

Ford Expected to Testify on Warren

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Former president Gerald R. Ford is expected to testify before the House Assassinations Committee today about his tenure on the Warren Commission where he reportedly promised to serve as a secret informant for the FBI.

After a hurried and inconclusive look at the possibility of foreign involvement in the murder of President Kennedy, the committee has now turned to the quality of the investigations that followed.

At yesterday's hearing, which involved the FBI, Rep. Robert W. Edgar (D-Pa.) suggested at one point that the bureau "was a bit paranoid about the Warren Commission," second-guessing its work after the 1963 assassination.

According to FBI files released earlier this year, Ford, who was House minority leader and one of the Warren Commission's seven members, agreed on Dec. 12, 1963, to keep the FBI "thoroughly advised as to the activities of the commission.

"He stated this would have to be on a confidential basis, however, he thought it should be done," a two-page memo written by FBI Assistant Director Cartha D. DeLoach stated after a conversation with Ford in the Republican leader's office on Capitol Hill.

Headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, the commission had held its first meeting just one week earlier, on Dec. 5, 1963, but it immediately bogged down in internal bickering over Warren's attempts to name one of his proteges, Warren Olney, as chief counsel. The move was headed off, according to another FBI memo, after "a number of sources" confidentially briefed other commission members about "Olney's background," which the bureau apparently found objectionable.

Ford, for one, was upset by the Olney nomination because he felt it represented an attempt by Warren to establish a "one-man commission." According to the DeLoach memo, Ford said former CIA director Allen Dulles, another commission member, "protested quite violently" at the mention of the chief justice's "protege."

Former solicitor general Lee Rankin, who is also scheduled to testify today, was named instead as a compromise choice. He, in turn, was apparently dissuaded from hiring an independent investigative staff after the FBI was tipped off about Rankin's intentions the day after he was sworn in.

Two former FBI inspectors who testified before the committee yesterday professed no knowledge of such politicking or subsequent backstage maneuvering on the part of the FBI. The hearing concentrated instead on the shortcomings of the so-called "pre-assassination investigation" of Lee Harvey Oswald as a security risk and what might have happened if that inquiry had been handled properly.

Retired FBI assistant director James H. Gale, whose findings resulted in then-Director J. Edgar Hoover's disciplining 20 FBI agents and officials said that the bureau should have put Oswald on a so-called "Security Index" of those deemed subversive, and should have stepped up its investigation of him after learning of Oswald's visit to the Soviet Em-

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bassy in Mexico City in September 1963.

But even if these and other "investigative and reporting delinquencies" had not occurred, Gale insisted, "I don't think it would have prevented the assassination."

Former FBI inspector James R. Malley, who supervised the FBI investigation in Dallas after the murder and then served as FBI liaison officer for the Warren Commission, also testified. He insisted that the bureau did all it could to determine whether a conspiracy was involved in the assassination.

"That was on our minds constantly," Malley said. "He (Hoover) told me not to stop at anything," Malley added. "The people working on the assassination had an open mind (on the conspiracy issue) and still had an open mind in 1971 when I left the bureau."

By contrast, FBI Assistant Director DeLoach said he told then-Congressman Ford on Dec. 12, 1963, that "our investigation thus far had conclusively shown that Oswald operated by himself and that (Jack) Ruby additionally was a loner."



JAMES R. MALLEY
... testifies on FBI probe