

Miss Moore Aided U.S. Firearms Unit Day Before Attack

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 25 — Sara Jane Moore, who is accused of attempting to assassinate President Ford, took part in an undercover Treasury Department operation against a suspected illicit firearms dealer a day after the department's San Francisco bureau was notified by the police that the woman had made what appeared to be a threat against the President's life.

In the operation Miss Moore, 45 years old, introduced an undercover agent of the department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to the dealer, Mark Fernwood. That occurred on Sunday, a little more than 24 hours before Miss Moore is alleged to have fired a shot at Mr. Ford on a crowded San Francisco street.

A spokesman for the alcohol,

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tobacco and firearms unit here declined comment when asked why the operation had been allowed to proceed in view of reports of the woman's apparent threat or whether Federal funds had been used to purchase the pistol allegedly used against the President.

Although Miss Moore, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, had served for about a year as an undercover F.B.I. informer, her relationship with that agency was terminated in June, and it is not clear whether the F.B.I. or any other Federal agency had knowledge of her association with the firearms unit.

Second Purchase

It was early on the day of the alleged assassination attempt that Miss Moore, who had been serving as a Treasury Department informer, purchased from Mr. Fernwood the .38-caliber revolver used in the attack on the President.

According to Government sources familiar with the events of last weekend, Miss Moore, a divorced mother, telephoned a San Francisco police inspector late Saturday night and suggested in the course of the conversation that she might be inclined to "test" the Presidential security system during an appearance by Mr. Ford at Stanford University on Sunday.

The inspector, who had known Miss Moore in her role as an informant for the San Francisco Police Department, is reported to have asked Miss Moore whether she owned a

gun. She is said to have replied that she did.

The inspector, the sources said, then communicated the thrust of Miss Moore's remarks to the San Francisco offices of the Secret Service, which is responsible for protecting the President; F.B.I., and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, for which she was then working as an informant, presumably in an investigation of Mr. Fernwood.

Morning Meeting

Early the next morning, these sources said, the inspector met Miss Moore and she showed him a .44 caliber revolver purchased from Mr. Fernwood two weeks earlier.

The inspector left, intending to ask uniformed officers to question the woman later in the day.

In the meantime, the sources said, Miss Moore accompanied the Federal firearms agent, identified only as "Chuck," to Mr. Fernwood's home in Danville, Calif., about 20 miles east of San Francisco.

During the visit, Miss Moore gave Mr. Fernwood, who has described himself as a legitimate collector of firearms, a \$125 check in payment for the .44-caliber revolver.

Purchase Planned

The Federal agent, sources said, had been sent to meet Mr. Fernwood, from whom he later hoped to purchase some weapons that could be used in the case against the man. But the agent departed without completing a transaction.

After Miss Moore's return to her home in San Francisco's

Mission District, two San Francisco policemen met her and confiscated the .44 caliber revolver, which she was carrying, unloaded, in her purse.

The police inspector, Jack O'Shea, said in an interview today that the department's prime consideration on Sunday was Mr. Ford's safety during his appearance at Stanford. He added that Miss Moore was charged with a misdemeanor weapons-possession offense and held in custody until it was no longer possible for her to drive the 40 miles to the university before Mr. Ford had left.

At that point, Inspector O'Shea said, his department called the Secret Service's San Francisco office, described Miss Moore's actions and asked whether she should be retained in custody.

Interview Planned

But the police are reported to have been told to release the woman because Secret Service agents planned to interview her that night. The Service has declined to explain why it allowed Miss Moore to remain free after the interview, except to say that in its opinion she did not represent a sufficient threat to the President or warrant further detention or surveillance.

Government sources said that the next morning, Miss Moore again traveled to Mr. Fernwood's Danville home and purchased a .38 caliber revolver and some target ammunition. A few hours later, she is accused of firing a single shot from the pistol while standing across the street from Mr. Ford

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as he stepped out of a San Francisco hotel.

Suspect 'Glad He Didn't Die'

By ANDREW H. MALCOLM

Special to The New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 25 — Sara Jane Moore, accused of attempting to assassinate President Ford, said in an interview published today, "I'm glad he didn't die."

Speaking at times in confused fragments, Miss Moore said she had been driven to shoot at the President by a sense of isolation from her radical friends. They had rejected her, she said,

when she revealed last summer that she had been a regular informer for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"It was kind of an ultimate protest against the system," she said of the shot she fired outside the St. Francis Hotel Monday afternoon. "I did not want to kill somebody, but there comes a point when the only way you can make a statement is to pick up a gun."

At one point during a two-hour prison interview, Miss Moore told a reporter for The Los Angeles Times: "I am not a berserk woman."

Nonetheless, Miss Moore, who is being held on \$500,000 bail, is scheduled to be taken to the San Diego Metropolitan Correctional Facility tomorrow afternoon for a 60-day psychiatric examination ordered by Federal Magistrate Owen Woodruff.

Her attorney, James L. Hewitt, a public defender, said today that he planned no further attempts to delay the examination. He said Miss Moore, who is in the county jail here, is calm.

"However," he said, "her conversations are not as clear as they could be."

Mr. Hewitt has said that at Miss Moore's request he asked Ellen Hume, a reporter for The

Los Angeles Times, to visit his client in jail Tuesday night. The two women had met several times in recent months.

Mr. Hewitt said that at his urging Miss Moore had agreed not to see any other reporters, despite an avalanche of requests for interviews.

During her one interview, which was conducted over a telephone in a partitioned visiting room, Miss Moore wore a white nightgown and a red sweater. She maintained that she had acted alone in attacking the President.

Childhood Recalled

CHARLESTON, W. Va., Sept. 25 (UPI)—Both Sara Jane

Moore and Charles M. Manson spent part of their childhood in this Appalachian coal capital, and a grocer remembers selling candy to them, recalling them as likable children.

"I was very much surprised at how those two children turned out," said Van Watson, the grocer.

Mr. Manson, the leader of a group convicted of murdering Sharon Tate, the actress, and others in 1969, lived across the street from the former location of Mr. Watson's store. Miss Moore's family—the Kahns—lived in a log house up the street.