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Wade's remarks about Oswald enraged Hoover

By BOB DUDNEY 12/10/77

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WASHINGTON — Statements made by Henry Wade about Lee Harvey Oswald so infuriated J. Edgar Hoover that a background check into the district attorney's FBI years was ordered and Dallas agents were told to keep him "at arm's length."

The late FBI director also told J. Lee Rankin, chief counsel to the Warren Commission, that Wade "grossly distorted" the possibility that the assassin of President Kennedy might be an informant unknown even to FBI headquarters, and that his testimony "would not hold water," according to newly released FBI files.

Hoover disputed Wade's assertion, as recounted in a private meeting with Rankin, that as an FBI agent stationed in South America during World War II the bureau kept no records of funds given to informants. The implication, which the commission considered extremely serious, was that Oswald could have worked for the FBI without leav-

ing any trace.

The Wade testimony apparently fueled the suspicion — which lingers to this day among those with well-honed senses of conspiracy — of Oswald's government connections that Hoover was trying desperately to dispel. The result was a deep chill between the FBI and the prosecutor's office which has never been publicly detailed.

"I told Mr. Rankin that I most certainly could say that at least for the last 20 years I know Mr. Wade's statements would not hold water," Hoover wrote in a memorandum of his conversation with the chief counsel. "Every cent is strictly accounted for and the identity of every informant is known."

After the meeting with Rankin, Hoover apparently moved immediately to get a full briefing of Wade's career as an FBI agent in 1941-42 because in the Jan. 31, 1964, memo to top FBI officials he observed that he had found fault with the district attorney's version of his severance from the bureau.

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"He (Rankin) stated Wade advised the commission that he had left the bureau with a good record and that, in fact, the bureau had endeavored to dissuade him from leaving," Hoover wrote. "The summary on Wade ... does not substantiate this last statement."

The memorandum then stated that after Wade left to enter the service "he sought reinstatement, stating he had made a mistake in resigning," but that an FBI request that his draft deferment be terminated had already gone through.

In an interview Friday, Wade said he was at a loss to understand the statement. "I know they would have taken me back, as far as I can tell," Wade said. "On the day I was sworn into the Navy I got a telegram from the FBI saying permission to enter the service was denied because they wanted me in the FBI."

Hoover also voluntarily sent a statement affirming his admirable public service in the FBI during one of his political campaigns in later years, Wade added.

"In addition to the matter of Wade's leaving, the FBI memorandum also sheds light on the subsequent Warren Commission inclusion of Wade's informant payroll records in its mass of documents, an incident that appeared to make little sense at the time.

"I would like now to have a further analysis of exactly how Wade operated and how monies were paid to him as well as a listing of the funds supplied him and what disposition he made of them," Hoover instructed.

"Wade has certainly grossly misinterpreted to the (Warren Commission) the manner in which the bureau operates its informants and it is the desire of the commission and most certainly that of