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Secret Service and FBI Protection Is Criticized

By Edward T. Follard
Staff Reporter

Both the Secret Service and the FBI viewed "too narrowly" their responsibilities as Presidential bodyguards when President Kennedy was assassinated, the Warren Commission report concluded.

The report blamed neither agency, but saw a "need for a more imaginative and less narrow interpretation of their responsibilities" for Presidential protection.

To this end, it recommended a \$3 million budget increase for the Secret Service, which would enable it to employ more than 200 additional agents. It also recommended that the Secret Service be empowered to call as needed on the FBI and other Federal agencies for investigative and protective help.

And it said that the Secret Service should improve the protective measures used in presidential motorcades and increase the precautionary attention given to buildings around parade routes.

Legislation Sought

The Commission also called on Congress for legislation making the murder or kidnaping of a President or Vice President—or any official in the Presidential line of succession—a Federal crime, and suggested that a Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury supervise the Secret Service.

The report pointed out that since the assassination "many changes have already been made and others are contemplated" in the standard provisions for Presidential protection.

The Commission tempered its recommendations for procedural improvements with the observation that it could "recommend no procedures for the future protection of our Presidents which will guarantee security."

The demands on the person who holds the office are so complex and varied, and "the traditions of the office in a democracy such as ours are so deepseated as to preclude absolute security," the report said.

Shared Responsibility

The Secret Service has the primary responsibility for the protection of the President. However, the Warren Commission points out that the FBI also has some duties in this area. Since 1910, the FBI appropriation has included an item for the "protection of the person of the President of the United States."

The Secret Service has what is called a Protective Research Section. Its job is to collect and evaluate information about individuals and groups who might be a danger to the President. It depends on other agencies, Federal and local, for part of its information, but it had none on Oswald.

Said the report: "The Commission has concluded that at the time of the assassination the arrangements relied upon by the Secret Service to perform this function were not adequate."

But the Commission acknowledges that at the time, the Protective Research Section was very small: 12 specialists and three clerks. The PRS would be much enlarged if the recommended money were authorized by Congress.

File: FBI Edson WC

A Finding of "Arrogance"

The FBI began a file on Lee Harvey Oswald, assassin of President Kennedy, in October, 1959, after reports that he had defected to the Soviet Union. FBI agents first interviewed him in June, 1962, at Fort Worth and found him "arrogant."

The report says that FBI agent James P. Hosty Jr. knew that Oswald was in Dallas in November and knew that he was working in the Texas School Book Depository Building, from which Mr. Kennedy was ambushed, but did not—and was not required to—pass on this information to the Secret Service.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover defended Hosty before.

I want this case fully read particularly by Belmont & Sullivan who have contended all along FBI had not given details with which contention I have disagreed

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- The Washington Daily News _____
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- The New York Times _____
- The Worker _____
- The New Leader _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The National Observer _____
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the Warren Commission, saying: "There was nothing up to the time of the assassination that gave any indication that this man (Oswald) was a dangerous character who might do harm to the President or the Vice President."

Hoover said that the first indication of Oswald's capacity for violence was his attempt on the life of former Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker, the right-wing leader. That was in April, 1963, but Hoover said the FBI did not learn that Oswald was the sniper until after the Kennedy assassination.

Should the FBI have told the Secret Service about Oswald's presence in Dallas before the arrival of President Kennedy on Nov. 22?

Criteria for Trouble

Robert I. Bouck, in charge of the Protective Research Section of the Secret Service, gave his testimony to the Warren Commission:

"I would think his (Oswald's) continued association with the Russian Embassy after his return, his association with the Castro groups, would have been of concern to us; a knowledge that he had, I believe, been courtmartialled for illegal possession of a gun, of a hand gun in the Marines; that he had owned a weapon and did a good deal of hunting or use of it, perhaps in Russia, plus a number of items about his disposition and unreliability of character. I think all of those, if we had them altogether, would have added up pointing out a pretty bad individual; and I think that, together, had we known that he had a vantage point would have seemed somewhat serious to us, even though I must admit that none of these in themselves would be—would meet our specific criteria, none of them alone.

"But it is when you begin adding them up to some degree that you begin to get criteria that are meaningful."

The report went on to say that Bouck acknowledged that he had no reason to believe that any one Federal agency had access to all this information, including the significant fact that Oswald worked in a building which overlooked the motorcade route.

After agreeing with the

FBI's contention that Oswald had not shown any potential for violence (except the attempt on the life of Gen. Walker, which the FBI knew nothing about until after Nov. 22), the report said:

"The Commission believes, however, that the FBI took an unduly restrictive view of its responsibilities in preventive intelligence work, prior to the assassination.

"The Commission appreciates the large volume of cases handled by the FBI (636,371 investigative matters during fiscal year 1963). There were no Secret Service criteria which specifically required the referral of Oswald's case to the Secret Service; nor was there any requirement to report the names of defectors.

"However, there was much material in the hands of the FBI about Oswald: the knowledge of his defection, his arrogance and hostility to the United States, his pro-Castro tendencies, his lies when interrogated by the FBI, his trip to Mexico where he was in contact with Soviet authorities, his presence in the

School Book Depository job and its location along the route of the motorcade.

"All this does seem to amount to enough to have induced an alert agency such as the FBI, possessed of this information, to list Oswald as a potential threat to the safety of the President."

The report noted that the FBI Director testified he did not believe his agency, under an operating directive, was required to give the Secret Service what information it has about Oswald. And it recalled the testimony of Secret Service Special Agent Bouck that the accumulation of facts known to the FBI should have constituted a sufficient basis to warn the Secret Service of the Oswald risk. The Commission then said:

"The Commission believes that both the FBI and the Secret Service have too narrowly construed their respective responsibilities. The Commission has the impression that too

much emphasis is placed by both on the investigation of specific threats by individuals and not enough on danger from other sources. . . ."

Cooperation Needed

The Commission recommended that the Secret Service "completely overhaul" its advance detection facilities and develop "more useful and precise criteria" for defining potential threats to the President. It added that other agencies of government should tell the Secret Service about "all returned defectors."

In addition, the Commission said the Secret Service should enter into agreements with other agencies to insure that it gets all the information it needs and that it should expedite plans to use data-processing techniques.

The Commission noted also that both the FBI and Secret Service had conducted investigations of the assassination on their own immediately following the tragedy and had turned over to the Commission the results of those inquiries.

Commenting on the liaison (and lack of it) between the two agencies just prior to the crime, the Commission observed:

"Most important, notwithstanding that both agencies have professed to the Commission that the liaison between them was close and fully sufficient, the Commission does not believe that the liaison between the FBI and the Secret Service . . . was as effective as it should have been."

The Commission also looked into reports that some Secret Service agents travelling with President Kennedy did some drinking at the Fort Worth Press Club and remained up

late in the Cellar Coffee House on the night of Nov. 21.

The report said that Secret Service Chief James J. Rowley did not condone this behavior, but was satisfied that all the agents carried out their duties satisfactorily. Indeed, the report said that the conduct of the agents at the time of the assassination was "in the finest tradition of Government service."

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