

Rankin Named Counsel

for Assassin Probers

A-3 By Laurence Stern
Staff Reporter

Former U.S. Solicitor General J. Lee Rankin was named yesterday as chief counsel for the Presidential Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy.

Chief Justice Earl Warren, chairman of the special panel, announced Rankin's appointment and said he "is now in the performance of his duties."

Rankin and the Chief Justice are old court room acquaintances. As Solicitor General from 1956 to 1961, Rankin was the Government's top lawyer in cases before the Supreme Court.

A slight, soft-spoken man, 56, Rankin is the first state appointee hired by the presidential panel. The announcement described him as a "distinguished lawyer."

A spokesman for the Commission announced that each of its seven members has received copies of the five-volume FBI report on the November 22 assassination of President Kennedy and the subsequent murder of the suspected assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

The FBI report does not flatly assert that Oswald was the President's assassin, according to informed officials. But it does reek a mass of circumstantial evidence that in the view of investigators points to Oswald as the fatal sniper beyond reasonable doubt.

Physical evidence in the case—Oswald's Italian carbine rifle, .45 revolver, three spent cartridges from the assassination scene, a shirt, fingerprints and several documents—are under lock and key in the FBI laboratory here.

This evidence is available to the Commission on request. Oswald's fingerprints and palm prints have been recovered from the Italian carbine rifle, a .65 mm. Mannlicher Carcano, that ballistics tests showed to be the assassination weapon, authorities reported.

Additional prints were found on a box at the sixth-floor sniper post from which the fatal volley was fired and on the wrapping paper in which Oswald carried the murder weapon into the Texas School Book Depository Building.

Another link in the circumstantial chain of evidence were shreds of material found in metal parts of the murder weapon that microscopic examination showed to have come from a brown shirt Oswald was wearing when he was arrested.

The bulky FBI report consists of two volumes of narrative, developed in chronological form, and three separate volumes of supporting evidence, principally photographs and documents.

A Commission spokesman said yesterday that "no further announcement will be made concerning the report until the Commission had an opportunity to review it. A preliminary statement will thereafter be made public."

It was understood from official sources that the FBI refrained explicitly from naming Oswald as President Kennedy's assassin. There is considerable sensitivity on this point because of criticism surrounding the handling of the case by Dallas police.

The final responsibility for passing verdict on Oswald rests with Chief Justice Warren and his Investigating Commission, authorities say.

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In another development the House yesterday passed and sent to the White House a measure granting subpoena powers to the Warren Commission. The Senate passed an identical measure Monday.

The resolutions also grant the Commission authority to grant witnesses immunity from future prosecution as a result of their testimony. This step is designed to encourage witnesses to talk who might otherwise decline to testify on grounds of possible self-incrimination.

Just can't understand how some of these details were known before are leaked to the press.

- Conrad _____
- Loach _____
- Evans _____
- Gale _____
- Rosen _____
- Sullivan _____
- Tavel _____
- Trotter _____
- Tele Room _____
- Holmes _____
- Gandy _____

- The Washington Post and Times Herald _____
- The Washington Daily News _____
- The Evening Star _____
- New York Herald Tribune _____
- New York Journal-American _____
- New York Mirror _____
- New York Daily News _____
- New York Post _____
- The New York Times _____
- The Yorker _____
- The New Leader _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The National Observer _____
- People's World _____

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Memorandum

Mr. Tolson	
Mr. DeLoach	
Mr. Mohr	
Mr. Bishop	
Mr. Casper	
Mr. Callahan	
Mr. Conrad	
Mr. Felt	
Mr. Gale	
Mr. Rosen	
Mr. Sullivan	
Mr. Tavel	
Mr. Trotter	
Tele. Room	
Miss Holmes	
Miss Gandy	

TO : Mr. Mohr

DATE: December 11, 1963

FROM : C. D. DeLoach

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT

With respect to the story in the "Washington Post and Times Herald" today on page A-3 captioned "Rankin Named Counsel for Assassin Probers," the Director has noted, "I just can't understand how some of these details never known before are leaked to the press."

In the above referred to story, there is what appears to be some speculation as well as hard fact. While we, of course, do not believe it advisable to ask Laurence Stern, the writer of the story, his source, it is known that he is close to various persons in the Department. Also, since copies of the report have been made available to members of the Commission, there is every indication leaks are coming from the Commission itself. It is a fact that within a matter of an hour or two after the report was made available to the Commission local radio stations were broadcasting details. We have and will maintain a "no comment" here.

ACTION:

For information.

- 1 - Mr. Belmont
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Evans
- 1 - Mr. Jones
- 1 - Mr. Morrell

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ENCLOSURE

REW:saj
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