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JFK Slaying

Hoover Called Oswald a 'Nut' Hours After

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Washington Star Staff Writers

Documents released today show the FBI involved within hours after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in an intense investigation that included checking out bizarre tips from citizens and close scrutiny of individuals already regarded as radical by the agency.

One of the documents was a message labeled "urgent" from James Walsh, otherwise unidentified, on De-

partment of Justice communications section letterhead.

Written less than one hour after the shooting on Nov. 22, 1963, it read: "Get everyone involved in shooting the president and get them fast."

The 40,000 documents were made public today by the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act.

AN URGENT Teletype message from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to all FBI offices instructed agents to "immediately establish whereabouts of bombing suspects, all known Klan and hate group members, known ra-

cial extremists and any other individuals who on the basis of information available in your files may possibly have been involved."

And less than four hours after Kennedy was assassinated during a motorcade in Dallas, Tex. — and two hours after the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald — Hoover told Washington officials that Oswald "very probably" was the killer.

Hoover said he would classify Oswald "in the category of a nut and the extremist pro-Castro crowd." In a memo to the FBI's top echi-

lon, dated Dec. 12, 1963, Hoover wrote:

"... We have several letters, not in the report (to the Warren Commission) because we were not able to prove it, written to him (Oswald) from Cuba referring to the job he was going to do, his good marksman-ship and stating when it was all over he would be brought back to Cuba and presented to the chief."

BUT HOOVER'S memo said, "We do not know if the chief was Castro and cannot make an investigation because we have no intelligence operation in Cuba."

"I personally believe Oswald was the assassin," he wrote, but he said he was greatly concerned as to "whether he was the only man."

Hoover told his aides the Justice Department wanted to issue a statement saying Oswald was the assassin; there were "no foreign or subversive elements involved in the killing; and there was no connection between Oswald and Jack Ruby who shot him dead two days after the assassination."

"I flatly disagreed," Hoover said, and new President Lyndon B. John-

son agreed with him no conclusions ought to be drawn at that time.

The FBI files indicate that the bureau tracked down every lead, however remote, from people who overheard conversations in which people predicted the president would be assassinated if he went to Texas, or expressed anti-Kennedy sentiments. Many of these conversations about the result of people's concern about the right-wing and anti-Kennedy sentiment in Texas.

THE FBI also checked out anyone who talked or asked about guns, such as a man in a service station near Dallas who asked another customer where he could get a silencer or a high-powered rifle.

The bureau also investigated statements by waitresses and service station attendants and others who felt they had seen people resembling Oswald or his wife or mother in the days and weeks before the assassination.

Many of the predictions that Kennedy would be killed were made by members of the John Birch Society and others who were strongly anti-Kennedy.

Some people such as waitresses reported overhearing men boast of having won bets as much as \$5,000 or \$8,000 that Kennedy would never finish the parade in Dallas alive. Many of the statements about the killing were made by people who were drunk.

The FBI investigated someone who wanted to send a telegram to Andrei Gromyko; an anonymous telephone call the New York State Police got from Baton Rouge, La., and an obscene letter sent to Marguerite Oswald, the assassin's mother, threatening, "Us Nazis'll kill ya."

A CALLER on Dec. 9 from Logan, Utah, urged that Hoover be immediately informed "that President Kennedy was not dead, and the apparent assassination was a right-left hoax engineered by the FBI to trap the Mafia."

One man called the FBI and said he had stopped at a gas station in

Scottsdale, Ariz., six months after the assassination and in a telephone booth in a phone booth he found "John Wilks Booth" and "John F. Kennedy" written on the front page. The middle name of the killer of Abraham Lincoln had been spelled incorrectly.

After questioning the owner of the gas station and others, the FBI concluded "no one had noticed any questionable persons in the telephone booth."

Other documents portrayed the FBI as being wary and truculent in its dealings with the CIA during this period. At one stage, an assistant to Assistant FBI Director William Sullivan wrote a memo saying the only way to deal with CIA agents was to treat them firmly for the best protection of the FBI's interests.

A DAY AFTER Oswald was killed by Ruby, Hoover sent three basic questions to the Dallas field office. He ordered them to find out: if anyone had been conspiring with Ruby to accomplish Oswald's death; to find out Ruby's motive for killing Oswald; and to discover if any police officers or persons operating under the cover of the law "willfully permitted Oswald to be shot."

The investigation basically became an intense exploration into the lives of both Oswald, the ex-Marine who once lived in the Soviet Union, and the Chicago-born Ruby who lived on the fringes of society as a gambler and proprietor of sleazy nightclubs.

Early messages ordered background checks of everyone of Ruby's relations and to discover particularly if there ever had been mental illness in his family. Within two days agents in Chicago reported one acquaintance thought Ruby might have been shellshocked during World War II while he was in the Army Air Corps but in short order other agents found that there was no substance to reports that Ruby had a plate in his head to account for his emotional behavior.

WITHIN 24 hours after Oswald was shot, Hoover informed the Dallas of-

fice that it was checking the State Department and CIA for any records of a Ruby trip to Havana, Cuba. It was learned that Ruby had gone to Havana in September, 1959 — nine months after Fidel Castro took power — for one week, ostensibly to visit the manager of a casino. A woman named Elaine Mignier from San Francisco, told agents she had taken a message in code from Ruby to gambler Lewis McWillie prior to the visit. But first inspection of the FBI records did not disclose the results of this phase of the probe.

Special Agent in Charge at Dallas Gordon Shanklin told Hoover by the night of Nov. 24 that Ruby said no one else was involved in his killing of Oswald and that no one knew what he was going to do.

Officials emphasized that the FBI files contain all sorts of reports, with various levels of accuracy or lack of it, about the Kennedy assassination. They said the material is the raw data that flows into the hands of investigators at every stage of an investigation and that much of the material is uncorroborated or single-source information.

This raw information is said to include numerous rumors and unverified reports as well as information that was checked out and became part of the official Warren Commission report.

THE FBI HAS eliminated the names of any witnesses or informants whose identities they think must be kept secret, as is often done to protect persons named in CIA and FBI documents being made public.

Some officials said they hoped to lease of the documents would help put an end to speculations about unproven conspiracies in connection with Kennedy's murder. Others acknowledged that the nature of the documents, sometimes unchecked and often unverifiable, is more likely to set off a new wave of conspiracy theories rather than to dispose of them.

"This is the raw, unchecked stuff, just as we got it at the time of the president's murder 14 years ago," one official said. "Most of the docu-

ments aren't going to show you anything you haven't heard or read before. And some of it is probably pretty far-fetched, but it's all there so people can see what we had to wade through when we were hot on the case."

AMONG THE major questions that still excite controversy are:

- Is the conclusion of the Warren Commission valid that Oswald, the ex-Marine who once lived in Russia, acted alone and was not part of a conspiracy when he planned and carried out the assassination of Kennedy?
- How many shots were fired at Kennedy and was Oswald the only gunman? There were reports of gunshot sounds and smoke puffs from the grass and witnesses who concluded they saw shadows and silhouettes of other possible gunmen on the grassy knoll in front of the president's limousine.
- Did some shots come from the front as the sharp backward movement of Kennedy's head suggests to some critics?
- What is the explanation for discovery of the unmarked bullet that was found on the stretcher of Kennedy after he arrived at the Parkland Hospital where he was pronounced dead?
- Why did nightclub owner Ruby wait until Sunday morning to shoot Oswald when he could even more easily have shot the suspected assassin in Dallas police headquarters during the previous two days as the suspect was paraded through the halls repeatedly?
- Did Ruby arrive at the police station just in time to shoot Oswald by coincidence or by careful advance planning, and was he acting alone?
- There have been conflicting reports about whether Oswald and Ruby knew one another and some assassination buffs claim Ruby's role was that of co-conspirator assigned to silence Oswald.
- Why did Oswald shoot a Dallas policeman, J.D. Tippitt, shortly after he had slain Kennedy?
- Is there any substance to recurrent rumors that Kennedy's death had been ordered by Fidel Castro,

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angered at learning that the Kennedys were plotting through the CIA to have the Cuban leader assassinated?

- Was Oswald given his orders by foreigners when he visited Mexico City a few weeks before the assassination?
- Was Oswald ever an informant or tool of the FBI or CIA, and did either agency have advance knowledge that Oswald was a threat to the president's life?

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—United Press International—
Reporters scour masses of internal FBI reports gathered in the investigation of John F. Kennedy's assassination. The 40,000 pages of material were released by the bureau today.