

Link Cited Between CIA, Mafia Boss

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A top lieutenant of reputed Chicago racketeer Sam Giancana once tried to cut off intensive FBI surveillance of the alleged Mafia boss by assuring an FBI agent that "we're all part of the same team," according to informed sources.

The Giancana lieutenant, the sources said, then told the flabbergasted FBI agent that Giancana had been working for the Central Intelligence Agency.

"That raised quite a bit of commotion in the bureau," one source said.

The incident took place in 1961, after Giancana and his reputed right-hand man on the West Coast, Johnny Roselli, reportedly had been recruited by the CIA in a scheme to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

The two apparently had been enlisted to work for the agency in 1960 during the waning days of the Eisenhower administration.

Roselli later claimed to have been involved in six attempts on Castro's life. Giancana, who had pre-Castro gambling and other interests in Cuba, apparently lent enough of his support, the source said, to have won the CIA's thanks in the form of some spying in Las Vegas, Nev., on Giancana's behalf.

The Chicago Mafia boss,

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however, was not one of the FBI's favorites and the bureau kept him under close, at times almost stifling, surveillance.

One evening in 1961, sources said, the FBI was keeping watch on the Armory Lounge, a favorite Giancana hangout in Forest Park, Ill., when Chuckie English, one of the mobster's lieutenants, came out to protest.

"What's wrong?" English reportedly asked one of the agents. "Why don't you guys stop all this? We're all part of the same team."

It was one of those remarks "made as if the other guy knows what the hell it's all about," one source said, but the FBI agent was aghast. English, another source said, explained that Giancana was doing "all this work for the CIA," but apparently without being too specific.

The explanation was enough to set off loud alarms within the bureau that are remembered to this day. By 1961, the FBI had other evidence of a CIA-Mafia link, furnished by a chance arrest in Las Vegas on Oct. 31, 1960. Sheriff's deputies there had picked up a private detective involved in the surveillance of comedian Dan Rowan and, the FBI found, the trail led to the CIA.

The spying on Rowan was said to have been arranged as a favor to Giancana, who was picqued about Rowan's friendship with singer Phyllis McGuire. The Miami detective agency that did some of the work said it was hired by Robert A. Maheu, a former FBI agent and at the time a consultant to billionaire Howard Hughes.

Maheu has refused to comment on reports that he was

acting at the behest of the CIA, but J. Edgar Hoover, the late FBI director, apparently satisfied himself of the connection, according to documents that sources say are in the hands of the White House and the Senate select committee on intelligence operations.

In addition, Maheu has confirmed that he recruited Roselli to work for the CIA on "a very sensitive assignment." Testifying in federal court in Los Angeles last year during his defamation suit against the Hughes' empire, Maheu said he spent a lot of time in Miami in 1960-'61 in connection with the CIA activity.

Maheu said Hughes grew so concerned that "I finally received permission from my major contact in the intelligence agency with which I was working to reveal to Mr. Hughes the necessity of the work. Thus informed, Hughes encouraged him to 'continue on with the assignment, and any work that might be required of me in the future,'" Maheu recalled.

Maheu gave no details of the "very sensitive assignment" in his testimony, but in 1971, Roselli's lawyer gave his client's version in hopes of winning a reduction in a

prison sentence Roselli had drawn for a \$1 million card-cheating scheme in Los Angeles.

The lawyer said Roselli, a one-time rum-runner, had not only worked with Maheu on a CIA mission to kill Castro, but even had a boat shot out from under him on one dash to the Cuban coast.

During his lawsuit against Hughes, Maheu made it clear that Roselli was a useful person to know. According to Maheu it was Roselli who helped "grease" the way for Hughes' arrival on the Las Vegas scene in the 1960s. Roselli not only helped Hughes take over the penthouse floor of the Desert Inn in 1966, but when Hughes bought the hotel, Roselli shared in a "finder's fee" that the sellers paid.

Whatever Roselli did, one source said, it is almost certain that he checked with Giancana first.

Maheu testified that 1960 also was the year he tried—on instructions from Hughes—to kill news stories about the \$205,000 Hughes' loan to Donald F. Nixon, the brother of Vice President Richard M. Nixon who was then running for President.

Vice President Nixon also

was White House project officer in 1960 for the CIA's Cuban invasion planning that ended under President Kennedy in April, 1961, with the Bay of Pigs.

Both Maheu and Roselli have been subpoenaed to testify this week before the Senate Committee investigating the CIA, which is headed by Frank Church (D-Idaho). Church said the committee will seek Nixon's testimony if it appears necessary.

Asked if Nixon would be called to testify, Church said there are many "unresolved" questions before the committee. One may be what Nixon meant on June 23, 1972, in the wake of the Watergate break-in, when he agreed that the CIA should be called in to stymie the FBI investigation of the burglary.

Nixon added of then-CIA director Richard Helms: "We protected Helms from one hell of a lot of things . . . this involves these Cubans, (Howard) Hunt and a lot of hanky panky that we have nothing to do with ourselves." The Watergate cover-up trial lasted 64 days, but those remarks were never fully explained.