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Oswald Planned Move Here, FBI Files Show

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Lee Harvey Oswald wrote that he was planning to move to the Washington-Baltimore area shortly before he assassinated President John F. Kennedy in Dallas in the fall of 1963, according to newly released FBI files.

This disclosure appeared in a letter he wrote the Worker magazine in New York from New Orleans in September 1963. He wrote that he wanted to know how to contact the Communist Party in this area "as I plan to relocate there in October." The only reply Oswald got was very guarded and indicated he should plan to operate not underground but in the back-

ground. Instead Oswald went to Dallas, and it was there on Nov. 22, 1963, that he shot Kennedy from the window of the building in which he worked. Two days later Oswald was dead at the hands of a police follower and nightclub operator named Jack Ruby.

THE OSWALD correspondence was only one page of the 40,001 documents released this week by the FBI

under a Freedom of Information Act request, but it illustrates a problem created by release of the raw FBI files: That all manner of information from the wildest "nut" calls to the serious communications between various officials at every step of the investigation of the Kennedy and Oswald murders is now available, but there is no ready way for the press or public to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Nowhere in the raw FBI files can a reader find out, for example, why Oswald didn't come to the Washington-Baltimore area or what his intentions were if he did. In that sense, the release of nearly half a ton of unindexed, inconclusive documents raises more questions than it answers.

There are scores, even hundreds, of such mysteries, even if one culls out the "nut calls" from people who contacted the FBI with everything from their dreams and fantasies to conversations they overheard which seemed suspicious to them.

The FBI dispatched agents to track down every report, no matter how addled, drunk or just mistaken the listeners were.

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ONE OF THE STORIES related in the FBI files, and written with the standard humorless style used by the agents, was that of a woman from Hominy, Okla. She succeeded in getting nine letters written by the FBI to the Warren Commission after charging that the FBI knew all about Oswald's purchase of a rifle and his trip to Mexico before the assassination. She also got the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's dander up; he wrote that she was conducting a "scurrilous campaign of villification."

Another woman from New York got considerable attention from Hoover when she claimed that an FBI agent who was 10 feet tall and very well built was responsible for the whole thing. Hoover admonished her for making unsupported statements about the FBI and its personnel.

The documents show that the bureau left few stones unturned in its investigation of Oswald and his murderer, Ruby. But the raw files

HOME
FINAL

also make it obvious that Hoover, from the outset was determined to share the investigation with no one.

HE AND HIS AIDES feuded with the CIA, the Dallas police and even the State Department, and they resisted the formation of a presidential commission. And when the Warren Commission was ordered into being by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Hoover made very sure he knew everything the panel was doing as well as controlling most of the evidence that it was given to consider.

As the investigation progressed, the FBI turned up many bizarre and startling leads. Here are some of the more noteworthy:

- Agents learned of an Army captain from Fort Benning, Ga., who was contacted by a North Hollywood, Calif., dentist, ostensibly a member of the ultra-conservative National States Rights Party. The dentist told the captain in early 1963 that the organization needed a group of young men "to get rid of Kennedy, the Cabinet and all members of Americans for Democratic Action and maybe 10,000 other people." The captain backed away from what he regarded as a crackpot idea, but said he had the definite impression the dentist was propositioning him on this matter.

- Another tip sent the New York office of the FBI rushing out to 42nd Street in search of gypsy tea rooms after one caller said a gypsy had predicted the Kennedy murder.

- Priscilla Johnson McMillan, who recently wrote a best-selling book about Oswald's widow, Marina, was actually considered a suspect in the Kennedy case, according to language in a Telex message from the Washington field office to the New York FBI office just five days after Kennedy's death. The message refers to Johnson as a suspect in the case and tells of two FBI interviews with her on Nov. 23 and 24, 1963.

- Adam Yarmolinsky, then a powerful Defense Department employe and widely known academic, called the FBI — where he was not popular — to inform the bureau that Oswald's

activities reminded him of another individual, a former GI named Nicholas Petrucci. Petrucci had renounced his U.S. citizenship in Moscow, just as Oswald had done in 1959, and then returned to the United States. An FBI official told another in recounting the story. "The director asked if it is accepted practice by the State Department to allow individuals who have renounced their citizenship to return to the United States."

• W.O. Stinson, administrative assistant to wounded Texas Gov. John B. Connally, passed on to the FBI second-hand information about an overheard plot to kill Kennedy that was set afoot three weeks before the assassination by three unnamed oilmen. As Stinson told the story to the FBI office in Dallas after Kennedy was dead, the three oilmen had put up a great deal of money to have Kennedy killed. It was not possible to discover in the FBI documents what the outcome of this tale was.

FBI officials M.A. Jones and Cartha D. DeLoach worked up a statement in Hoover's name in early 1964 rebutting what was called the false statement that Oswald was a confidential agent of the FBI. They prepared a press release that said Oswald had never been employed in any capacity by the FBI, had never received any payments from the FBI and was not a confidential informant. The CIA also formally denied that Oswald was connected with it in any way.

• Hoover was almost perpetually unhappy about the actions of Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry and wrote an internal memo about it to his top aides in February 1964 attacking the chief. Hoover said he had told publisher William Randolph Hearst that the police chief was "trying to please everybody and was giving TV interviews most of the time until I sent him word to keep his mouth shut."

• The records indicate that both the Secret Service and FBI lost track of the clothes Connally was wearing when he was wounded in the presi-

dent's car. The documents do not explain how the clothes turned up later and that when they became evidence, they had already been cleaned and pressed.

THE DOCUMENTS reveal that Hoover and the FBI badly wanted a deathbed statement from Oswald after he was wounded by Ruby but before word reached Washington that he was dead. Al Rosen, one of Hoover's top aides, sent a memo to Alan Belmont, another top aide, a few hours after Oswald was shot, saying that the director wanted agents standing by at Parkland Hospital where Oswald was dying. Oswald, as it developed, never regained consciousness. Hoover passed the word that President Johnson wanted the FBI to investigate the second shooting.

FBI agents, therefore, waited at Oswald's bedside until he died while other G-men took part in the first interviews of Ruby even though no federal agents were present when Ruby was captured after the shooting.

Ironically, FBI officials were sending messages to one another saying that the White House and Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach wanted a full report on the Oswald case, including "everything that may raise a question in the mind of the public or the press regarding this matter."

"IN OTHER WORDS," Belmont wrote to Assistant Director William C. Sullivan, "this report is to settle the dust both from the standpoint that Oswald is the man who assassinated the president and relative to Oswald himself. The director desires it out as quickly as possible. We want to be certain that anything that is put into the report can be backed up as it will be subject to minute scrutiny from the press and public."

Quarter Ton of Files Fails to Alter Varying Views on Kennedy Death

By James R. Dickenson

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The 500 pounds of raw files on the John F. Kennedy assassination made public this week by the FBI is, in effect, a quarter of a ton of reinforcing material. There is every reason to believe that the other quarter-ton of documents the FBI will release next month will be more of the same.

Whatever beliefs you hold about the murder of President Kennedy, they will be unshaken regardless of how scrupulously you examine the bulky files. What these files contain is overwhelming circumstantial evidence that on Nov. 22, 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald alone shot President Kennedy and John B. Connally, then governor of Texas, from the Texas Book Depository, with a 6.5 mm Italian rifle.

Those who subscribe to the various conspiracy theories, however, including involvement of the Mafia, pro- and anti-Castro Cubans, or such governmental agencies as the FBI and the CIA, will find nothing in the files to assuage their suspicions.

There is a great deal of emphasis on FBI denials that either Oswald or Jack Ruby, the man who killed Oswald, were ever on the FBI payroll as informants.

THE FILES INDICATE that Oswald's fingerprints were on the brown paper bag in which the assassination weapon had been carried and which was found in the depository. "A latent fingerprint on the brown bag on the sixth floor was of Oswald's left index finger," the file says. "In addition, one latent palm print on specimen Q10 (the wrapper) was identified as the right palm print of Oswald."

They also indicate that analysis of Oswald's hands indicate that he had fired a weapon that day. A diphenylbenzidine reagent test showed "punctate traces of nitrate and the paraffin on the right and left hands is consistent with that of a person who handled or fired a firearm," the FBI reports say.

A neutron activation analysis also "revealed deposits on the (paraffin) cast characteristic of powder residues. However it is not possible to distinguish the powder residues of the rifle cartridges from that of the revolver cartridges."

This is because a cast had been chemically treated and washed prior to the neutron analysis, the report says.

THE REFERENCE to the revolver involves the Smith and Wesson revolver in Oswald's possession when he was captured in a movie theater shortly after the assassination. The revolver was the weapon with which Dallas police officer J.D. Tippitt was killed less than an hour after Kennedy was shot.

The revolver was sold to a person named A. Hidell and was shipped to a post office box rented by Oswald's mother. Oswald carried a draft card with the name Alex Hidell, and his membership card in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee was signed by an A.J. Hidell.

The FBI reports also say that fibers caught in the buttplate matched those of Oswald's shirt. "Included in this tuft of fibers were gray-black, dark blue and orange-yellow cotton fibers which match in microscopic characteristics the gray-black, dark blue and orange-yellow fibers composing the (specimen) Q11 shirt of the suspect," the report says.

Fibers on the brown bag in which the rifle had been wrapped matched the microscopic characteristics of the Q12 blanket, the report continued. This is a reference to the blanket in which Oswald also had wrapped the rifle and which was left on the sixth floor of the depository.

THE BLANKET HAS been identified by the family with which Oswald's Russian-born wife, Marina, was living at the time of the assassination.

"Michael Paine (the head of the family) identified a blanket in possession of Dallas police officers as the same one he had previously seen in said garage," the report says.

Buell Wesley Frazier, a fellow employee at the book depository, drove Oswald to work on the morning of the assassination. Oswald had with him a package in a large department store paper sack which he said was curtain rods, the FBI report says. Frazier states this package was large enough to have accommodated a "broken down" rifle. Upon arrival at work, Oswald took this package from the

car and went into his place of employment while Frazier stayed in car for a short time to recharge his battery.

Frazier said that Oswald told him that Mrs. Ruth Paine had given him some curtain rods, but Mrs. Paine subsequently told the FBI that she knew nothing about any curtain rods.

The FBI report raises a question about the three bullets that the Warren commission, which was appointed by President Johnson to investigate the assassination, ultimately determined were fired at Kennedy.

THE COMMISSION at one point had the opinion that the first shot had struck the president in the right shoulder, that the second hit Connally in the right shoulder and came out his chest, then hitting his wrist and penetrating his thigh. The third shot was believed to be the one that killed Kennedy.

The commission subsequently decided that the first shot hit Kennedy and then Connally, and that the second shot missed the car entirely. This was because of their inability to find enough fragments to account for three bullets and because of a lack of interior damage to the limousine.

According to testimony by Navy doctors who performed the autopsy on Kennedy "shot one struck the president high in the right shoulder area penetrating the torso near the base of the neck damaging the flesh of the throat but not tearing the throat wall." This bullet, according to the doctors, continued and entered Connally's right shoulder, emerging below the right nipple. The bullet, the doctors reported, then apparently was snagged in clothing, eventually falling out on Connally's stretcher.

"Shot two struck the wrist of the governor continuing on into his thigh."

"SHOT THREE STRUCK the right side of the president's head, carrying much bone and brain tissue away, leaving a large cavity. There is nothing controversial about where shot three occurred inasmuch as the Zapruder movie indicates with much clarity where this happened."

One of the most intense controversies surrounding the assassination is the belief that Oswald could not possibly have fired three accurately aimed shots with a bolt-action rifle.

even though he had a telescopic sight in the five-second time period indicated by the Zapruder movie and by witnesses.

The FBI files indicate that marksmen using Oswald's rifle were able to fire three well-aimed shots in that time and the exhibits have a chart indicating that, even with an aiming error of one millimeter, the chances of hitting a target as large as the head and shoulders of a human being are 100 percent up to 270 feet. The estimated distance at the time of the shots was 90 feet.

The firing tests indicated that the telescopic sight was off and that the rifle would fire slightly high. Witnesses told the Warren Commission that an assassin would aim at the upper torso rather than at the head to have a better chance of hitting the target and that this might account for the fact that Kennedy was hit in the head.

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS point to the fact that the Zapruder movies show that Kennedy's head was driven forward by the force of the fatal shot and then snapped violently backward. They cite this as evidence that other gunmen hit him from the front, firing from the grassy knoll on which some witnesses contended they saw shadows and silhouettes of possible gunmen and puffs of smoke as from rifle shots.

Ballistic tests on human skulls filled with gelatin show that the skulls move forward under initial impact but that the jet effect of the material blown out the front of the skull causes it to snap back.

The FBI files have nothing on these theories that Oswald acted in conjunction with other assassins. The late J. Edgar Hoover entertained the possibility of some sort of conspiracy immediately after the assassination but by the end of the day concluded that Oswald was the assassin and that he had acted alone.

The FBI files contained other, inconclusive, evidence against Oswald. One witness, Howard L. Brennan, a steamfitter, was on his lunch break and seated across the street from the book depository. He looked up in time to see the assassin on the sixth floor take dead aim at Kennedy's car and fire the final shot. He

had heard the first two, he said. Brennan described the rifleman as a white male in his early thirties wearing light colored clothes "in the khaki line."

BRENNAN LATER picked Oswald out of a police lineup as a person who resembled the man he had seen in the window. He was not able to make a positive identification, however.

Another witness, James Richard Worrell, saw the rifleman fire the shots and a few minutes later saw a man running from the depository building. When he saw the film clips of Oswald on television that evening he thought Oswald was the man he had seen.

There is other circumstantial evidence. Officials of the Texas Employment Commission told the FBI that Oswald had been contacted several times in the two months prior to the assassination and was referred to a better paying job than the one he had in the depository, but that he refused it.

For many people, however, circumstantial evidence that a neurotic and maladjusted young man acting alone could commit such a crime is not convincing. Many people want conclusive evidence in such cases but, like the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and other historic murders, there will always be profound and unanswered questions.