

Underworld Figure Refuses to Talk Before House Assassination Panel

WASHINGTON, March 16 (UPI)—Santo Trafficante Jr., once the overlord of syndicate gambling in Cuba, risked a contempt citation today by refusing to answer any questions from a House Committee about the assassination of President Kennedy or plots to kill Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Mr. Trafficante is the only survivor among three underworld figures described in earlier Congressional testimony as being enlisted by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1960 to kill the Cuban Premier. The two others were killed and their murders remain unsolved.

Asked if he had been threatened concerning his appearance, Mr. Trafficante refused to reply, citing constitutional protection.

"I refuse to answer on my constitutional rights," the gray-haired Tampa resident responded to 15 questions from the lawyer heading the House Assassinations Committee, which is investigating the deaths of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Finally, Representative Louis Stokes, Democrat of Ohio, chairman of the committee, reminded Mr. Trafficante that he was vulnerable to contempt-of-Congress citations for refusing to respond. He then told him he could go but might be recalled later.

Mr. Trafficante, Sam Giancana and John Rosselli had been mentioned in previous testimony as having been approached by the C.I.A. in the 1960's to develop plans to kill Mr. Castro. The com-

mittee is trying to find out if there was any connection between the Castro plot and the Kennedy assassination.

Mr. Giancana was shot in his suburban Chicago home in 1975 shortly after Senate investigators tried to question him about the plot. Mr. Rosselli was found dead in an oil drum in Biscayne Bay near Miami in 1975 after testifying before a Senate committee.

Questions asked by committee counsel, Richard A. Sprague, that Mr. Trafficante refused to answer included the following:

¶Had he ever been connected with the C.I.A. or any other Federal agency?

¶Did he know Mr. Rosselli or Mr. Giancana?

¶Did he know Robert Mayheu, a former agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a longtime associate of Howard R. Hughes who once testified that he had been recruited by the C.I.A. to plot Mr. Castro's death?

¶Did he have advance information that President Kennedy would be assassinated? Did he "advise other people of the assassination" before it happened?

¶Did he know Jack L. Ruby, who killed Lee Harvey Oswald after Mr. Oswald was arrested for the Kennedy murder? Was he visited by Mr. Ruby while imprisoned in Cuba?

¶Did he ever meet C.I.A. representatives to "discuss the assassinations of various world leaders, including Castro?"

Mr. Trafficante, who was jailed in Cuba after Mr. Castro seized his Havana gambling enterprises, was directed by a com-



Associated Press

Santos Trafficante Jr. waiting to appear before the House assassinations committee yesterday.

mittee subpoena to bring a variety of documents "from June 1955 to December 1964 relating to attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro and relating to attempts to assassinate or the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and relating to groups or organizations known as ALPHA 66, International Anticommunist Brigade, No-Name key group, and the Cuban Revolutionary Council and relating to your release from prison in Havana, Cuba."

He produced none of the items.