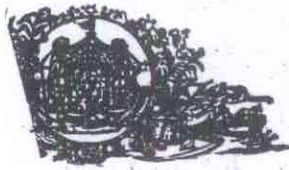


THE



HERALD

Thursday, December 8, 1977

Four Sections 15¢

files

—Hoover advised fledging President Lyndon Johnson within hours of Kennedy's death that he believed Oswald, who was arrested quickly, "probably" fired the fatal shots.

—Although Hoover never had any doubts Oswald was the lone triggerman, however, he and Secret Service Chief James Rowley both saw possibilities of a conspiracy from the outset.

—Hoover's own suspicions focused quickly on possibilities of a Castro Cuban plot because the FBI had obtained letters purportedly written to Oswald from an unidentified person in Cuba, praising his abilities as a sharpshooter and apparently urging him to kill Kennedy to please the Cuban's "chief."

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John Fitzgerald Kennedy

MORNING



104th Year No. 287

Hagerstown, Md.

FBI opens Kennedy

WASHINGTON (UPI) — J. Edgar Hoover himself questioned whether Lee Harvey Oswald alone assassinated John F. Kennedy, and ordered his agents to check vague, tantalizing evidence of a Cuban conspiracy, FBI documents disclosed Wednesday.

But the Cuban leads apparently proved uncheckable, and there seemed to be nothing else in the 40,000 pages of FBI documents released Wednesday that would invalidate the Warren Commission's main findings.

Namely, that Oswald — whom Hoover called a pro-Castro "nut"—acted alone in killing Kennedy in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963, and that Jack Ruby acted alone in killing Oswald two days later.

The bureau, under pressure of a

Freedom of Information suit, released half of its long-guarded, moderately censored Kennedy assassination files in a flood Wednesday morning. It planned to release another 40,000-plus pages in January.

Initial scrutiny of the voluminous first batch—a half-tone stack of 25,000 unedited memos and raw investigative reports, including rumors and false leads—suggested Hoover ordered an immediate, all-out FBI effort to identify Kennedy's killer and follow all conspiracy leads.

It also showed the director was very sensitive to innuendo that the FBI had been derelict in not recognizing Oswald as a potential assassin, and issued handwritten orders to muzzle an agent —

James Hosty of the Dallas bureau—who had been quoted as saying the bureau knew beforehand Oswald was capable of killing the president.

"Tell Dallas to tell Hosty to keep his mouth shut," Hoover scrawled at the bottom of an inter-office memo dated April 24, 1964. "He has already done irreparable harm."

And, in a letter written Dec. 10, 1963, to a sympathetic private citizen, Hoover stated that, even though agents had held Oswald under surveillance since he returned from life as a defector in Russia, "we had no information indicating that Lee Harvey Oswald was a possible assassin."

Main points disclosed by the files released Wednesday:

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—Hoover confided in Johnson about these letters—apparently never authenticated, and never given the Warren Commission—20 days after Kennedy's killing. He persuaded Johnson to quash a Justice Department proposal that the government tentatively identify Oswald as the lone assassin, without conspirators, and Ruby as Oswald's lone killer.

—Voluminous supporting FBI documents make clear, however, that agents concluded after investigating hundreds of tips that Oswald did act alone in killing Kennedy, even though he "frankly" denied any involvement according to one memo.

—Similar documentation also makes clear the bureau concluded that Ruby, by himself, shot Oswald. Agents quoted him as saying he did the deed "in a moment of insanity." There was considerable fretting, but no real explanation, over how Ruby managed to walk right up to Oswald in the basement of the Dallas police department.

—The FBI documents occasionally mention CIA participation in the probe, but include no samples of CIA assistance.

The files included a report that Lee Rankin, general counsel for the Warren Commission, said some members of the commission believed the job of protecting the president should be transferred from the Secret Service to the FBI.

The author of the report, Hoover aide A.H. Belmont, said he expressed doubt the



Lee Harvey Oswald

director would approve such a switch because he wanted to keep the bureau small, with limited responsibilities, and not turn it into a "national police force" with too much power.

Indication of Hoover's conspiracy suspicions occurs at more than one point in the material — including a memo written hours after the slaying — but is most clearly stated in a staff memorandum he wrote Dec. 12, 1963.

In it, he described a meeting he had had with Johnson concerning a Justice Department proposal that an interim statement be issued identifying Oswald as the lone assassin, without "foreign or subversive" support and with no links to Ruby.

"I flatly disagreed," Hoover wrote, with the proposal to give those conclusions official government approval so quickly.

He said Johnson sided with him.

"I said I personally believe Oswald was the assassin," Hoover wrote, but added: "The second aspect as to whether he was the only man gives me great concern."

He said he confided to Johnson "that we have letters, not in the (early FBI) report because we were not able to prove it, written to him from Cuba referring to the job he was going to do, his good marksmanship, and stating when it was all over he would be brought back to Cuba and presented to the chief."



Jack Ruby