

New Batch of Documents

Oswald's Widow Targeted For FBI Eavesdropping

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

The FBI, at the request of the Warren Commission and with the approval of then Attorney General Robert Kennedy, put Marina Oswald under electronic surveillance early in 1964 at her home in Richardson, Texas.

FBI documents released yesterday disclosed the FBI used microphones and telephone taps to eavesdrop on the widow of Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of President John F. Kennedy, apparently at the request of the presidential commission.

A Feb. 24, 1964, memo from the late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, to Kennedy said, "We have received a request from the president's commission on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy for a technical surveillance regarding Marina Oswald. Accordingly, it is requested that you authorize installation of a technical surveillance at the Ford (Mr. and Mrs. Declan Ford of Dallas, friends of Mrs. Oswald) residence where Marina Oswald is currently residing or at any other address to which Marina Oswald may move in the future."

KENNEDY'S SIGNATURE approving the technical surveillance, a polite word for bugging or wiretapping, appears on the memorandum, which was dated the following day.

But an FBI memo in 1975 prompted by a New York Times disclosure that the bureau had tapped Mrs. Oswald's living quarters and phones here and in Texas, raises the suggestion that the Warren Commission did not ask specifically for a technical surveillance. The memo states that the surveillance was in response to the commission's request but raises doubts about precisely what the commission asked of Hoover and how much it knew about what the FBI was doing to keep track of Mrs. Oswald.

Apparently Hoover thought the commission might be trying to set him up by asking for coverage of Mrs. Oswald when she was to testify before the commission. Hoover wrote on the memo "I agree reluctantly because commission seems to be intensively alert to embarrass FBI. . ."

The 1975 FBI memo said no indica-

tion was found that the Russian-born widow's hotel room was bugged while she was in Washington to testify. The General Investigative Division of the bureau made this report in 1975 on the events of 11 years before: "On 2/24/64, Director J. Edgar Hoover prepared a memorandum relating to a conversation he had on that date with J. Lee Rankin, general counsel of the Warren Commission.

"MR. RANKIN expressed concern that Mrs. Oswald might run out on the commission before they had an opportunity to get her back for further testimony. He said he was wondering about a stakeout on her which would watch her and see who is visiting her for a while. According to the memorandum, Mr. Hoover suggested a telephone tap could be considered in addition to the stakeout since there would not be a trial (of Oswald)."

The 1975 memo continues that a memorandum was prepared for the attorney general stating that the FBI had received a request from the Warren Commission for a technical surveillance of Mrs. Oswald. Subsequently the FBI put telephone and microphone surveillance in Mrs. Oswald's new home in Richardson, Texas.

The next month the FBI had Inspector J.R. Malley inform Rankin that the technical surveillance, plus the lookout and physical surveillance on Mrs. Oswald, was undesirable from a legal point of view. That was because some of what was picked up involved her negotiations with her attorney, William McKenzie. It raised the possibility that the FBI could be criticized for this coverage, the memo noted dryly.

THE MEMO recommended that Rankin be advised the surveillance was being discontinued and that the FBI cut off the microphone surveillance of its own volition since it had never told the Warren Commission about the microphones.

Hoover approved all these recommendations, and the memo indicates at least part of the reason was because the FBI was not getting much, if any, significant information from its electronic or physical shadowing of Oswald's widow.

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