

Accused Ford Assailant Reportedly Was Still

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SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 24—Sara Jane Moore, accused of attempting to assassinate President Ford, was a long-time Government informer and continued in that role in the days just before she allegedly fired a single shot as Mr. Ford left the St. Francis Hotel here Monday, sources familiar with her activities say.

Jimme Bivins, of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms here, disclosed today that his office had had what he described as very recent contact with Miss Moore regarding "an open investigation concerning unlawful transactions of firearms." He refused to elaborate.

In addition, Inspector Jack O'Shea, the San Francisco police officer whom Miss Moore called Saturday about her possible intent to "est" the Presidential security system, was one of two department officers who dealt with her only in her role as an informant.

Today employees of some Federal agencies became increasingly reluctant to discuss their relationship with the middle-aged Miss Moore, who is in San Francisco County Jail awaiting a psychiatric examination.

And the Secret Service here, which interviewed Miss Moore on Sunday after she made threats against the President's life, has suddenly refused to discuss the matter.

This situation has prompted a feeling among some here that the service, which is entrusted with protecting the President's life, may have mishandled the case when without explanation, and despite warnings from the local police, it released Miss Moore and failed to order surveillance of her just hours before Mr. Ford's arrival.

Manson Follower

It was the second apparent attempt on the President's life in California in 17 days involving women who had made threats against the President. The other case, which occurred Sept. 5 in Sacramento, involved Lynette Alice Fromme, a follower of Charles M. Manson, the convicted murderer.

The episode and the mounting controversy about it have focused increased attention on the dangerous world of the

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a Federal Informer in the Days

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Before Gun Episode

police informer. It is a clandestine world involving secret payoffs, code names and letter drops. And it is an intelligence method involving millions of dollars in payoffs that in recent years has been relied upon as a major tool by law enforcement authorities on Federal and local levels.

Miss Moore, who is about 45 years old, apparently first came in contact with the life of an informer about 20 months ago when she became involved in the food distribution program, People In Need, that was part of the ransom demand for the release of Patricia Hearst.

In newspaper interviews Miss Moore sought several months ago, apparently attempting to break off her informant status, Miss Moore told how she had worked with agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation seeking information on radical groups and causes, including the so-called Symbionese Liberation Army, which said it had kidnapped Miss Hearst.

Miss Moore described the special phone numbers and post office box she was assigned to use, how she was to write her reports referring to herself in the third person and then signing each page with a code name.

F.B.I. spokesmen have confirmed that Miss Moore was engaged as a "potential security informant." That description can be misleading since in the jargon, a "potential" informant is a regular informant who happens to be on trial.

One spokesman said she was an informant for approximately one year starting in mid-1974,

that she was terminated in June when she disclosed her informant status but that she continued to volunteer information.

Mr. Bivins, of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, said that his office recently "had contact with Sara Moore regarding an open investigation concerning unlawful transactions of firearms."

Miss Moore had also been an informer on an undisclosed subject for the San Francisco Police Department. She called Inspector O'Shea there last Saturday afternoon, told him she had been carrying a gun recently and that she was considering "testing the system" by going to Stanford University where President Ford was to dedicate a law school the next day.

Miss Moore reportedly then said: "I'm going to ask you something that will make you recoil in horror. Can you have me arrested?"

"A red light went off in my head during that telephone conversation," Inspector O'Shea said later, and he said he had told her she could be arrested if she was carrying a concealed weapon.

He said he notified three Federal agencies, the F.B.I., the Secret Service and the Firearms Unit of the Treasury Department.

The next morning he met with Miss Moore at an undisclosed site and she showed him her gun, a .44-caliber Charter Arms pistol which, it turned out, she had bought three weeks

ago for \$144 from Mark Fernwood, a suburban San Francisco gun collector.

After the meeting, Inspector O'Shea said he called the Mission District police station near Miss Moore's home at 565 Guerrero Street and ordered officers to seize the weapon. At 2:30 P.M. when she returned home, two policemen asked if she had a gun in her purse. She said "yes."

She was taken to the station, where the gun was confiscated. Miss Moore was issued a citation for the weapon's possession, which is a misdemeanor in California.

According to informed sources, the Secret Service was notified that she was in custody, that a weapon had been seized and that the local police "are ready to take any action desired" by the Secret Service.

The strong suggestion to the service was that Miss Moore's release could be delayed or she could be followed.

"You don't need to hold her," a Secret Service official is said to have replied, "we'll be in touch."

She was released. Late that night Secret Service men talked with Miss Moore, who reportedly denied having made the statements to Inspector O'Shea. According to a Secret Service spokesman in Washington yesterday, agents determined "that she was not of sufficient protective interest to warrant surveillance." She was not detained.

The next morning she drove to Danville, Calif., 40 miles east of San Francisco, and bought from Mr. Fernwood a .38-caliber pistol, paying \$125 by check. Such private gun transactions need not be reported under California law.

She drove to the St. Francis Hotel, where President Ford was appearing.

Today, the Secret Service office was asked by The New York Times for a fuller explanation of its activities regarding Miss Moore. An agent there, summoned by the receptionist, refused to discuss the matter or give his name, which was Davis.

There are some reports that perhaps the Secret Service's opinion of Miss Moore was swayed by representation from another government agency—perhaps one for which Miss Moore served as an informant.

No record is kept of the number of secret informants on the Federal payroll working for

agencies including the Internal Revenue Service, the F.B.I., the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

But a rule of thumb is that there are two informants for each full-time agent. This would mean about 30,000 informants paid by the Treasury and Justice Department alone.

The agencies spend millions of dollars a year to compensate them.

For instance, in the F.B.I., an informant is proposed by an agent, his records are checked in Washington, and

then the tipster serves a year's probation, sometimes without pay.

Part of the evaluation of Government agents is the number and reliability of their informants.

When an informer's cover is revealed or becomes known to his targets, he is sometimes "traded" to another undercover job for another agency, possibly in another city.

One of the problems facing the Government is the possibility that an informant may be "turned," or so swayed by his target's personality, beliefs or

conduct as to become a member of the group or even a double agent.

Miss Moore has said she became convinced that the radical politics of her friends had come to seem a plausible solution to the world's problems. There are some who speculate that her apparent assassination attempt may have been an effort to re-establish her radical status in those circles.

According to Frank Donner, an expert on Government surveillance, an informant's motivations can range from altruism to revenge with hunger

for money, power or recognition in between.

"A guy walks in off the street," says Mr. Donner, "and offers to help the Government. He may be a psychotic or a paranoid or whatever. But the pressures and premium on gaining results, like finding Patty Hearst, for instance, are so great that the agent cannot engage in a refined analysis of whether the informant is a good risk. Some believe this is a dangerous and improvident situation."

Meanwhile, investigation uncovered further details on the

life of Miss Moore, who was apparently born Sara Jane Kahn in Charleston, W. Va. There, she was the daughter of Olaf and Ruth Moore Kahn, was a flutist in the Stonewall Jackson High School Band and was described as "a quiet student."

However, Wade Burdette, a former teacher of hers, said "she was a little more standoffish" than other students.

Three Marriages

Miss Moore has apparently been married three times, first to Sydney Louis Manning, a

retired military officer of Los Angeles, then to John Aalberg, a movie producer by whom she had her 9-year-old son, Frederick, and then to Dr. Willard Carmel, an internist in Danville, Calif.

She is believed to have had at least three other children by Mr. Manning.

Her last marriage began Dec. 22, 1967. She was separated from Dr. Carmel Sept. 20, 1971, and in February, 1973, the marriage was dissolved on the grounds that she was married to Mr. Aalberg at the time of the 1967 wedding.