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CIA, FBI in Assassination Plots

WASHINGTON — There has been secret, sworn testimony that the CIA and FBI have plotted occasionally to murder enemy agents in this country.

We have been unable to document a single murder case. But at least two witnesses have testified that they were asked by the CIA or FBI to commit murder.

THE SENATE Intelligence Committee has also obtained vouchers, which prove exotic assassination weapons have been sold to U.S. agencies. Senate investigators have evidence, furthermore, that assassination teams were trained at secret sites somewhere in southeastern United States. Both government and contract employees were taught how to use James Bond-style assassination weapons.

CIA employees have acknowledged to us that assassination plots have been discussed in their presence. The plotters were squeamish, said one source, about using the words "assassination" and "murder." They spoke more delicately about "eliminating" or "getting rid" of a troublesome Communist agent. But there was no question, insisted the source, that they were talking about murder.

Another source stressed that a Soviet

spy or double agent might be marked for murder only if he were considered "a tremendous threat" to U.S. interests. Then the CIA wouldn't use one of its own agents but would recruit an outsider "to do the job," the source said.

NORMALLY, THE CIA would try, he said, to maneuver the victim out of the country before arranging his disappearance. But one CIA source, with only second-hand knowledge of the case, told of a spy who was thrown off a New York City bridge. A cooperative police lieutenant allegedly submitted a suicide report on the victim. We have been unable, however, to confirm the incident.

In secret testimony before the Rockefeller Commission, Frank Sturgis of the Watergate break-in squad confessed that he had once been asked to commit a murder for the CIA in the Miami area.

He discussed with a CIA agent, Sturgis testified, how to dispose of the body. One plan was to dump it into shark-infested waters near the Bahamas. They also considered ditching the body in the Everglades swamp, Sturgis swore.

THE AGENT promised to identify the victim at a subsequent meeting. But, according to Sturgis' account, he began to

have misgivings. He wanted to be sure the agent wasn't trying to use him to kill a personal enemy.

So at the second meeting, Sturgis insisted that the assassination order would have to be confirmed by a CIA staff officer. That was the last, testified Sturgis, he heard of the scheme. The CIA has denied having anything to do with domestic murder plots.

At a secret Senate hearing, meanwhile, an FBI informant in Tampa, Joseph Burton, testified that his FBI contact wanted him to do away with an alleged revolutionary.

THE BIZARRE plot called for Burton to conspire with the radical, Richard Arvedon, to kidnap a Federal judge. Then Burton would gun down Arvedon on the judge's property, making it look as if a revolutionary plot had backfired, Burton testified.

He identified his FBI contact as agent Robert Heibel, who allegedly told him that Washington had approved the plan to kill Arvedon. This is vigorously denied by the FBI, which denounced as "spurious" the "innumerable allegations" Burton has made against the FBI.

Arvedon's attorneys, Judith Petersen



BURTON

Claims Involvement

of Tampa and David Rosenberg of Cambridge, Mass., told us: "We have been aware for some time that both the FBI and the Justice Department have had knowledge of (the assassination plot).

"From sworn affidavits we have seen, we believe the plot to kill Arvedon existed. We do not know the dimension or the scope of what was involved, whether wiretapping or other surveillance was utilized and how long the plot was in effect, but we are making efforts to determine the answer on these questions."