

Hoover Had Doubts That

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ton in a floor-to-ceiling stack — made public in response to a Freedom of Information Act suit. The 25,000 internal memos and raw investigative reports, censored to delete sensitive sources, rumors, and false leads, indicated that despite the initial confusion and chaos, Hoover immediately directed an all-out probe and was able to report within hours after the Dallas' shooting that Oswald was the likely killer and was probably "a nut" from the "extremist, pro-Castro crowd."

The files also showed that:

- While the Secret Service chief at the time, James J. Rowley, shared Hoover's early belief that Oswald was the killer, he also shared Hoover's concern over a possible wider conspiracy.

- The FBI apparently never gave to the Warren Commission some of the provocative letters supposedly written to Oswald from Havana, because the bureau could not authenticate them to Hoovers' satisfaction.

- Hoover broke the news that the President had been shot to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy 15 minutes after the shooting, but it was Robert Kennedy who later informed Hoover that the President had been pronounced dead at Dallas' Parkland Hospital.

- The FBI had to cope with thousands of worthless leads, hoaxes, crank calls, letters, and wild theories, and it investigated them all. For instance, hundreds of persons notified the FBI of the identities of persons who, at one time or another, had suggested that Kennedy should be killed; each allegation was meticulously checked out. Even six months after the slaying, agents were sent to question a Scottsdale, Ariz., service station attendant who found "John Wilks (sic) Booth" and "John F. Kennedy" scrawled on the front of a telephone directory. (Booth was the assassin of Abraham Lincoln.)

- Relations between the FBI and CIA wore thin during the tense days after the assassination. At one point, Hoover accused the CIA director at the time, John J. McCone, of telling Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.), a member of the Warren Commission, that Oswald was paid \$6,500 in Mexico City to kill Kennedy. Hoover was irked because the FBI had told McCone personally that there was no truth to that story.

- Oswald "frantically denied shooting Dallas Police Officer (J.D.) Tippitt or shooting President John F. Kennedy" when questioned by Dallas Police Capt. J.W. Fritz, an FBI report said. The report said Oswald also denied ever owning a rifle. But no stenographic notes were kept of Fritz' interrogation of Oswald.

- Oswald, who defected to the Soviet Union from the Marine Corps and married a Russian woman before returning to the U.S., made several inquiries at the Soviet embassies in Washington and in Mexico City about

the possibility of returning to the USSR, the last one only 13 days before the assassination.

- Marina Oswald, the assassin's Russian-born wife, told FBI agents after the shooting that her husband had tried eight months earlier to shoot and kill former Army Maj. Gen. Edwin Walker in his Dallas home. She said Oswald told her he escaped on foot and by bus, the same method used in the Kennedy assassination. Mrs. Oswald told agents that when she heard that Kennedy had been shot, she feared that her "crazy" husband might have done it.

- A memo to Hoover dated Nov. 27, 1963, quotes the deputy attorney general at the time, Nicholas Katzenbach, as saying that he had learned that Abe Fortas, a close friend of the new President, Lyndon B. Johnson, and later a Supreme Court justice, was opposed to the idea of a special presidential commission looking into the assassination. "Certainly something sinister here," read a note in Hoover's handwriting. (Fortas, contacted yesterday, denied he had ever opposed formation of the Warren Commission, and Katzenbach said that LBJ was not a reliable source when it came to quoting someone else.)

- On Dec. 2, 1963, the U.S. Embassy in Rome sent Hoover a report that an American newspaper columnist there—the name was censored—said that the Spanish ambassador to Italy, Sanchez Bellas, had showed him a report prepared by Spanish intelligence alleging that Kennedy's assassination was the work of Fidel Castro. The State Department cable said in part:

"(censored) stated that, as he understood the report, Fidel Castro was very much disturbed by the deaths of the Diem brothers in Vietnam and felt certain that these deaths had been caused by the CIA... (Castro) had been most upset by the apparent rapport established between President Kennedy and Premier (Nikita) Khrushchev... and felt that some dire act was needed to destroy this rapport."

Evidence of a possible Cuban link included among the documents was a letter written in Spanish and mailed from Havana to Oswald "Mail Office, Dallas, Texas, U.S.A." It was dated 12 days before the assassination, but postmarked six days after Kennedy was killed and four days after Oswald was shot to death by Jack Ruby.

FBI officials apparently found it impossible to judge what to make of the letter, which 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." It was signed by a "Pedro Charles."

The same last name was contained in a second letter, written on the same day to Attorney General Kennedy by a "Mario del Rosario Molina" of Havana. The Rosario Molina letter alleged that Oswald had killed the President at "Charles" direction.

Oswald Acted Alone



Lee Harvey Oswald clenches manacled fists as he arrives in police station.



Oswald is placed in ambulance after being shot by Jack Ruby.