

TORONTO
STAR

L/24

WORLD NEWS

CIA muzzled JFK inquiry Senate says



JOHN F. KENNEDY
Sniper death still shrouded

By VAL SEARS
Star staff writer

WASHINGTON — The U.S. intelligence community was badly shaken today by charges from a Senate committee that it was guilty of a Watergate-style "cover-up" of relevant information about the assassination of President John Kennedy.

Both the CIA and the FBI withheld vital pieces about a possible Cuban connection in the "gigantic jigsaw puzzle" surrounding the 1963 Dallas tragedy, said committee investigator Senator Richard Schweiker upon release of the committee's final report.

"There is no longer any reason to have faith in (the Warren Commission's) picture of the Kennedy assassination," the senator said.

Among the missing pieces the committee feels should be investigated further were:

— Why did former CIA chief Allen Dulles, a member of the Warren Commission, never tell the commission of CIA assassination plots against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro?

— Why did the FBI break off its investigation of a possible Cuban connection in the Kennedy killing just 14 hours after it began, and narrow its focus to suspected assassin Lee Harvey Oswald alone?

— Why did a Cuban intelligence agent arrive in a private plane at the Mexico City airport the day of the Kennedy assassination and board a Cuba-bound airliner that had been delayed hours waiting for him?

— Why did the FBI office in Dallas destroy a threaten-

ing note from Oswald two hours after Oswald was shot dead by Jack Ruby?

The report concentrates on the possibility that the Kennedy murder was a Cuban reprisal for CIA plots against Castro and lambasts both the CIA and FBI for failing to lay what evidence it had of this theory before the Warren Commission.

"Why senior officials of the CIA and FBI permitted the investigation to go forward, in light of these deficiencies, and why they permitted the Warren Commission to reach its conclusions without all relevant information is still unclear," the report says.

"Certainly, concern with public reputation, problems of co-ordination between agencies, possible bureaucratic failure and embarrassment and the extreme compartmentation of knowledge of sensitive operations may have contributed to these shortcomings.

"But the possibility exists that senior officials in both agencies made conscious decisions not to disclose potentially important information."

Both Senator Frank Church, who headed the Senate committee, and Schweiker, who led the task force on the Kennedy investigation, agreed that before the Warren Commission investigation is reopened on a full-scale basis, a further investigation is necessary by a permanent Senate committee.

"We ought to know how high up the cover-up went," Schweiker said, "why it was undertaken and who was responsible."

17 agents disciplined

He would name only two men immediately involved in the cover-up: The late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and former CIA director Richard Helms, now U.S. ambassador to Iran.

The report reproduced letters and memos from Hoover indicating that from the beginning the aging FBI chief saw the special Warren Commission as a reflection on FBI competence to handle the assassination investigation.

After the commission was established, each time Hoover received word that a particular person was being considered for the commission staff, he asked "what the bureau had" on the individual. The report says that although certain derogatory information was produced it was never made public.

When the commission complimented the FBI on some aspect of its work, Hoover dismissed it as "empty."

Hoover was dismayed, however, to find that even after the bureau had evidence of Oswald's instability, prior to the assassination, he was not placed on the Security Index for special attention.

"Such gross incompetency cannot be overlooked nor administrative action postponed," he said, and 17 agents and inspectors were disciplined.

When an aide suggested that this disciplinary action not be mentioned to the Warren Commission because it would provide them with ammunition against the FBI, Hoover wrote: "I do not concur. We were wrong."

"We might as well lay down and let anybody and everybody kick us around and not defend nor retaliate," Hoover wrote.

Despite its concern that the Warren Commission was

never informed about CIA assassination plots against Castro, the Senate committee reported it "had seen no evidence that Fidel Castro or others in the Cuban government plotted President Kennedy's assassination in retaliation for U.S. operations against Cuba."

And it added: "The committee emphasizes that the report's discussion of investigative deficiencies and the failure of American intelligence agencies to inform the Warren Commission of certain information does not lead to the conclusion that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy."

The possibility of Cuban revenge for the activities of AMLASH, a Cuban whom the CIA recruited to kill Castro with a sniper rifle or a poison pen, was considered by a White House committee before the assassination.

Although the Senate report does not give his name, AMLASH was Rolando Cubela, a senior Cuban official and intimate of Castro recruited by the CIA in 1961.

Some believed, however, that he was a double agent.

Cubela's talk about killing Castro was reported to CIA headquarters in suburban Virginia on Sept. 7, 1963, nearly three months before Kennedy's death.

Several hours later, Castro held an impromptu news conference with Associated Press reporter Daniel Harkes at a party in Havana and warned:

"We are prepared to fight them and answer in kind. United States leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe."

Castro may strike

But the warning apparently failed to raise any serious apprehension in Washington.

Five days later, the National Security Council's special affairs group on Cuba agreed unanimously "there was a strong likelihood Castro would retaliate in some way against the rash of covert activity in Cuba."

But the group, which included Attorney-General Robert Kennedy, the president's brother, dismissed the possibility of attacks against U.S. officials in the United States as "unlikely."

Rather, such possible retaliatory actions as kidnapping or assassination of local officials, and jamming of U.S. radio stations was considered.

The Senate report cites a number of CIA reports that should have reached the Warren Commission.

One was a cable from the CIA Mexican station that a man identified only as "D" claimed to have heard Oswald being offered money to kill Kennedy. The report said: "A cable was dispatched to CIA stations in Europe and Canada stating that stations should carefully examine materials obtained from a specified sensitive source because of obvious significance of any scrap information which bears on the assassination issue."

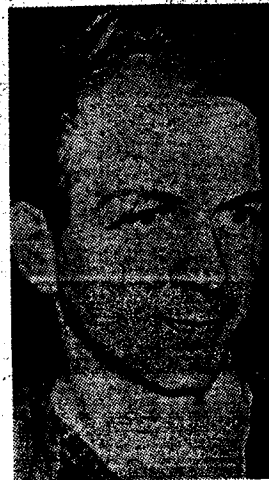
The CIA later concluded "D's" story was a fabrication.

The report also traces the movements of some Cuban intelligence agents around the time of the assassination.

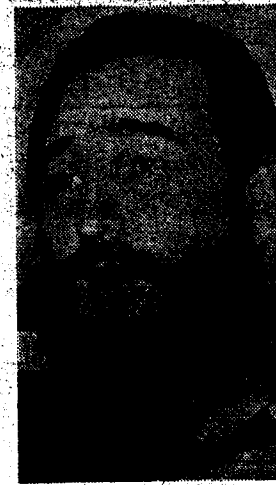
One agent, who boarded the delayed Cuban Airlines plane in Mexico City, did so without passing through customs and travelled in the cockpit so he wouldn't be seen by other passengers.

The CIA also learned of a Cuban-American who crossed the border from Texas into Mexico the day after the assassination and flew off to Cuba in an airliner the next day. He was the only passenger on the flight which had a crew of nine.

The Senate's report is the fifth and last in a series dealing with the American Intelligence community.



LEE HARVEY OSWALD
Lone target of probe



FIDEL CASTRO
His threat ignored