

A Report Links C.I.A. to Murder in U.S.

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The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is investigating the possibility that the Central Intelligence Agency was responsible for a hit-and-run murder in New Orleans in the late 1950's or early 1960's.

A spokesman for the C.I.A. emphatically denied that a premeditated murder had ever been ordered or carried out by C.I.A. officials within the United States.

Senator Frank Church, who heads the select panel, confirmed through a spokesman that his staff was "at work on this matter," but said that the results of the investigation would not be included in the committee's forthcoming report on C.I.A. assassination plots directed at foreign heads of state.

"We don't know as yet what weight to give to it," Senator Church, an Idaho Democrat, said of the information obtained by the committee. "We have not made a full assessment of the evidence."

Neither the name of the alleged victim nor any circumstances that might have provoked such an action by the C.I.A. in New Orleans or elsewhere could be learned.

Report First of Kind

The report under investigation, while thus far uncorroborated, is the first known to have come to the attention of investigators suggesting that the C.I.A. had ever considered the use of assassination in this country.

Senator Church provided no details of the evidence obtained by the committee's staff, but the principal exhibit is understood to be a written statement from a former missionary that a C.I.A. official once acknowledged to him having participated in such an assassination.

The former missionary, the Rev. Alden J. Stevenson, now a chaplain at the University of San Francisco, was unable in a recent interview to recall the name of the C.I.A. man who, he said, solicited his opinion about the ethics of a killing carried out under orders from agency higher-ups.

But Father Stevenson, a member of the Jesuit order,



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The Rev. Alden J. Stevenson is said to be source of assassination report.

provided a detailed description of the man, including his involvement in intelligence-gathering flights over the Chinese mainland from a base at Hsinchu, Taiwan, where the conversation with the official took place.

Father Stevenson, whose mission was in Hsinchu near the Taiwanese base, and others who had known the C.I.A. official, subsequently recalled that he had been referred to as "Mr. Mac" and had an aluminum leg.

Intelligence sources said that that description fitted a C.I.A. official they identified as Robert McNamara, who had served with the agency in Washington and Las Vegas, Nev., as well as at Hsinchu.

'Supply Officer'

The C.I.A. spokesman dismissed reports of agency involvement in a domestic assassination as "just poppycock," but he did confirm that the agency had employed a one-legged man named Robert McNamara, now dead, in this country and abroad.

The spokesman said that Mr. McNamara's only domestic assignment, however, had been to a C.I.A. facility near Las Vegas, where he died on Sept. 3, 1962.

Records compiled by Clark County, Nev., which includes Las Vegas, show that a Robert Joseph McNamara was pronounced dead on that date of a heart attack.

The C.I.A. spokesman described Mr. McNamara as a "supply officer," and another source confirmed that the agency did maintain a weapons supply depot near Las Vegas at the time.

According to an obituary printed in the Sept. 5, 1962, issue of The Las Vegas Sun, Mr. McNamara, who was then 40 years old, died at an un-

named local hotel where he and his family had been guests for the last week.

The obituary said that the McNamaras had stopped in Las Vegas on the way to Taiwan, where Mr. McNamara, who was described as a World War II amputee, was to take an assignment as a civilian employee of the Air Force.

Efforts to locate Mr. Mc-

Namara's wife, who sources said is still living, were not immediately successful.

Despite the C.I.A. spokesman's characterization of him as a "supply officer," others familiar with him or his reputation described him as an "operations type" who had taken part in the Normandy invasion, and who, under military cover, had headed intelligence overflight operations conducted by the C.I.A. from Taiwan.

The C.I.A. spokesman at first refused to address the question of whether Mr. McNamara had ever been ordered by his superiors in the agency to carry out a murder in New Orleans, saying only that there was "no record of him being assigned anywhere except the Las Vegas area" within the United States.

A 'Flat' Denial

The spokesman telephoned a few minutes later, however, to say that the C.I.A. would "flatly deny that Mr. McNamara was ever instructed to kill anyone or did carry out such an assignment."

He declined, however, to extend his denial to encompass the possibility that Mr. McNamara might have undertaken such an operation without the approval of higher authorities.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has compiled a report of 400 pages based on the evidence it has gathered in secret hearings concerning attempts by the C.I.A. on the lives of some foreign leaders, principally Fidel Castro, the Cuban Prime Minister.

Sources familiar with the report, which the Church committee plans to release next week if the full Senate approves, have said that although it deals "chiefly" with assassination plots directed at foreign heads of state, it will also illustrate, in the words of one source, "how the agency deals with people who try to blackmail it."

Letter Spurred Inquiry

These sources said that the report contained evidence, provided to the Senate committee by the Rockefeller commission, which investigated some aspects of the C.I.A.'s activities, that an individual had been killed by the C.I.A. under such circumstances, but outside the United States.

Although the Senate report is understood to contain indications that more than one low-level intelligence operative met with a similar fate, none of the information thus far provided to the Church committee by the C.I.A. has concerned an officially sanctioned murder in New Orleans or elsewhere inside this country.

Father Stevenson, the former missionary whose letter to a member of Congress outlining

his conversation with Mr. McNamara provided the impetus for the Senate committee's investigation, said in the recent interview that, as best he could recall, the discussion took place between 1959 and 1961.

The priest said that he had become acquainted with Mr. McNamara, a Roman Catholic, through his attendance at services the priest held at a chapel near the Hsinchu base, and that after a time the C.I.A. man invited him to dine with himself and his wife at their house in the C.I.A. compound at Yang Min Shan, in the hills north of Taipei.

The man's wife, who, sources said, was also a C.I.A. employee, remained in Taipei after the meal, the priest said, and it was during the 50-mile drive back to Hsinchu later that evening that the conversation about the assassination took place.

Father Stevenson emphasized that his discussion with the C.I.A. man did not constitute a formal confession, but rather was a conversation of conscience in which the man, at first, "just threw out this hypothetical case."

The problem he posed, the priest recalled, concerned the appropriate moral and ethical response to an order from higher authority "to eliminate a person as a danger to national security."

A Further Opinion

The man told him, Father Stevenson said, that he had previously discussed the same question with another priest, but wanted a further opinion. As the man provided more details about the "hypothetical" murder, the priest said, he became suspicious and asked him whether he had been "involved in something like this."

The man, he recalled, replied that he had been, and explained that he was troubled by the fact that he had relied on the judgment of his superiors in carrying out the killing, having known nothing about the victim or the C.I.A.'s reasons for

wanting him dead.

Father Stevenson said that the C.I.A. man had told him he had simply received instructions one day to travel to a planning site without disclosing his whereabouts to anyone, including his wife. Once there, the man said, he was told that he was to take part in an assassination in the New Orleans area with assistance from another C.I.A. employee.

A check of the New Orleans city directory showed that a Robert McNamara rented an apartment near the Tulane University campus in 1960, but no indication could be found that he and the C.I.A. official were one and the same.

The owner of the building in which the apartment had been taken said that he had no records of tenants going back to 1960, and that the manager of the building in that period had since died.

The cover for the operation, Father Stevenson recalled, was a New Orleans florist's shop, and he said that he had received the impression that a delivery truck associated with the shop had been employed in a hit-and-run attempt, which the man conceded to him had been successful.

Asked how he had responded to the man's request for advice, Father Stevenson said that he had replied that what had been done had been done, and that the man would have to accept the ambiguities surrounding the matter unless he could elicit further information from his superiors about the reasons for the assassination.

But the priest said that he had concluded by advising the man that there was no guarantee that such a situation might not present itself again, and that if he were truly concerned about the morality of such killings, he would do well to "get out of the racket."

Father Stevenson said that he had never discussed the subject with the man again and had heard on a subsequent visit to Taiwan that he had died of a heart attack in the United States.