy.

FBI files contain no record of receipt of the alleged 1963 letter from Nagell, who has a long history of mental instability. The CIA has advised in the past that Nagell was never of operational interest to that agency.

To set Nagell's allegations in proper perspective, the following information pertaining to him was extracted from FBI files:

Richard C. Nagell served as an officer in the U. S. Army (Counterintelligence Corps and Infantry) and was wounded on several occasions. He was the lone survivor of a military aircraft crash in 1954, suffering severe head/neck injuries. Since then, he has received psychiatric treatment in numerous hospitals. In January, 1963, he was diagnosed

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NOTE: See memorandum J. B. Adams to Mr. Callahan 6/9/75, captioned as above (JBA:ams).

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Prior to the crash, Nagell had an outstanding military record in the intelligence field, but his personality and actions markedly deteriorated after the crash. He was held in jail in East Germany for four months in 1968 after having apparently made remarks considered derogatory to East Germany while on a train en route from West Germany to Berlin.

Over the years Nagell has been in contact with various Governmental agencies in an attempt to have his disability payments increased. At one time he commented to a U. S. Government representative that "unless promises made to him by U. S. officials were honored, he would reveal to the press the entire story of his alleged contacts with the CIA and would expose individuals with whom he had contact in CIA." He has been in contact with several FBI Offices over the years, primarily alleging civil rights violations and intelligence activities.

In September, 1963, Nagell entered a bank in El Paso, Texas, pointed a revolver at a teller, and then fired it twice over her head. He was apprehended at the scene and was convicted of a bank robbery violation.

In December, 1963, he told an FBI Agent that he had a social relationship with Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City and in Texas. He refused to comment further on this. In January, 1964, he requested to talk to an agent of the U. S. Secret Service (USSS). He was contacted by a USSS agent and an FBI Agent, but stated the information he wished to report was "too late now." He added that he had been acquainted with Lee Harvey Oswald's wife, Marina. He stated he knew "certain things" in the Fort Worth - Dallas, Texas, area and wanted to let USSS know that someone like Oswald was in the area; however, he knew nothing of Oswald's intention to assassinate President Kennedy. Nagell's photograph was subsequently shown to Marina Oswald. She said she had never seen him before.

While being removed from a courtroom in El Paso in January, 1964, Nagell made wild accusations in a shouting manner to newspaper reporters accusing the FBI of not attempting to prevent the assassination of President Kennedy.

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In a letter to the FBI in 1964, Magell alleged that the FBI was attempting to get him "railroaded" into prison on the "phony" bank robbery charges. He mentioned sending a registered letter, signed Joseph Kramer (one of his aliases), to the FBI in September, 1963, concerning the "prospective action of Lee H. Oswald (Albert Hidel)." He stated, "Since the information disclosed in that letter was judged to be mendacious by the FBI, as is quite evident, then with whom the responsibility lies for what subsequently happened in Dallas is rather obvious."

No record could be located of the alleged September, 1963, letter in the files of the FBI.

The CIA advised in 1968 that Magell was never of operational interest to that agency.

In 1969, Magell told a representative of the U. S. Government in Germany that he was a retired military man, who following retirement, worked as an investigator for the CIA; was involved in the Lee Harvey Oswald case; and was arrested and sentenced for an alleged bank robbery since he "knew too much."

In an April, 1967, letter to Senator Richard B. Russell (which was provided to the FBI), Magell stated he was no longer certain the letter he sent to the FBI in September, 1963, "was sent via postal registry, or for that matter, ever mailed."

On November 19, 1968, Magell went to the FBI Office in New York City, New York, and made available, among several items, copies of an article from the July 13, 1968, edition of the "New Yorker" magazine. This article pertained to the investigation of the assassination conducted by New Orleans, Louisiana, District Attorney Jim Garrison. It states in part that Magell was brought forward as a witness with the assistance of "Professor Popkin." It states that Magell had purposely gotten himself arrested on the bank robbery charge to provide himself with an alibi for his involvement in the "assassination conspiracy," his part being to kill Oswald, who was the "patsy." Magell allegedly told a Garrison investigator that he had proof of the conspiracy in the form of tape recordings hidden in a steamer trunk in California.

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When the recordings could not be found, Magell told the investigator, "They've stolen the tapes," and he refused to discuss the matter any further. The article states that Magell was rejected as a court witness, but Garrison continued to use Magell's story to bolster his case in public.

Also, during that visit to the New York City Office of the FBI, Magell made available a letter he had written to the "New Yorker" magazine on November 14, 1968, in which he says he never claimed to have purposely gotten himself arrested to provide himself with an alibi for his involvement in the assassination conspiracy.

Richard H. Popkin, Professor of Philosophy at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, was formerly Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, University of California, at San Diego. He is the author of a book entitled "The Second Oswald," published in 1966. In this book Popkin reviews much of the material of other critics of the Warren Commission and presents a theory that there was a second assassin who looked like Lee Harvey Oswald and was with Oswald in the Texas School Book Depository. He has been involved in conferences held at Georgetown University in Washington, D. C., by the "Committee to Investigate Assassinations," wherein recent political assassinations were discussed. In 1969 he gave a speech at a "Teach-In" at San Diego State College in California in which he outlined assassinations of several prominent political and civil rights personalities in the United States. He contended that the assassins were employees of the FBI.

- 1 - The Deputy Attorney General
- 1 - Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

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