

Was Oswald an FBI agent? Warren panel study is disclosed

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Warren Commission discussed a report that Lee Harvey Oswald had worked as an FBI undercover agent for more than a year before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, according to a recently declassified commission transcript.

Members of the commission included the late Chief Justice Earl Warren and President Ford, then a representative from Michigan. They discussed the report at a closed session on Jan. 22, 1964.

The transcript remained classified top secret for 11 years until released to Harold Weisberg, an author who had filed suit under the Freedom of Information Act. Weisberg has written many books and articles criticizing the Warren Commission investigation and its conclusion that Oswald, acting alone, shot and killed Kennedy in Dallas, Tex., on Nov. 22, 1963.

At the start of the meeting, J. Lee Rankin, general counsel of the commission, said he had been told by Waggoner Carr, Texas attorney general, that "the word had come out . . . that Oswald was acting as an FBI undercover agent and that they had the information of his badge which was given as number 179, and that he was being paid \$200 a month from September of 1962 up through the time of the assassination."

Rankin said he had talked to Henry Wade, Dallas district attorney, who told him the source of the report was a member of the press.

"There is a denial of this in one of these FBI records, as you know," interjected the late Rep. Dale Bogue, D-La., a commission member.

"It is something that would be very

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Lee Harvey Oswald

Associated Press

Oswald an FBI agent? Warren

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difficult to prove out," answered Rankin. "There were events in connections with this that are curious, in that they might make it possible to check some of it out in time. I assure that the FBI records would never show it, and if it is true, and of course, we don't know. But we thought you should have the information."

Later, Rankin commented that he and Warren had discussed the report and "we said if that was true and it ever came out and could be established, then you would have people think that there was a conspiracy to accomplish this assassination, that nothing the commission did or anybody could dissipate."

"You are so right," said Boggs. "Oh, terrible," said the late Allen Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and a member of the Warren Commission.

"The implications of this are fantastic, don't you think so?" asked Boggs. "Terrible," commented an unidentified participant.

Dulles questioned why the FBI would hire Oswald as an undercover agent.

"What was the ostensible mission?" Dulles asked. "I mean, when they hire someone they hire somebody for a purpose. Was it to penetrate the Fair Play for Cuba Committee? That is the only thing I can think of where they might have used this man. You wouldn't pick up a fellow like him to do an agent's job."

"He (Oswald) was playing ball, writing letters to both the elements of the Communist parties," said Ford. "I mean, he was playing ball with the Trotskyites and with the others. This was a strange circumstance to me."

"But the FBI get people right inside, you know," Dulles commented. "They don't need a person like this on the outside. The only place where he did anything at all was with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee."

An unidentified speaker brought up the tension between the commission and the FBI and particularly its director, the late J. Edgar Hoover.

"That is somewhat an issue in this case, and I suppose you are all aware of it," said the speaker.

Weisberg said that, in this transcript, Rankin is sometimes identified by name when he speaks and sometimes not. Warren never is, he said. He speculated that the speaker in this case was the chief justice.

"That is that the FBI is very explicit that Oswald is the assassin or was the assassin, and they are very explicit that there was no conspiracy, and they are also saying in the same place that they are continuing their investigation," the speaker said.

"Now in my experience of almost nine years," he continued, "it is hard to get them to say, when you think you have got a case tight enough to convict somebody, that that is the person that committed the crime. In my experience with the FBI they don't do that. . . . Why are they so eager to make both of those conclusions, both in the original report and in their experimental report, which is such a departure? Now, that is just circumstantial evidence and it doesn't prove anything about this, but it raises questions."

A moment later, commission members discussed their fear that the FBI was trying to maneuver them simply into endorsing the FBI probe and described

how the FBI probably wanted the probe handled. One unidentified speaker said, "They (the FBI) would like to have us fold up and quit."

"They found the man," said Rankin. "There is nothing more to do. The com-

mission supports their conclusions and we can go on home and that is the end of it."

Dulles agreed that the FBI was trying to capture credit for having solved the case, then with the discussion about to end he said, "I think this record ought to be destroyed. Do you think we need a record of this?"

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An unidentified speaker replied, "I don't. Except that we said we would have records of meetings and so we called the reporter in the formal way."

"I would hope that none of these records are disclosed to anybody," added Boggs.