

CBS REPORTS INQUIRY
"The American Assassins"

Part II

Lee Harvey Oswald and John F. Kennedy

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With CBS News Correspondent Dan Rather

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ANNOUNCER: This is a CBS REPORTS INQUIRY: "The American Assassins". Here is CBS News Correspondent Dan Rather.

DAN RATHER: Good evening.

Twelve years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, only 15% of the American people believe the official verdict of the Warren Commission - that he was the victim of a single assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone.

Last night, in the first of this series of broadcasts about the controversy surrounding the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King, and the attempt on the life of Governor George Wallace, CBS News considered and tried to find reasonable answers to some of the major questions that have been raised about the John Kennedy murder. We concluded, through an independent examination by Dr. James Weston of x-rays and photographs from the Kennedy autopsy, that the President was struck by only two shots, both from the rear. Scientists at Itek Corporation, the nation's leading film analysts, examined Abraham Zapruder's film of the assassination. They found evidence that Governor John Connally's body appeared to be reacting to a bullet strike only a third of a second or less after the first shot hit President Kennedy. This was new supporting evidence for the controversial single bullet theory; no proof, but the possibility established. Our conclusion was this: it seems impossible to - quote - "prove" that all the shots fired that day in Dallas came from a single gun in a single spot, but there is less evidence to support any theory to the contrary. The best available evidence indicates that Lee Harvey Oswald did indeed shoot President Kennedy, and that Oswald probably was the only gunman.

But that doesn't close the door on two other major questions in the case: Was there a conspiracy? And was there a cover-up?

If there were a conspiracy, it most likely would have taken one of two forms: either that other gunmen fired at the President; or that Oswald was sole triggerman for behind-the-scenes manipulators. Contrary to popular impression, the Warren Commission itself left this door open just a crack. It said only that the Commission could find no evidence that others were involved. As to whom Oswald might have been a front man, or even patsy, for, well, theories of conspiracy abound. They range from plots hatched by embittered survivors of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba to Cuban Communists determined to avenge the invasion to Mafia leaders angered by Justice Department crackdowns or the loss of their casinos in Havana to right-wing CIA men who feared that Kennedy might pull American troops out of Vietnam.

The Cuban connection is the strongest, and concern that Kennedy might have been killed in retaliation for CIA attempts on the life of Fidel Castro had some highly respectable adherents, including John Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson.

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON: I can't honestly say that I've ever been completely relieved of the fact that there might have been international connections.

WALTER CRONKITE: You mean you still feel that there might-- might have been?

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Well, I have not completely discounted it.

RATHER: We'll have more on Johnson's beliefs later. In addition to the question of whether Government agencies were involved in the crime itself is the question of whether they covered up knowledge about it and didn't tell the Warren Commission the whole truth. Oswald's connections with the CIA and the FBI and with Cuba groups are entwined with his activities in years prior to the assassination.

Lee Harvey Oswald was born in New Orleans in 1939, two months after the death of his father. He lived with his mother, Marguerite, at various places in the South, and for a time in New York City. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at Fort Worth, Texas, six days after his 17th birthday. He served 15 months overseas, most of it in Japan, at the Atsugi Air Base, from which U-2 flights were launched to spy on China. The Warren Report said Oswald did not have access to U-2 material, but one of his officers, John Donovan, says otherwise.

JOHN DONOVAN: Lee was a radar man, and he surveilled for aircraft both known and unknown. He also was a plotter, meaning he plotted the positions of the aircraft he saw or one of his counterparts saw.

RATHER: Lay out for me what information he could have had that the Soviets would have been interested in at the time he went to the Soviet Union.

DONOVAN: In relation to the U-2?

RATHER: In relation to the U-2.

DONOVAN: We did pick it up. You could see it on our altimeter. It went to altitudes well beyond what we were capable of detecting. Lee, if he had any insight at all, he could have certainly put two and two together. He-- He would have known that he had a high-flying aircraft, and he did know that - as we all did.

RATHER: After it became known that Lee Oswald had defected to the Soviet Union, were procedures changed, codes changed, anything changed in the way you did business?

DONOVAN: There had to be. Once it was discerned that he was-- he had defected, Dan, you just have to change that stuff when it has been compromised.

RATHER: What kind of classification would Oswald have to do the kind of work that he was doing?

DONOVAN: He would had to have had a minimum of "Secret", because you do not allow anyone in the door who does not have a "Secret" clearance.

RATHER: While in the Marine Corps, Oswald learned to speak and read Russian. He claimed he taught himself. Some critics of the Warren Report believe Oswald was trained as a spy while in the Marine Corps, and was taught the language in anticipation of being sent to Russia. William Colby, the present Director of the CIA, says that is not true.

Director Colby, did the CIA recruit Lee Harvey Oswald when he was in the Marines and send him to Russia?

WILLIAM COLBY [Director, Central Intelligence Agency]: No, we had no contact with Mr. Oswald.

RATHER: No contact before he went to the Soviet Union?

COLBY: No contact with him before he went to the Soviet Union, and no contact with him after he returned from the Soviet Union. No contact with him while he was in the Soviet Union.

RATHER: Oswald did leave the service in an unusual manner: he asked for a discharge a few months before his scheduled release, saying that his mother was ill and without work, and he wanted to help her. But instead of doing that, he returned to Fort Worth, remained home only a few days, and then sailed off on a freighter bound for France. He was enroute to Moscow.

Oswald's mother told former CBS Dallas affiliate news director Eddie Barker that she has always believed her son was an agent for the CIA.

MRS. MARGUERITE OSWALD: This is what they tell the American people, they go into great detail - that Lee Harvey Oswald got out of the Marine Corps three months ahead of time because his mother had an accident (which was the truth, and it all went through the Red Cross legitimately), and when he came home he stayed with his mother three days (we sort of know that story), and then he left for Russia. Now, how can Lee Harvey Oswald get out of the Marine Corps three months ahead of time on a dire need discharge, and at the same time be issued a passport to travel?

RATHER: Oswald travelled to Moscow via London and Helsinki. Two weeks after arriving, on a Saturday afternoon he appeared at the United States Embassy and told Consul Richard Snyder that he wanted to renounce his citizenship.

CONSUL RICHARD SNYDER: I recall him being brought into the office by-- by the receptionist, and his saying, you know, something to the effect, "I've-- I've come to-- to give up my American passport and renounce my citizenship." He said, as I can recall, "I am a Marxist, and I intend to become a citizen of the Soviet Union."

RATHER: Was it your impression that he had been in touch with Soviet authorities before he came to see you?

SNYDER: Oh, yes, yes. He made that clear. He said he - one way or another, probably in several ways - but he had applied for Soviet citizenship.

RATHER: Here's a man who's been in the Marine Corps, worked at an important base in Japan. Didn't that raise a flag of concern in your mind or in someone's mind?

SNYDER: Yes, yes it did. He did say that he had information from his Marine Corps service which-- and that he intended to make available to the Soviet authorities - everything that he knew, everything that he had learned.

RATHER: Did anyone show a concern about it?

SNYDER: Well, there's no question in my mind that the-- that the Department back here passed it on to the FBI and other-- and the-- and the military authority. I mean, that-- that's routine.

RATHER: Any question in your mind that the person you saw was Lee Harvey Oswald? You've seen photographs of him since then.

SNYDER: Oh, yes. No-- No question.

RATHER: No question?

SNYDER: No, no question at all. The-- The person I saw first and the person I saw last was one and the same - Lee Harvey Oswald. Yeah. Absolutely no question in my mind on that.

RATHER: And-- No question in your mind?

SNYDER: No.

RATHER: At the time of the murder, John McCone, then CIA Director, swore under oath that the Agency had no connection with Oswald. But we know now they had a file on this former Marine who had gone to the Embassy and announced that he was going to give military secrets to the Russians. CIA Director Colby told CBS News that his Agency intercepted Oswald's mail going both ways.

In 1960, the Russians sent Oswald to Minsk, where he worked in a radio factory. The following year - in February, 1961 - he again contacted the American Embassy in Moscow, this time seeking approval to return to the United States. In the meantime, he had met and married a 19-year-old Russian girl, Marina Nikolaevna Prusakova, a pharmacist.

Mr. Snyder describes Oswald's reappearance at the Embassy.

What happened when he came back to the Embassy in 1961?

SNYDER: He was considerably subdued at that point, and he said, in effect, "I-- I've learned my lesson. I learned the lesson the hard way."

RATHER: In 1962, a daughter was born to the Oswalds, and by June they had received American and Russian permission to leave. They were given a loan of \$435.71 by the State Department for travel expenses. Two weeks later, they arrived at Fort Worth.

Did anyone with the CIA debrief Oswald when he returned to this country?

WILLIAM COLBY: No, he-- the CIA did not debrief him. I think there are some unclassified or declassified reports of FBI debriefings, but the CIA did not debrief him.

RATHER: I say to you, as I have before, that that's difficult for many people - and in all candor, difficult for me - to believe that a young man in the Marines gets out of the Marines, goes to the Soviet Union, marries a Russian woman, moves back to this country, comes back into the society, and it is difficult to believe that the CIA did not, under some circumstances, debrief him.

COLBY: Right. Well, I think-- I-- I understand your-- your doubt on this question. Think you have to look at the circumstances. Mr. Oswald was what can be called a defector to the Soviet Union, and we did have a report on Mr. Oswald which the FBI gave to us about it. We also received some material from the Embassy in Moscow about Mr. Oswald when he tried to disclaim his citizenship. We had a little file, therefore, on Mr. Oswald, which consisted of the two reports from the FBI, the two reports from the Embassy in Moscow, and one report from the Department of Navy, the Marines, I think it was, that-- indicating some exchange between them. That's all we had, until roughly October of 1963.

RATHER: Mr. Colby indicated to me that the Agency might have passed up Oswald because the FBI had interviewed him. John Fain, an FBI agent, talked to Oswald twice in Fort Worth, asking him, Fain said, to let the Bureau know if he was contacted in any way by Russian agents. Victor Marchetti, author of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, who worked with the Agency for 14 years, believes there is still more the public doesn't know about Oswald and the CIA.

John McCone, then the CIA Director, swore to the Warren Commission that the Agency had never communicated with Oswald in any way, directly or indirectly. Do you think this eliminates the possibility that the Agency debriefed Oswald on his return from the Soviet Union, or that he was in some other way connected or contacted with the CIA?

VICTOR MARCHETTI: I think John McCone should know better than to ever make such a blanket statement with regard to the CIA, after having been Director of that Agency. I would think he would want to add to that "to my knowledge". They could very well have dealt with him without McCone ever being informed. I think that the CIA knows more about the circumstances surrounding the Kennedy assassination that have not yet been made public about their relationships with Oswald, and that the Agency has covered up. I'm going on the assumption that the CIA had nothing to do with the Kennedy assassination. I cannot believe, to this day, that the CIA, as an institution, the people running the CIA that I knew, would have been party to any sort of a crime of this sort: murdering a President of the United States. This doesn't mean that there may not have been individuals, either acting on their own or-- or who were only remotely connected with the Agency in some capacity as a contract agent, or formerly a contract agent, who may have been involved.

RATHER: In June, 1963, Oswald applied for a new passport in New Orleans, indicating he wanted to visit Cuba and, again, Russia. Despite his visit to Russia and his attempt to renounce his citizenship there, Oswald this time got another passport in one day. The legal section of the Passport Office of the State Department says now that getting such quick treatment in an office such as New Orleans is not unusual; but there was apparently a slip-up, which the State Department insists today was simply a clerical error. Oswald's previous activities should have caused his name to be flagged in the files to raise questions about his eligibility for another passport. Instead, the new passport was simply handed to him. Many people insist that he must have had secret assistance from the CIA to get that passport. The CIA denies it.

In September, 1963, Oswald is supposed to have travelled by bus to Mexico City, where he visited the Cuban and Russian Embassies, seeking visas. The Cubans, it is said, refused to give him anything, apparently after checking with the Russians. After the assassination, the Warren Commission asked the CIA for anything they had on Oswald. What the staff received from the CIA was this photograph of a man the Agency tentatively identified as Lee Oswald going into the Cuban Embassy. It obviously is not Oswald. Director Colby.

During his visit to Mexico in September, 1963, you had Oswald under surveillance at both the Russian and Cuban Embassies?

WILLIAM COLBY: No, no, no. We did not have him under surveillance. We became aware of a contact he made with each of those Embassies.

RATHER: Did you make voice recordings of him?

COLBY: I-- I think there were, yes.

RATHER: Why was the Warren Commission given a photograph of another man at the Cuban Embassy, wrongly identified as Lee Harvey Oswald?

COLBY: Well, it wasn't wrongly identified as Lee Harvey Oswald. We knew that he was in these Embassies at a certain day. And we looked at the capability we had to photograph certain things in that-- in the city; and we looked at-- through the photographs, hoping that we could find perhaps a photograph of him as he came in or went out of one of these Embassies. We did focus on one, which we thought might be him, and this was flown up to Dallas, labelled an unidentified white male. That's-- That was the identification of it. But it was flown up in case it could be helpful at that time. But there was not a photograph wrongly labelled. It turned out not to be Mr. Oswald, clearly; and we to this day don't know who he is.

RATHER: Who, critics ask, is this man? Is he a CIA agent posing as Oswald? Where is the photograph of Oswald? David Phillips, who was with the CIA in Mexico City then, and is now retired from the Agency.

Why did you watch Americans going in and out of the Soviet and Cuban missions?

DAVID PHILLIPS: We didn't watch Americans going in and out. We watched these missions on our radar screen, and every once in a while there would be a blip, and the blip would turn out to be an American.

RATHER: You know he was at the Cuban Embassy?

PHILLIPS: I do.

RATHER: No doubt in your mind about that?

PHILLIPS: There's no question in my mind.

RATHER: You believe he was at the Soviet Embassy?

PHILLIPS: I'm not sure about that. I'm-- I'm positive that he made contact with them. They all thought he was so strange that they didn't want to have anything to do with him, and they rebuffed him and told him that they were not interested.

RATHER: How certain are you of this?

PHILLIPS: I'm positive. I know there are a lot of stories about photographs of Lee Harvey Oswald taken in Mexico. None were taken. There were no photographs of Lee Harvey Oswald.

RATHER: What about the accusation that is made flatly sometimes that the pictures of Oswald were destroyed?

PHILLIPS: Absolutely untrue. I was there, and I know.

RATHER: So, that is what we know - all we know - about Lee Oswald and the Central Intelligence Agency. Not much. Despite the official denials which have been consistent for 12 years, it remains very difficult to believe that the CIA did not have more to do with Oswald than the Agency ever has admitted. The Warren Commission decided it could not ascribe any single motive or group of motives to Oswald; they thought his principal motive may have been alienation from, and hatred for, a society in which he could not find a meaningful place. In protest, they thought, he decided to kill the President. Their conclusion made no mention whatever of a possible motive in revenge for the CIA attacks on Castro, revenge possibly inspired by Cuba or by Oswald's own sympathy for the Castro cause. Not surprising, since the Commission never was told about the attempts on Castro. If the CIA had done its duty and told the Commission about those attempts, far more might now be known about why Oswald, and how Oswald, became involved in this crime.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

RATHER: What about the FBI and Oswald? It has been suggested that Oswald might have been a secret agent in Russia working, not for the CIA, but for the FBI. It is well-known that those two agencies, plus the DIA (Defense Department intelligence), vie for positions in the intelligence world, and that each is jealous of its turf. FBI agents often appear in foreign capitals and U.S. Embassies, going about whatever is their business.

In any event, we know that Oswald was, probably correctly and routinely, interviewed by the FBI on his return; but he had a lot more to do with the Bureau than just that. In April, 1963, Oswald was working in New Orleans, while Marina and their child were living with a friend, Ruth Paine, in Irving, a suburb of Dallas. It was in New Orleans during the summer of 1963 that Oswald resurfaced as a controversial figure, and he did this at both extremes of the political spectrum.

For a couple of months, he worked here at Reily and Company on the top floor, oiling its coffee roasting machinery. But soon he began to slip away during working hours, spending his time at the Crescent City Garage next door, reading gun magazines, discussing weapons with the garage's owner. On July 19th, 1963, Oswald was fired. Then on August 5th, he entered this store on Decatur Street in New Orleans, offering his military skills to an anti-Castro organization. He spoke to the owner, Carlos Bringuers, a Cuban refugee, a leader in the New Orleans anti-Castro movement. He returned the following day with his *Guidebook for Marines* to verify his military background and competency. Then three days later, Oswald's politics appeared to take a swing in the opposite direction. He was observed here on Canal Street handing out pro-Castro leaflets. Bringuers confronted him. The police arrived. Oswald's first arrest followed.

CARLOS BRINGUIERS: I was surprised to find out that the man-- with the sign in the front telling "Viva Fidel" and "Hands Off Cuba" was this same man, Lee Harvey Oswald, who four days before had been in my store asking to have an opportunity to train Cubans to fight against Castro.

RATHER: That arrest seemed to be routine. The charge: disturbing the peace. But then something curious occurred: Oswald requested to see an FBI agent. Special agent John Quigley came to see him, and interviewed Oswald at length. Oswald pleaded guilty to the charge against him. He paid a \$10 fine, and left jail. A few days later, he was back handing out pro-Castro leaflets, this time with another man whom he had hired to assist him. He was a celebrity of sorts, receiving television coverage, being interviewed about politics and foreign affairs.

QUESTION: You're a Marxist?

LEE OSWALD: Well, I have studied Marxist philosophy, yes, sir, and also other philosophers.

QUESTION: But are you a Marxist? I think you did admit on an earlier radio interview that you-- that you consider yourself a Marxist.

OSWALD: Well, I would very definitely say that I am-- I am a Marxist, that is correct. But that-- that does not mean, however, that I am a-- a Communist.

QUESTION: What is the difference between the two?

OSWALD: Well, there's a great deal of difference. Several American parties and several countries are based on Marxism, such as Guyana, Ghana. Certain countries have characteristics of a socialist system, such as Great Britain with its socialized medicine. These, then, are the differences between an outright Communist country and countries which adhere to leftist or Marxist principles.

QUESTION: In your work with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, what are you advocating?

OSWALD: We advocate restoration of diplomatic, trade and tourist relations with Cuba.

RATHER: On August 21st, a radio debate on Cuba took place at WDSU radio. Among the participants were Oswald, Bringuiers, and Edward Butler, Executive Director of the Information Council of the Americas, a self-styled anti-Communist organization headquartered in New Orleans. Edward Butler is still the acting head of that anti-Communist organization.

EDWARD BUTLER: When I met Oswald, he was very, very articulate, very much together, and very, very competent as a propagandist. It kind of goes against the public image that most people have of Oswald as a-- a very inarticulate, incapable kind of non compos mentis character. He wasn't that at all. He knew what he was saying and knew what he was doing, and did it quite well, for a 24-year-old.

RATHER: But Oswald seems to have had other links besides the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, whose New Orleans Chairman and sole member he then was. The owner of the Habana Bar, Orest Pena, told Bruce Hall that he has a different version of Oswald than the one Edward Butler retains.

BRUCE HALL: Did any of the people you saw having-- meeting with Lee Harvey Oswald, were any of these FBI agents?

OREST PENA: Yes.

HALL: Who?

PENA: Warren C. deBrueys.

HALL: Warren deBrueys is an FBI agent, and you saw him with Lee Harvey Oswald?

PENA: Yes, I knew Warren C. deBrueys very well, because I used to work for him.

HALL: What did you do with Warren deBrueys?

PENA: I was an informer for the FBI about the people in New Orleans.

HALL: What happened when the FBI agent, whom you said you had seen with Lee Harvey Oswald, who was also the man you were the informant for, what happened when he came to the bar before you went to the Warren Commission?

PENA: About ten days before I came-- went to the-- to testify at the Warren Commission, could be less than ten days, and he came and he called me from behind the bar and said he wanted to talk to me. He called me on the table. He told me he was very, very nervous, very nervous; and he told me, "If you ever talk anything about me, I will get rid-- rid of your ass." Just in those words.

RATHER: Warren C. deBrueys is now the special agent in charge of the FBI office in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He talked to Bruce Hall.

HALL: Did you know Orest Pena, who was the operator of the Habana Bar in New Orleans?

WARREN C. DeBRUEYS: Yes.

HALL: What was your relationship with him?

DeBRUEYS: He was an individual that I recall having contacted, perhaps as many as a dozen times, I suppose, during the early 1960's, prior to the assassination of President Kennedy.

HALL: Orest Pena says that he was, in the literal sense, an informer for the FBI, that he knew you well, because you were his contact man with the FBI; and that on numerous occasions, he saw you and Lee Harvey Oswald together, and in particular, in a Greek restaurant in New Orleans in the French Quarter. What is your response to that?

DeBRUEYS: My response to that is he is wrong in his statements. I have never seen Lee Harvey Oswald at any time in my life personally, or-- nor have I talked to him by telephone knowingly. I've had absolutely no contact, no personal knowledge, first-hand contact with Lee Harvey Oswald, nor do I have any secondary contact with him.

HALL: Was Lee Harvey Oswald an informant of the FBI?

DeBRUEYS: He was not my informant, and I have no information whatsoever that he had ever been an informant for the FBI.

HALL: Did you ever use the phrase "to get your ass", or threaten Orest Pena in any way in connection with his Warren Commission testimony?

DeBRUEYS: I certainly don't recall ever having made that statement to Orest Pena. My recollection is that I treated him with a great deal of patience and with due respect. There would have been no reason whatsoever for me to have made such a statement.

RATHER: William Walter was an FBI security code clerk in the New Orleans office of the FBI from 1961 until 1966. He told me about Oswald and the FBI.

Do you think Oswald was, by your definition, and by the Bureau's definition, an informant?

WILLIAM WALTER: Yes, I'm sure he was.

RATHER: And you are certain, on the basis of what you did in the normal course of your duties, that Oswald's name was on the New Orleans FBI office Security Index File?

WALTER: I'm positive.

DeBRUEYS: I would say that's a falsehood. Had he been an informant, and had I had him as a subject of my investigation, it would have been logical that I would have been aware of that fact, because of cross-references in the File, and for many other reasons. And I say that is a falsehood.

HALL: Mr. Walters also says that Oswald's name was on the Security Index File. Could Oswald's name have been on the Security Index File, and what was the Security Index File?

DeBRUEYS: I have no idea at this time whether his name was on any type of special index. And as relates to what you term a "Security Index File", I'd rather not get into the discussion of administrative techniques employed within the office, and respectfully decline to answer that question.

RATHER: On November 1st, 1963, FBI agent James P. Hosty visited the Paine home seeking Oswald's whereabouts. Hosty's name and telephone number were found in Oswald's notebook when he was arrested after the Kennedy murder. The FBI failed to tell the Warren Commission that after Hosty's visit to Marina Oswald, Oswald went to the FBI office in Dallas and left a note threatening to blow up that office and Dallas police headquarters if the FBI did not stop bothering Oswald's wife. That is what the FBI now acknowledges was in the note. The Bureau says the note has been destroyed. The Warren Commission was told nothing about that note. The note apparently failed to alert the FBI to any special precautions in connection with the forthcoming Presidential visit, and the FBI did not tell the Secret Service about that note.

James Adams, Associate Deputy Director of the FBI, told the House Judiciary Committee about the matter on October 1st.

JAMES ADAMS: We learned that the agent for whom the note was intended took no action, other than to place it in his work box, where it continued to reside on the day of the assassination.

RATHER: But on November 24th, within hours after Lee Harvey Oswald had been shot to death, agent Hosty said he was sent for by the head of the Dallas FBI office, Gordon Shanklin.

ADAMS: He claimed that upon arriving in the Special Agent in Charge's office, he was instructed by the Special Agent in Charge to destroy both the note and the memorandum regarding it that he had given the Special Agent in Charge on the night of November 22. The agent has told us that he complied with these instructions and destroyed the note and the memorandum.

RATHER: FBI agent Hosty is now assigned to the Bureau in Kansas City. He declined, repeatedly, to be interviewed for this broadcast. And there was another FBI cover-up in Dallas - at least one other known. The then Police Chief, Jesse Curry, told reporters the night of the assassination that the FBI had prior knowledge about Oswald.

QUESTION: With this man's apparent subversive background, was there any surveillance-- were police aware of his presence in Dallas?

JESSE CURRY: We and the Police Department here did not know he was in Dallas. I understand the FBI did know that he was in Dallas.

QUESTION: Chief, do you normally-- Chief--

QUESTION: . . .normal practice for the FBI to inform the police, the municipal police?

CURRY: Yes.

QUESTION: Chief, do you have--?

CURRY: We did not have--

QUESTION: You were not informed?

CURRY: We had not been informed of this man.

RATHER: But then, at the request of Gordon Shanklin, the Agent in Charge at Dallas, Curry retracted that statement, saying that he did not know of this - quote - "of my own knowledge." To Morton Dean, Mr. Curry told why that happened.

CURRY: Yeah, I had a phone call very shortly thereafter, and it was from Shanklin, the--

DEAN: Head of the FBI bureau in Dallas?

CURRY: In Dallas, yes. And he seemed very upset, and he told me, or asked me, to go and make a statement retracting my statement that-- that the FBI knew that-- that Oswald was in Dallas. And I said, "Well, Shanklin, for your-- for you I will make the statement that, to my personal knowledge, he was not here, but that's as far as I will go. I will not retract the statement." I interpreted it this way: that the FBI is very jealous of its reputation, and J. Edgar Hoover was fanatic about the reputation of the FBI and didn't like to-- to admit that they made any kind of mistakes.

RATHER: We'll be back with more about Oswald and the FBI after this message.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

RATHER: A most serious allegation concerning the FBI - which does not necessarily have anything to do with Oswald - is that a teletype message was sent out of headquarters in Washington five days before the assassination to FBI offices in Mobile, New Orleans and Dallas warning that an attempt might be made to murder President Kennedy in Dallas on November 22nd. That allegation comes from William Walter. He was an employee of the FBI from 1961 to 1966. He was on overnight duty the night of November 17th. I talked to Mr. Walter in Louisiana, where he is now a bank officer.

WILLIAM WALTER: Well, on November the 17th - I guess that's five days before the 22nd - I was on duty at the FBI office in New Orleans from twelve midnight until eight in the morning, and that was, as I remember it, a Sunday morning. I received a teletype from FBI Headquarters, Washington. It was a normal movement teletype indicating that the President was going to be in Dallas on the 22nd, and that the FBI in Washington had information that an attempt would be made on President Kennedy's life in Dallas.

RATHER: You're sure of this?

WALTER: I'm positive of that. I have notes that I took back in 1963 that has the exact text of that teletype. There's one page to the teletype, and it's directed to the all-- to all SAC's, meaning all Special Agent in Charges, from the Director, and the title or the caption of the teletype is "Threat to Assassinate President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, November 22-23, 1963, Miscellaneous Information Concerning". And the body of the teletype, it says: "Information has been received by the Bureau that a militant revolutionary group may attempt to assassinate President Kennedy on his proposed trip to Dallas, Texas, November 22-23, 1963. All receiving offices should immediately contact all CI's, PCI's logical racial and hate group informants, and determine if any basis for this threat."

RATHER: What do those initials in the bottom part of the body of the teletype mean - CI's, PCI's?

WALTER: Well, that's Criminal Informants, Possible Criminal Informants; and of course, logical hate and racial group activities in your area.

RATHER: And then what did you do?

WALTER: I contacted the Special Agent in Charge of the New Orleans office, which was Harry Maynard.

RATHER: Present leadership of the-- of the FBI says they can't find any record of this teletype. Do you believe that?

WALTER: No, I-- I don't believe that.

RATHER: J. Edgar Hoover's successor, Clarence Kelley, told us that the FBI has been unable to find any copy of the teletype message Walter describes, or any other evidence that such a teletype existed at any time. The FBI does not flatly deny that any such teletype ever was sent.

The FBI did receive a warning about a possible assassination plot 13 days before the visit to Dallas. That threat was made in a conversation between a Florida police informer and a white supremacist organizing cells throughout the South. The conversation was recorded by the Miami Police Department, but the threat did not specifically refer to the President's upcoming visit to Florida. At the time, now Judge Seymour Gelber was with the Florida Attorney General's office. He told Bruce Hall what happened.

JUDGE SEYMOUR GELBER: They talked about killing the President in a Southern city. They discussed a high-powered rifle. They talked about shooting him from a high vantage point. They talked about the kind of rifle that could be broken down and brought inside a building. And all of the discussion that they were involved in actually and accurately described the manner in which the President eventually was assassinated one week later. We heard this, and we accepted this as a possibility - that this might be a plan that they intended to carry out.

BRUCE HALL: When this material came to your attention, what was done with it?

JUDGE GELBER: The information was immediately transmitted to the FBI and to the Secret Service for whatever action they might deem appropriate.

RATHER: The FBI says Secret Service offices in Miami and Washington were notified of this particular threat. The Secret Service, by law, has primary responsibility for protection of Presidents. The FBI says it was not requested to take any other action concerning the Florida tip.

The FBI has no excuse or explanation for the destruction of Oswald's threatening note in Dallas. Neither the Secret Service nor the Warren Commission nor anyone else was told about that until the information was forced out of the Bureau this year. As a result, it is a matter of record that, in this instance, at least, FBI officials told falsehoods to the Warren Commission. It is also a matter of record that FBI officials violated their own rules which required that Oswald's visit and the text of his note be recorded in the files of the Dallas office, and that they be reported to FBI headquarters to be passed on to the Secret Service. In the course of our own investigation, CBS News has been told repeatedly by Government sources that there remains much the public does not know about how extensively the FBI was connected with Oswald. We have not been able to confirm that. Our conclusion is that the only chance for establishing the complete story of the FBI and Oswald is with a full Congressional investigation. Senator Schweiker's group currently has a preliminary probe underway into the question of an FBI cover-up. There is no solid evidence anywhere that we have been able to find even suggesting FBI involvement in the killing of President Kennedy. Evidence abounds that the FBI mishandled information about Oswald before and after the assassination, and it is a fact that there was a calculated - very likely illegal - cover-up by the FBI.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

RATHER: The Warren Commission reported that it could find no evidence of any plot laid in Cuba responsible for President Kennedy's murder. Premier Fidel Castro told me in Havana last year that he did not

instigate any action against Kennedy, that he rather admired President Kennedy in many ways, and thought that if President Kennedy had lived the two nations, Cuba and the United States, might have improved relations. But because Oswald had been associated with pro-Castro and perhaps anti-Castro causes, the suspicion was always there that the murder could have been in some way connected to Cuba.

John Kennedy's first great trial as President was the disastrous invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. He felt that he had been given bad advice by the Central Intelligence Agency, and he angrily threatened to "break the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it." Instead, though, he put his brother, Robert, the Attorney General, in charge of it. According to well-placed sources, Robert Kennedy became extremely interested in anti-Castro activities of the CIA, and those activities were stepped up to what has been described as a small war. We know also that the CIA actually did try to kill Castro with the help of Mafia figures recruited by Robert Maheu, former FBI agent and former executive in charge of the Nevada gambling interests of Howard R. Hughes, Junior. Maheu, after testifying to the Senate Intelligence Committee under a grant of immunity, told reporters about that.

ROBERT MAHEU, JUNIOR: I was approached by my project officer, Mr. James O'Connell--

QUESTION: James who?

MAHEU: James O'Connell (who was then a member of the CIA, and as I said previously, had been assigned to me as my project officer) asked me if, in connection with a planned invasion in Cuba, I would contact a Mr. John Roselli in Los Angeles, asking if Mr. Roselli would be inclined to help in a program for removing Mr. Castro from the scene or eliminating him in connection with the invasion of Cuba. The discussions that we had with Mr. Roselli and Mr. Giancana were how best to accomplish this and make sure that, when the men landed off the barges, that it would be a successful takeover.

RATHER: The Roselli and Giancana Mr. Maheu refer to were major figures in the national crime syndicate. Roselli operated on the West Coast; Giancana was shot to death in his Chicago home last June. No arrest has been made in that case.

President Kennedy himself once raised the question of assassinating Castro with journalist Tad Szulc, who had worked for many years in Latin America. Szulc told us about it.

TAD SZULC: Well, at one point he said-- you know, he was rocking in-- in his chair, and I was sitting on the white sofa, as you remember, in the Oval Office, and then he said, "Listen," he said, "what would you say" - or words to that effect - "what would you say if I ordered the assassination of Fidel Castro in Cuba?" And I was, to put it mildly, taken aback, having that kind of a question asked by the President of

the United States, and I said, "Well" - having recovered, having lit a cigarette - I said, "it seems to me not to be-- morally, it's a disastrous thing. I think it's a terrible mistake, it seems to me as a citizen, for the United States to be involved in assassinations." We were very naive and innocent in those days, were we not? "And second, I think it would be a tactical mistake, even cynical and cowardly, because it-- even if you accomplished it, it would not make any difference, because the regime is well installed," and so on and so on. So he looked at me again, and said, "Well," he said, "I'm very glad that this is the way you feel, because I agree with you completely." And I remembered it very vividly, and of course, I wrote a memo to myself afterwards.

RATHER: In 1967, there were widespread doubts about the Warren Report, but we did not then know that the doubts extended directly into the White House, to President Kennedy's very successor, and were concerned with possible motives of Cuban revenge. Leo Janos served on President Johnson's staff. In July, 1973, he reported a conversation with his former boss at the LBJ ranch. They talked about Oswald. With CBS's Harold Dow, Janos recalls.

LEO JANOS: His-- His opening sentences were that when he took office the situation in the Caribbean was such that he-- he felt we were running a "Murder, Incorporated", and someone asked what he meant. He said, "Well, there were numerous assassination attempts, one of which was-- or two of which were directed against Castro, both of which--"

HAROLD DOW: By the CIA?

JANOS: "--both of which had failed." And then, in the-- in the very next sentence was-- he paused for a moment, and said, "That's why," he said, "I never believed that Oswald acted alone." He said, "I believe that he pulled the trigger, but I never believed he acted alone."

DOW: And he obviously thought that there was some connection--

JANOS: Yes, he did.

DOW: --between the attempt on Castro's life and-- and the assassination?

JANOS: Yes, he did. And that was-- that perhaps what Johnson was really saying or speculating about was an awful, a terrible, irony, that in a sense, perhaps, Bobby Kennedy, who had chaired the committee that over-- oversaw the CIA after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and who may very well have been issuing orders to assassinate people, had inadvertently brought about his own brother's-- President Kennedy's demise.

RATHER: One of Mr. Johnson's principal associates, Joseph Califano, also recalls the late President's opinions. He did so to David Culhane.

JOSEPH CALIFANO: President Johnson, on more than one occasion, made two points about the Kennedy assassination. One was a very strong suspicion, at some points coming out as a conviction from Johnson, that Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone, that he was either assisted and/or inspired by others. And the second point was - and a point that Johnson also held on some occasions as a strong suspicion, and on other occasions that he'd state as a conviction - that what happened to John Kennedy at the hands of Lee Harvey Oswald was a response and-- and retaliation for activities that the CIA or other elements of the United States Government were conducting against Castro or the Cuban Government. He used to say that-- that he thought in time, when all the activities of the CIA were flushed out and when-- then-- then maybe the whole story of the Kennedy assassination would be known.

RATHER: And we have LBJ speaking for himself. In 1969, Walter Cronkite filmed an interview with President Johnson. They talked about the Kennedy assassination. One portion of the interview was not broadcast at the President's insistence on grounds of national security; but subsequent disclosure of Mr. Johnson's opinions by Califano and others made it no longer necessary to withhold the film. Cronkite asked President Johnson whether he was satisfied that there was no international conspiracy in the assassination.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I can't honestly say that I've ever been completely relieved of the fact that there might have been international connections.

WALTER CRONKITE: You mean you still feel that there might-- might have been?

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: Well, I have not completely discounted it.

CRONKITE: Well, that would seem to indicate that you don't have full confidence in the Warren Commission report?

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: No. No, I think the Warren Commission's study and-- I think, first of all, is composed of the ablest and most judicious and bipartisan men in this country. Second, I think they had only one objective, and that was the truth. And third, I think they were competent and did the best they could. But I don't think that they or me or anyone else is always absolutely sure of everything that might have motivated Oswald or others that could have been involved. But he was quite a mysterious fellow, and he did have connections that bore examination. And the extent of the influence of those connections on him, I think, history will deal with much more than we're able to now.

CRONKITE: How would it come out in history?

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I don't know.

RATHER: We don't know how it will come out in history, either. It's hard enough to see where it comes out now. History will be less confused, we believe, if there are full Congressional investigations into what the CIA and FBI didn't tell the Warren Commission, and why; new investigations into the possible roles of Cubans and organized crime figures also in our judgment are warranted.

With this broadcast, we conclude our two-part inquiry into the case of Lee Harvey Oswald and John F. Kennedy - the first of a series on the assassination controversies. We have cast some new light on the event and on the activities of the alleged assassin - and still the case cannot be closed. To discover a conspiracy, and other gunmen, in the murder of John F. Kennedy would have been a journalistic coup almost beyond imagining. We tried to do that in 1967, and could not. We couldn't do it this time, either.

On Oswald's possible motives, which, if known, might possibly establish a connection with a conspiratorial cause, on this perhaps some light could have been shed if the CIA had not withheld information from the Warren Commission - information about its ties to organized crime, and attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, which could conceivably have triggered a similar attack on the American President. The connections, actual and potential, between Oswald and the FBI and the CIA were, we have shown, much more complex than any official account has indicated. And yet, we could find no evidence linking either agency to the actual crime, or linking any foreign government to it, or any other individuals besides Oswald. If there were any conspirators in the shadows behind Oswald, we simply could not find them, hard as we looked.

This conclusion is not likely to alter the fact, shown by our own CBS News poll, that only 15% of Americans believe the official account of the murder as set out in the Warren report. Regrettably, some of our own institutions, the very agencies that should have helped to dispel public doubts, have only fueled those doubts. Conspiracy theories persist partly because there has been a loss of confidence in Government, a loss in public morale. They have attached themselves to each of the succeeding assassinations and one near-assassination of other political leaders - Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Governor George Wallace - cases we will examine in future broadcasts in this series. The shots fired that day in Dallas 12 years ago did more than fatally wound a President. The most grievous wounds remain in the nation's psyche, and the nation is still waiting to be healed. Dan Rather. Good night.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

ANNOUNCER: This has been the second of a series - a CBS REPORTS INQUIRY: "The American Assassins".