

FBI probed report Oswald 'definitely' was informant

**** Monday, February 20, 1978 The Dallas Morning News

By EARL COLZ
Former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover personally ordered his top aides to "expedite" an interview in May 1964 with a Dallas FBI agent who was reported to have said that accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was "definitely an FBI informant" and that files of the bureau in Washington "would prove this fact."

A Hoover assistant, C.D. DeLoach, got the informant report from Walter Jenkins, special assistant to President Lyndon Johnson, according to memos filed with FBI documents declassified last month.

Neither the Warren Commission nor J. Gordon Shanklin, special agent in charge of the Dallas FBI office in 1964, was told of the incident, which apparently was handled by Hoover's top aides.

The FBI has acknowledged its agents had contact with Oswald or his wife about four times before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 but did not recruit him as an informant. The agency said it was interested in him because he had returned to this country in 1962 after defecting to Russia in 1959.

RESULTS OF the May 1964 interview with Will Hayden Griffin, the Dallas FBI agent referred to by Jenkins, were not released among the 40,000 pages of FBI documents made public last month.

An FBI spokesman told The News last week he understood the incident "didn't amount to anything" and results of Griffin's interview probably were placed in his personal file rather than in the assassination file.

Griffin, who retired from the FBI in 1967, said last week he did not make

"Will Griffin . . . knew the truth that Oswald was not an informant."

The statement as reported by Jenkins and said he is "convinced and always have been that he (Oswald) never was an informant for the FBI."

Griffin's name was blacked out in the two memos released last month but he confirmed he was the former New Orleans agent Jenkins referred to when he was transferred to Dallas about 1960.

"He (Oswald) wasn't an informant because I knew the boys who worked with him and tried to work with him," Griffin said.

SHANKLIN SAID Griffin in 1963-64 was "handling applicant investigations" for clerical and other employment in the Dallas FBI office and was not involved in domestic intelligence work.

During the investigation after the assassination Griffin interviewed two of Oswald's co-workers in the Texas School Book Depository Building and also Oswald's landlady at the time of the assassination.

Before his retirement he was assisting in checking clearance for possible

Investigators and researchers for the House Assassinations Committee, Griffin said he had never met Walter Jenkins but knew his brother William R. Jenkins who was an FBI agent in Amarillo in 1964.

Both Jenkins brothers told The News they could not remember the Griffin incident.

"I have no memory of any of that," Walter Jenkins said. "And if it was a serious matter that I really took seriously I would remember it. I think it might have been some incidental thing that I really didn't believe and just passed it along."

ACCORDING TO a memo DeLoach wrote to another Hoover aide, Jenkins told DeLoach on April 29, 1964, that a friend whom Jenkins refused to identify had talked to the Dallas FBI agent who said he "assisted in the investigation of the Oswald case and was definitely an FBI informant."

The agent stated that FBI files in Washington would prove this fact, DeLoach's memo said. "I told Jenkins that while I doubted very seriously that any of our agents had furnished this fact to his 'friend' that at the same time we, of course, would make a check and find out if the description given this agent fitted any of our people."

A second memo, dated May 4, 1964, was written by William A. Branigan, the FBI official in charge of the Oswald investigation, to William C. Sullivan, FBI assistant director in charge of domestic intelligence.

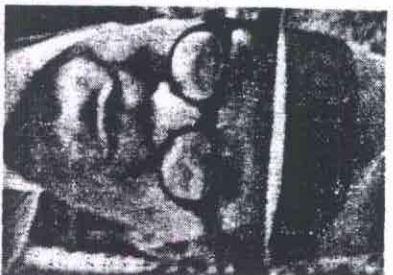
BRANIGAN SAID the agent, who by then was identified, would be interviewed in Dallas "to determine if he made the statement that Oswald was



C.D. DeLoach . . . Handled probe of reported statements by Dallas agent.



J. Edgar Hoover . . . "entire control of whether a man shall be an informant."



J. Gordon Shanklin . . . "They got . . . stuff up there (Washington) I never heard of."

definitely an FBI informant," Kyle Clark, assistant to Shanklin, was instructed in Shanklin's absence "to promptly advise of the results together with their recommendations."

Hoover's initials were written at the end of the memo under the word "expedite" in his handwriting.

Two days after the May 4 memo one of Hoover's top aides, Alan Belmont, was scheduled to testify before the Warren Commission about the Oswald informant question.

Belmont, in charge of all FBI investigative work, identified a letter dated Feb. 6, 1964, to the commission as a letter from Hoover "stating flatly that Lee Harvey Oswald was never an informant for the FBI."

One of the commission lawyers questioning Belmont, Samuel A. Stern, told The News he was "absolutely not" told of the Jenkins report at the time and had not learned of it afterward.

EIGHT DAYS after Belmont testified, Hoover went before the Warren Commission and said he had "entire control of whether a man shall be an informant or shall not be an informant" of the FBI. He testified he "can most emphatically say that at no time was he (Oswald) ever an employee of the bureau in any capacity, either as an agent or as a special employee or as an informant."

Neither DeLoach, Branigan nor Clark could recall the Jenkins report when questioned by The News this week.

Knowing Will Griffin, I doubt very seriously he ever made such a statement because he had better sense," DeLoach said. "And he also knew the truth that Oswald was not an informant."

"I THINK WE gave the Warren Commission everything. We gave them everything as far as I know. I don't know anything that was held back from the Warren Commission."

Army apparently didn't tell commission of Oswald's alias

SUNDAY MAR 19 1978

Kennedy, John F.

By EARL GOLZ

Army intelligence officers in San Antonio knew about one hour after Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested in Dallas on the day of the Kennedy assassination that he had used the alias "A. J. Hidell."

The 112th Intelligence Group at San Antonio, however, apparently turned over no material from its files to the Warren Commission, despite requests for all pre-assassination Defense Department records on Oswald.

FBI RECORDS recently declassified state Lt. Col. Robert E. Jones, operations officer for the 112th Group, by 3:15 p.m. on Nov. 22, 1963, had informed the FBI that Oswald used the Hidell alias when he was distributing pro-Cuban literature in New Orleans earlier that year. Oswald, a former Marine, was a proper subject for Navy, but not Army, intelligence files.

"Where Col. Jones got his information, I can't comment," said Col. Roy A. Pate, the Army intelligence officer then in charge in Dallas. "I just don't know. We didn't report anything like that because we didn't have that available."

Jones, who has retired from the Army, could not be located for comment. The 112th Intelligence Group which he headed is now defunct.

A check of Defense Department records last December by the Army Intelligence and Security Command "indicated no record of any Army intelligence investigative files existing" for Oswald or his alias, a command spokesman said.

Dallas Police Lt. Gerald Hill, one of the officers who arrested Oswald in the Texas Theater, said he understood the Texas Department of Public Safety's intelligence unit in Austin "had a file on Oswald" before the assassination.

"And in all probability Army intelligence got their information from DPS who had it probably 10 minutes after we got back here (to the Dallas Police Department) with him," Hill said.

DALLAS POLICE, however, had no way of knowing that Oswald had the Hidell alias

"... in all probability Army intelligence got their information from DPS who had it probably 10 minutes after we got back here with him (Oswald)."

when distributing pro-Castro literature in New Orleans because Oswald refused to acknowledge he used the name during three days of questioning by Dallas police.

A DPS spokesman said his agency's intelligence unit in Austin had a file on Oswald before the assassination with "a considerable number of newspaper clippings . . . But there really wasn't much hard intelligence in there, as I recall."

Hill and other officers arrested Oswald in the movie theater shortly before 2 p.m. and had driven him to the police station downtown by 2:15 p.m. On the way they discovered identification cards in his wallet under his real name and the Hidell alias, Hill said, but they referred to him only as "our suspect" over the police car radio.

After Oswald was brought to the station, police intelligence officer Bill Biggio was told about the two identifying names. Hill said he thinks Biggio gave this information "immediately" to DPS intelligence in Austin.

However, Biggio, who was directing police intelligence communications at the Fair Park office the day of the assassination, said, "We called down to Austin after we got the name Hidell, I believe, and they came back with that information."

Former Dallas police Capt. W. P. Gannaway, who commanded the special service bureau in which Biggio worked, said if Army intelligence in San Antonio or Dallas "had any information pertaining to Oswald, we didn't know about it." Neither did Capt. Jack Revill, in charge of Gannaway's intelligence section, know of any input about Oswald by Army intelligence.

REVILL SAID he gave a ride Nov. 22 to an Army intelligence officer from near the Texas School Book Depository where

Oswald earlier had allegedly shot President Kennedy.

Revill said he couldn't recall whether the officer's name was James W. Powell, identified by the Warren Commission as a member of the Army intelligence reserve. Powell was on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository when Oswald's rifle was found and later was trapped inside the building when police sealed it off.

Don Stringfellow, a fellow police intelligence officer working with Biggio at the Fair Park office, was named as the source of information in a secret cable the night of Nov. 22 from Army intelligence in Texas to the U.S. Strike Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. The cable said that information "obtained from Oswald revealed that he had defected to Cuba in 1959 and is a card-carrying member of the Communist Party."

THIS CABLE, containing false information, was sent to an Army-Air Force operation set up three years earlier to provide a quick-reacting strike force in case of enemy attack.

Gannaway and Revill said they could not recall Stringfellow giving such specific information to Army intelligence but Gannaway said it was "entirely possible because their agents were in our office nearly every day."

Pate, the Army intelligence commander in Dallas, said his group was getting information soon after the assassination from both the Dallas police and the FBI, but the cable using Stringfellow as a source "did not originate in Dallas because my only reporting channels in the Army were to the 112th in San Antonio."

Army intelligence, however, did not turn over an Oswald file to the Warren Commission and does not now have such a file.

Dallas, Texas
May 4, 1964

I, Will Hayden Griffin, make the following free and voluntary statement to J. Gordon Shanklin, Special Agent in Charge, and Kyle G. Clark, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, of the Dallas Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I have been asked if I have visited or talked with any of my friends or associates from Washington, D. C., in the past few weeks. In addition, I have been asked if, during this same period of time, I have ever mentioned the reason for my transfer from the New Orleans Division. I have also been asked if I ever made the statement that Lee Harvey Oswald, prior to his murder, was definitely a Federal Bureau of Investigation informant and that the Federal Bureau of Investigation files in Washington would prove this fact.

I have not visited with any of my friends or acquaintances from Washington, D. C., since November 22, 1963, and have not discussed the investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy with any of these people, officially or socially.

With respect to my transfer to Dallas, I have not

discussed with or told anyone the circumstances surrounding my transfer from the New Orleans Division as I feel this is an entirely private matter not subject to discussion.

With respect to the statement that Lee Harvey Oswald was an informant, I categorically deny ever having made such a statement to anyone, officially, unofficially, in the line of duty, or socially. I wish to emphasize I have never discussed the investigation of the assassination or the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald other than while on official business. I emphatically deny ever having made a statement concerning the possible informant status of Lee Harvey Oswald. Such a statement by me would have been impossible as I have absolutely no knowledge of, nor did I participate in, the investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald.

If such statements have been attributed to me, I desire to be furnished the identity of the individual making such an unfounded accusation. I also desire to be allowed to confront this individual so that I may have the opportunity to identify myself and categorically deny these baseless accusations which are pure figments of his imagination.

Witnesses:

Stanh Shurkin
FBI, Dallas, Texas, 5/4/64.

W. H. Black
FBI, Dallas, Texas, 5/4/64.

Will Hayden Duffin

, Special Agent in Charge,

, Assistant Special Agent in Charge,

5/4/64

AIRTEL

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

ATTENTION: SECTION CHIEF WILLIAM BRANIGAN

FROM: SAC, DALLAS (67-425)

**RE: LEE HARVEY OSWALD, aka
IS - R - CUBA**

PERSONNEL MATTER

Reference is made to telephone call from Mr. BRANIGAN and my teletype of 5/4/64.

A review of the personnel files of the Agents assigned to Dallas who were formerly assigned to the New Orleans Office indicates that

[REDACTED]

Agent GRIFFIN was interviewed by me and the ASAC and he vehemently denied the statements attributed to this alleged Agent. Transmitted herewith are original and one copy of a signed statement from SA GRIFFIN.

One other Agent, namely

[REDACTED]

In view of the fact that both Agents have denied making any such statement and desire to be confronted with the source of the information, it is not felt, in the absence of any more specific information, that any further action is justified.

SHANKLIN

5 - Bureau (Enc. 4)
3 - Dallas (67-425) (67-6901) (67-6519)
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