

Hints at CIA tie-in with JFK slaying probed

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WASHINGTON — The Rockefeller Commission on the Central Intelligence Agency is looking into allegations that the CIA somehow was involved in the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, according to informed sources close to its investigation.

One focus of the commission's inquiry, the sources said, is the recent assertion of a group headed by Dick Gregory, the comedian and civil rights activist, that E. Howard Hunt Jr. was seized by the Dallas police near the Kennedy assassination site within minutes of the shooting.

Hunt, convicted two years ago of conspiring to carry out the Watergate bugging plot, was a clandestine political officer for the CIA at the time Kennedy was murdered.

The Gregory group's charge is founded on photographs published last year in underground newspapers and elsewhere purporting to show Hunt and Frank A. Sturgis, another of the convicted Watergate burglars, being led by the police away from a grassy knoll across from the Texas School Book Depository building.

Hunt, in testimony before the Rockefeller commission, reportedly denied that he was in Dallas at the time of the assassination or that he knew Sturgis then.

Sturgis reportedly was employed by the CIA as an

operative in Florida's Miami area around the time of the agency - inspired Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

The book depository building was identified in the final report of the Warren Commission, which investigated the Kennedy Assassination. As the location from which Lee Harvey Oswald fired the shots that killed Kennedy and wounded John B. Connally, then governor of Texas as they passed by in motorcade.

David W. Belin, executive director of the panel headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, declined Friday to comment on specific areas of the inquiry or on any tentative conclusions reached.

The commission has decided, Belin said, to release its findings about the nature and scope of the CIA's domestic activities only after its investigation has been completed.

Belin, an Iowa lawyer who

served as a counsel to the Warren Commission, said that although it was not his intention to "reopen the entire investigation of the assassination" of Kennedy, "the allegation has been made that the CIA, and particularly Hunt, was in Dallas on 22 Nov. 1963."

After leaving the Warren Commission, Belin wrote a book analyzing its works entitled, "You Are the Jury," supporting the conclusion that Oswald was the only killer of both Kennedy and J.D. Tippet, a Dallas police officer slain shortly afterward outside a movie theater.

Asked for a personal assessment of any evidence gathered by the Rockefeller commission bearing on a possible CIA role in the Kennedy assassination, Belin replied:

"Thus far, I have found no hard evidence whatsoever to indicate that there was any person involved in the assassination of John F. Kennedy

other than Lee Harvey Oswald."

Hunt, who is preparing to return to prison following the failure of an appeal seeking to overturn his conviction, reportedly testified in a closed session with Rockefeller Commission investigators Wednesday.

Gregory met with commission investigators earlier, according to knowledgeable sources, and outlined the assertion that centers on the photographs.

Hunt reportedly told the commission staff that he was at home in the Washington area on the day of the Kennedy assassination, had dined that evening with his family, and supplied the names of witnesses who could attest to his whereabouts.