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HOOVER WAS CERTAIN OSWALD WAS KILLER

F.B.I. Files Don't Dispute Finding That Assassin Acted Alone

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Dec. 7—Two weeks after John F. Kennedy's death, J. Edgar Hoover was convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald had killed the President, but he wondered whether Oswald had had help from secret conspirators in Cuba, according to bureau files released today.

The documents show that Mr. Hoover had concluded within hours of Kennedy's

Excerpts from Hoover memo, page B20.

death that Oswald had fired the fatal bullets. But the agency later obtained letters written to Oswald from Cuba, and those messages raised the questions about conspiracy that linger to this day.

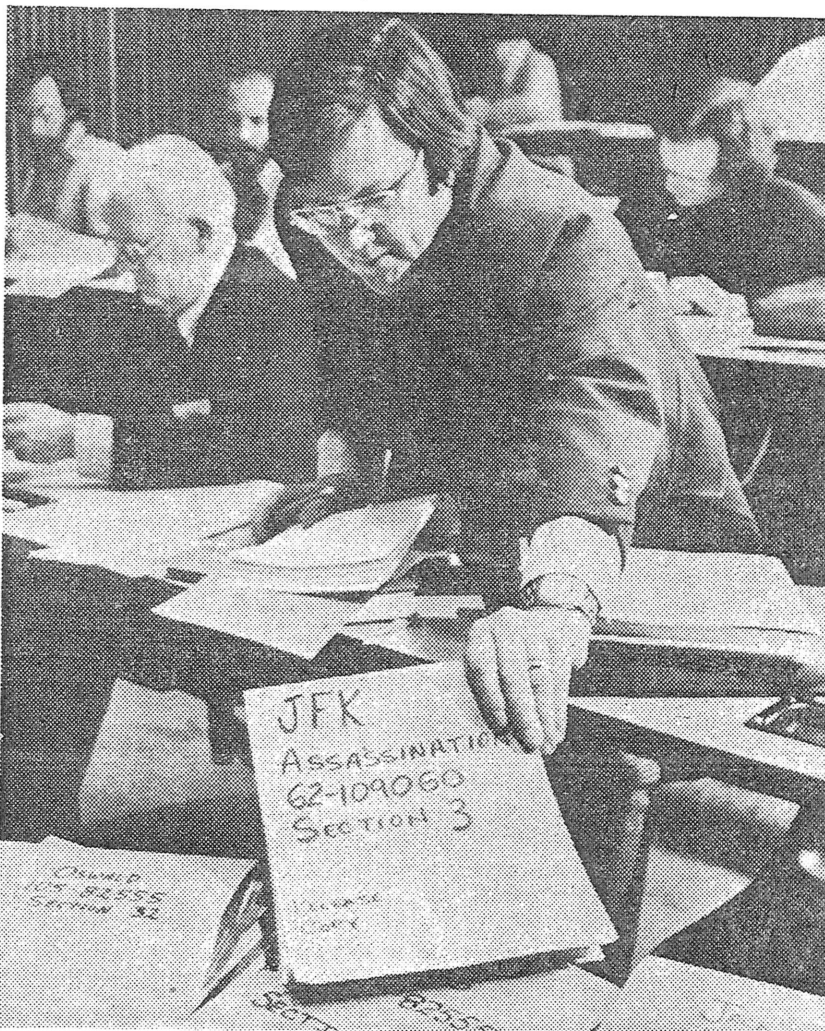
The material examined so far provides no information contradicting the Warren Commission's finding that Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy nor any immediate or astounding insight into the mysteries still attached to the assassination.

Because of the letters and the difficulty in checking their validity, Mr. Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said, "I urged strongly that we not reach the conclusion Oswald was the only man."

One of the Cuban letters illustrates the problem. It was written in Spanish and mailed from Havana to Oswald in Dallas. It was dated 12 days before the assassination but was postmarked six days after the assassination of Nov. 22, 1963. The fact that it was postmarked long after news of the assassination had spread worldwide suggests that it might have been the work of a headline-seeker. F.B.I. officials apparently found it impossible to judge what to make of the message.

The 40,001 pages of F.B.I. files released today, weighing nearly half a ton, recount the tragedy and drama rippling from the gunfire in Dallas in 1963. The

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The New York Times/George Tames

Reporters picking up copies of documents released yesterday in Washington

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bureau released the documents, half of its total file on the Kennedy assassination, to comply with requests under the Freedom of Information Act. The 40,000 other pages are scheduled to be released in January.

The material may be of greatest value for what it shows about the inside operations of the F.B.I. as it handled one of its most important missions. It is a picture that has emerged only in vague outline until now.

The memorandums include confidential reports passed among the highest officials of the Government. And they include letters from ordinary citizens expressing outrage and sorrow and, in some cases, intense hatred of the Kennedy family. Some documents were censored to delete material classified as secret or otherwise exempt from disclosure.

Attorney General Informed

Two hours after Kennedy was pronounced dead in a Dallas hospital at 2 P.M. Eastern standard time on Nov. 22,

Mr. Hoover wrote that he had told the President's brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, that Oswald was the assassin and that he had been apprehended near the Texas School Book Depository where the shots had been fired.

But on Dec. 12, Mr. Hoover confided to his chief aides that he was troubled by the conspiracy questions and was unsure how to resolve them. Reporting on a conversation with a caller, he wrote:

"I said I personally believe Oswald was the assassin; that the second aspect as to whether he was the only man gives me great concern; that we have several letters written to him from Cuba referring to the job he was going to do, his good marksmanship and stating when it was all over, he would be brought back to Cuba and presented to the chief.

"We do not know if the chief was Castro and cannot make an investigation because we have no intelligence operation in Cuba."

The reference was to Fidel Castro, the Cuban leader.

The F.B.I. is restricted to domestic operations, and the Central Intelligence

Agency gathers intelligence abroad. It was not clear whether Mr. Hoover meant to imply that the C.I.A. as well as the F.B.I. had no operations in Cuba. During this period, the F.B.I. maintained liaison with the C.I.A., although Mr. Hoover later severed the relationship.

A Discussion With Rankin

The memo was Mr. Hoover's report of his discussion that day with Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission's general counsel, who had called to make arrangements for dealing with the bureau during the commission's investigation. The Warren Commission later concluded that Oswald was the assassin and that he had acted alone.

As the agents translated it, the letter referred to Oswald as "Friend Lee" and said, "After the affair, I am going to recommend much to the chief. I told him you could put out a candle at 50 meters. Leave nothing that could lead to your trail and when you receive my letters, destroy them as always. After the affair, I will send you the money and we will see each other in Miami as always."

It was signed Pedro Charles.

Mr. Hoover told the State Department and the C.I.A. that he considered the letter an apparent hoax.

Some of the F.B.I. memos suggest that Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, then the Deputy Attorney General, was putting pressure on the bureau for a prompt public announcement that Oswald, acting alone, was the assassin.

Three days after the assassination, he wrote the bureau to express concern about the growing rumors of conspiracy and said that it was important to satisfy the public that Oswald was the assassin and that no conspirators were still at large.

Referring to the pressure from Mr. Katzenbach, Mr. Hoover's aide Courtney Evans wrote that there's "no doubt" Oswald had fired the gun.

"The problem is to show motive," he continued. "A matter of this magnitude cannot be fully investigated in a week's time."

Basic Facts in Hand

In a scribbled notation, Mr. Hoover asked: "Just how long do you estimate it will take? It seems to me we have the basic facts now."

At this point, he was apparently not seriously concerned about the conspiracy questions.

The F.B.I. will release 40,000 more pages next month. In the two batches, officials say, will be all the paperwork generated in the bureau as it investigated the case.

No files are being withheld, officials say, although many words and paragraphs have been deleted because they are classified as secret or are otherwise exempt from disclosure.

The documents include hundreds and hundreds of memos from field agents describing their pursuit of clues.

The first 597 pages, obtained by The Associated Press last week, showed that agents were swamped with tips and were instructed to check out every one. When Oswald was identified as the suspect and his picture was flashed around the world, people from one end of the country to the other called their local F.B.I. office to report seeing Oswald in their neighborhood in the preceding weeks.

The files include numerous memos from

Mr. Hoover giving directions on aspects of the investigation and instructions on how his superiors in the Justice Department should be handled.

His memos and notations reflected his concern for finding Kennedy's killer, but they also showed that he had other interests in mind as well, chiefly protecting the image of the bureau.

The First Memo

The new files show that some citizens wrote to suggest that inadequate F.B.I. security measures were responsible for Kennedy's assassination and Oswald's murder. Mr. Hoover quickly replied that the Secret Service, not his agency, was responsible for Presidential protection and that Oswald was in the custody of the Dallas police when he was shot.

On the day of the assassination, Mr. Hoover wrote his first memo for his files at 1:43 P.M. Eastern standard time, only moments after the news of the shooting had been flashed around the world. He said that he had broken the news to the President's brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and that the Attorney General "asked that we do whatever we could."

The President was pronounced dead at 2 P.M., but Mr. Hoover failed to get the word immediately. The director must have suffered an embarrassing blow to his ego when he called the Attorney General at 2:10 P.M. "to advise him that the President was in very, very critical condition."

"The Attorney General then told me the President had died," Mr. Hoover wrote.

But two hours later, he was able to report to Robert Kennedy that Oswald had been apprehended.