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Arms-running and JFK death

By Edward W. O'Brien
Newhouse News Service

WASHINGTON — In the early summer of 1963, two shipments of explosives were secretly hauled from Collinsville, Ill., to anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Miami and New Orleans.

Those arms may have been linked to the assassination of President Kennedy by Lee Harvey Oswald in November of that year, Senate investigators have concluded.

It is possible, the recent Senate intelligence committee report suggests, that knowledge of plans for guerrilla attacks on Cuba involving these and other weapons may have prompted Oswald or Castro government officials to decide that Kennedy should be killed.

It is certain, the committee declared, that a key FBI document on the weapons-running from Collinsville was withheld by the FBI from the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination.

FBI suppression of its information about the source, destination and purpose of the dynamite and other devices from Collinsville was cited by the committee as an important example of FBI efforts to protect its image by hiding facts about its alleged laxity in checking Oswald before the assassination.

The Senate investigators also established a link between the Collinsville dynamite, American underworld plots against Fidel Castro, and CIA attempts to kill Castro.

(Earlier this week, Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald, was reported to have secretly met Castro in 1963 to plot Kennedy's assassination and to offer guns in return for permission to use Cuba as a base for drug-running to

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Key FBI document withheld

Arms-running link in JFK case

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the United States.

(San Francisco attorney Melvin Belli, Ruby's attorney and friend, yesterday said that Ruby may have been involved in gun-running, but not in drugs and definitely not in the assassination. Belli said he didn't know whether Ruby actually made the trip, but denied that Ruby met Castro.

(Belli said the gun-running involved a mob-owned casino in Havana.)

The dynamite shipment to Miami in June 1963 was intended for a bombing raid on a Shell oil refinery in Cuba, the FBI document said. It was financed by a "former gambling operator" in Havana and was carried out in part by a Cuban exile identified in the Senate report merely as "A."

"A" also bought 2400 pounds of dynamite and 20 bomb casings in Collinsville that were to be dropped on Cuban targets, the document said.

The shadowy "A" turned up again in Washington government files — in 1965, long after the Warren Commission finished its investigation. "A" was reported to have knowledge of the CIA's 1963 contacts with "Amlash," the code name for a high Castro official, about killing Castro with a poison ballpoint pen or a telescopic rifle.

"A" claimed in 1965 that he and "Amlash" were lifelong friends, the Senate report said.

Some people doubt that "Amlash" was truly anti-Castro and suspect that he was a plant who kept Castro fully informed about the CIA plots.

Like many of its findings, the Senate report left unanswered many questions about the arms-running from Collinsville. But it did quote at length from an Oct. 3, 1963, memo from the FBI's Miami field office.

This memo was not furnished to the Warren Commission, the committee said, and "raised additional questions" about the purpose of Oswald's contacts with Carlos Bringuier, an anti-Castro Cuban exile in New Orleans who was training paramilitary forces for raids on Cuba.

The committee implied that the FBI wanted to divert the commission from digging too deeply into Oswald's highly suspicious activities before he killed Kennedy.

On Aug. 5, Oswald, who was living in New Orleans, offered his help to Bringuier, and on Aug. 7 he presented his Marine Corps training manual to Bringuief's group. But two days later Bringuier saw Oswald passing out pro-Castro literature and a fight broke out between the two.

The Senate report said Bringuier "believed Oswald was attempting to infiltrate the anti-Castro movement in order to report its activities to pro-Castro forces."

The anti-Castro activities included the plans for bombing raids with the Collinsville explosives, the report said.

According to the withheld FBI document, an informant told the agency on June 14, 1963, that "B" of Collinsville, Ill., had "recently arrived in Miami in a Ford stationwagon with a load of arms for sale. American adventurers and mercenaries (names deleted) took 'B' around to meet the different Cuban exile leaders in Miami."

The intended raid was thwarted when customs agents seized two Beechcraft airplanes near Miami and "a quantity of explosives" at an airfield near Miami on June 15, 1963.

"A" and an American were detained but not arrested.

On July 31, 1963, FBI agents raided a home near New Orleans and seized the 2400 pounds of dynamite and 20 bomb casings.

According to the FBI document, the arms were located on property owned by the brother of the former operator of a Havana gambling casino. The dynamite was purchased at Collinsville by "B" for "A," who transported the dynamite to New Orleans in a rented trailer, the FBI said.

While the two planned attacks were halted by the arms seizures, many other guerrilla assaults in Cuba proceeded, the report said.

In that period, Oswald was in contact with pro-Castro organizations in New Orleans as well as the anti-Castro groups, who were operating a guerrilla training camp outside New Orleans.

On Sept. 7, 1963, Castro granted an unexpected and impromptu interview with an Associated Press reporter and warned that any U.S. leaders aiding in terrorist plants to eliminate Cuban leaders would themselves not be safe.