

Mr. Les Payne  
Newsday  
Long Island, N.Y. 11747

2/18/89

Dear Les,

Today I got from the CIA a record I believe is of considerable importance. I should have gotten it from the CIA years ago and didn't. I got it this time because the Department of Justice referred it and that required a decision. Quiet disclosure probably appeared to be the safest course to the CIA. Jim hasn't even seen it yet. I have in fact given it to nobody because I want to have it used effectively or not at all.

So, I write to get your reaction and if it appeals to you what you think you can do with it.

There has been a considerable campaign, rising and falling in intensity over the years and rising again now with crummy TV specials and lousy but well-publicized books plus newspaper and magazine comment to make it appear that the JFK assassination was a kickback from the CIA's mafia scheme, attributed to John and Robert Kennedy, to off Fidel Castro. If I remember correctly, the House Assassins Committee puffed this and its staff director's book blames the assassination on the mafia in this sense.

Helms testified before the House Assassins that the CIA was doing only what the President wanted done. He lied, SOP for him, especially under oath.

The record I just got was written by the CIA's Sheffield Edwards at Bobby Kennedy's request as a report on his briefing of Robert Kennedy in 1962 on the mafia scheme. Only two copies were made. I now have the DJ's copy from the CIA but not the CIA's copy. It is written with the usual CIA deference for obfuscation and under-information.

It is now without any possibility of question that the plot was not hatched by the Kennedys or the CIA under the Kennedy administration. It was hatched by Bissell in August 1960, which was before JFK was elected. It was cancelled by the Kennedys in May of 1961, which I believe was at the time, without public attention, the plot came to some restricted but official attention.

Only six men knew of the plot and all were senior CIA officials. I presume he meant it to be understood that some of those involved in it also knew, like the mobsters. However, with only six knowing and all of them top CIA people, it is obvious that neither the President nor the attorney general knew a thing about it.

Bearing on this the memo makes no claim to any authorization for the scheme. It in fact never even says what that was, referring to it only as the project and in the sense of being an intelligence function. If it had been authorized by a president he would have been Eisenhower because he then was the only president.

Bissell's concept was given to Edwards who got Maheu in it. He fails to really identify Maheu, saying he was connected with a couple of large organizations, meaning corporations. In fact he was a former FBI agent and former CIA contract employee and one of those big outfits for which Maheu worked was the Hughes combine - a CIA asset.

Maheu got John Roselli to handle the mafia end when they met in Florida. In the Edwards memo Sam Giancana did not attend all their meetings and seems to have had a smaller role. Both mobsters insisted they wanted no money for their part in the project. Some of Maheu's Florida expenses were paid by the CIA. It also authorized a payment of \$150,000 to the person or persons who did it, quite a bit more than that sums appears to be today.

What leaves identification of the project without doubt is Edwards' reference to a bugging operation in which a bugger named Bellotti was apprehended. The memo is deliberately hazy on the whole business. Some of it has been published. I have the FBI's files that have not been used.