

FBI Sought to Stop Oswald Rumors

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI went to great lengths in 1964 to discredit rumors that Lee Harvey Oswald had been a paid FBI informant. J. Edgar Hoover called the rumors "a planned smear by the communists" against his agency.

The voluminous FBI assassination files released Wednesday include affidavits sent to the Warren Commission from 10 FBI agents and Hoover himself that Oswald was not an FBI informant and that the bureau had never tried to enlist him as an informer.

FBI agents had interviewed Oswald twice in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1962 after his return from Russia and again in New Orleans on Aug. 10, 1963, at Oswald's request after he was arrested for disturbing the peace while distrib-

uting leaflets for the "Fair Play for Cuba Committee."

The first two interviews, Hoover said, were "to assess the possibility of his having been given intelligence assignments by the Soviets." The FBI decided he was neither a spy, nor a good candidate for an informant.

FBI Agent John W. Fain, who conducted the first two interviews, said in his affidavit that during both, "Lee Harvey Oswald exhibited an arrogant and hostile attitude, and in view of his uncooperative attitude I never felt that he could be trusted to furnish any reliable information."

No effort was made to recruit him and "no suggestion, either express or implied, was ever made that Oswald might act as an informant for the FBI

or for any government agency," Fain swore.

Dallas District Attorney Henry M. Wade told the Warren Commission that he had heard Oswald had been paid \$200 a month as an FBI informant. Hoover, in a bureau memo, called Wade "an absolute skunk."

Hoover in his affidavit also denied Wade's claim, based upon the D.A.'s brief service with the FBI during World War II, that FBI headquarters sometimes did not know who its agents' informants were.

The FBI kept tabs on Oswald from Oct. 23, 1959, when it spotted a story in the Corpus Christi Times saying he had defected to the Soviet Union. William Sullivan, then a top Hoover aide, said in a Jan. 28, 1964, memo that

Oswald denied in the 1962 interview that he was acting as a spy for the Soviets, and no "information from other sources indicated that Oswald had been recruited by the Soviets."

At the interview Oswald requested the New Orleans jail. "He admitted FPCC (Fair Play for Cuba Committee) activities in New Orleans, but there was no further indication of intelligence recruitment or other subversive activities," Sullivan said. The agent conducting the interview said Oswald gave "no indication why he wanted to talk to an FBI agent."

"The information developed about Oswald prior to the assassination. President Kennedy 11-22-63 did not suggest in any way that he represent a threat to the personal safety of the president," he concluded.

To answer critics who would say the FBI should have kept a closer watch on Oswald, Sullivan observed:

"Literally thousands of people come to our attention each year who exhibit unusual behavior, oppose those in public office and profess support for extremist movements of both the right and left."

"The bureau is extremely careful to make certain we have sound basis for our investigation ... We must always be careful to maintain a proper balance between the indiscriminate invasion of privacy and the need for protection of the national security."

Sullivan, in another memo, stressed the importance of the FBI's issuing public denial of the "wild and fiducious allegations that Lee Harvey Oswald was a paid informant for the FBI ..."

If the FBI kept silent, "attacks on us in the press on this point may increase. Our silence will be taken as an admission of guilt. Six months from now when the (Warren) Commission issues its report, the falsehood will be widely distributed that it will be more difficult to refute it," Sullivan said.