

FBI Knew Of CIA Plots On Castro

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Top FBI officials knew of Central Intelligence Agency plotting to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro at the time the bureau was investigating the assassination of President Kennedy, it was learned yesterday.

The late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover never informed the Warren Commission of the scheming against Castro and, according to Sen. Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.), may also have concealed the information from the FBI agents assigned to investigate the President's murder.

"The fact that they would withhold information from an investigation of this kind has rather chilling implications," said David W. Belin, who served as an assistant counsel for the Warren Commission. "One of the things we were looking at was whether there was any Castro involvement in the Kennedy assassination."

Some critics of the Warren Commission have suggested that the President was killed in retaliation for the CIA-sponsored plotting against Castro.

Schweiker, a member of the Senate intelligence committee, which last week voted to recommend a new congressional inquiry into the assassination, said Senate investigators have just started to examine belatedly discovered FBI files concerning Castro.

An FBI spokesman refused to comment when asked why the documents were not discovered earlier. The Senate committee requested any such records more than a year ago.

In a May 6 letter to Attorney General Edward H. Levi, which was released yesterday, Schweiker said that "Recently received materials reveal that the FBI, in 1964, had knowledge of the CIA's 'AM LASH' plot, and that there even exists an FBI file captioned 'Plans to Assassinate Cuban Leaders.'"

AM LASH was the CIA's

code name for a senior Cuban official and Castro intimate named Rolando Cubela, whom the spy agency recruited in 1961 as

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an important "asset" inside Cuba. Eventually, in the fall of 1963—early September desire to plan Castro's "execution."

President Kennedy was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. That same day, the Senate committee has reported, two CIA officials, including one who held himself out as "the personal representative of Attorney General [Robert F.] Kennedy," met with AM LASH in Paris and offered him a ball-point pen rigged with a poison hypodermic needle for use against Castro.

AM LASH apparently spurned the device as too unsophisticated, but the CIA kept sponsoring his efforts even after the Kennedy assassination.

The spy agency delivered arms to him in Cuba in March and June of 1964, according to the Senate committee's findings, and it was not until June, 1965, that the CIA "terminated all contact with AM LASH and his associates for reasons related to security."

When first disclosed in The Washington Post last year, the negotiations with AM LASH seemed to offer a striking illustration of evidence the CIA withheld from the Warren Commission in its inquiry into the President's murder. Now it appears that the FBI, which did the primary investigative work for the commission, suppressed the same evidence.

Senate intelligence committee Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) asked the Justice Department, including the FBI, more than a year ago for "prompt delivery" of any documents "which relate to the subject of planned or attempted or actual assassinations carried out either within the United States or abroad by, or on behalf of, the United States government, including the Central Intelligence Agency."

Committee officials said

all they received were various memos bearing on the CIA's enlistment of Mafia leaders in an earlier effort to kill Castro.

According to one of these documents, a 1962 memorandum by Hoover, both the FBI director and Attorney General Kennedy were aware at that time that "CIA had hired Robert A. Maheu, a private detective in Washington, D.C., to approach [Mafia boss Sam] Giancana with a proposition of paying \$150,000 to hire some gunmen to go into Cuba to kill Castro."

Reportedly, however, Kennedy was told, inaccurately, as it turned out, that the operation had been "terminated."

Senate investigators came across cross-references to the additional FBI assassination files several weeks ago while poring over other records.

Schweiker, a member of the intelligence subcommittee that has been reviewing the shortcomings of the detective work that was done for the Warren Commission, said he wrote his May 6 letter to Levi after several unsuccessful efforts to secure access to the documents from the FBI.

Justice Department spokesman Robert Havel said yesterday afternoon that a letter is being prepared for Levi explaining why the records were not turned over earlier. Havel said he did not know the exact reasons but added:

"I understand it was just an oversight. They were in several boxes."

The Warren Commission was appointed by President Johnson a week after Kennedy's assassination, and completed its work on Sept. 24, 1964, in a hurry-up atmosphere fostered by the chairman, the late Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Schweiker speculated yesterday in a telephone interview that the FBI agents assigned to the Warren Commission inquiry and the commission "might have been deprived of the information" about the CIA plotting against Castro.

Belin added that "there certainly was nothing like that ever given to the Warren Commission." He noted that FBI documents were supplied to the commission in a continuing flow, "all transmitted under the signature of J. Edgar Hoover."

Schweiker implied that the recently discovered FBI files about the plots to kill Castro were dated before the Warren Commission concluded its work, but refused to confirm this.

Other sources, however, said the files show that FBI knew of the CIA's AM LASH plot by the summer of 1964, before the Warren Commission had stopped checking out various leads.

Sen. Robert B. Morgan (D-N.C.), another member of the intelligence committee, has voiced the suspicion that Cubela was actually a double agent for Castro.

In any case, the Warren Commission was unaware of his activities. It concluded that there was "no credible evidence" that anyone but Lee Harvey Oswald was involved in the President's assassination and "no evidence that the Soviet Union or Cuba were involved . . ."