

Congressional Roundup

Secret C.I.A. File Shows Agents Followed

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 12 — A Central Intelligence Agency file includes information that shows that agents kept track of Lee Harvey Oswald's travels in the years before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, Congressional officials said today.

The 110-page file was given to the Senate Government Affairs Committee and made available to reporters. Robert M. Gates, the Director of Central Intelligence, appeared before the committee and said he had ordered the file to be made public within days.

Of the 33 documents in the file, only 11 were written by C.I.A. officials. Most of the others were written by agencies that included the Federal Bureau of Investigation and were sent to the C.I.A. All but six of the documents have previously been made public.

The documents generally confirm what has long been known about Oswald's movements before the assassination. They do not appear to resolve the question of whether there was a conspiracy.

The documents suggest that there was a mild government interest in Oswald beginning with his defection to the Soviet Union and extending to his visit to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City a month before the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

A committee aide said some documents mentioned Oswald's service in the Marines and his posting at an air base in Japan.

Mr. Gates's announcement of the declassification of the file represented a first trickle in what could soon be a vast river of assassination documents to be made public soon. He testified on legislation to create a review board to speed the disclosure of the estimated one million documents on the case still

in the Government's hands.

The legislation is an effort to respond to public skepticism about the official accounts of the Kennedy assassination and revived interest in the matter produced by the film "J.F.K."

The movie, which challenged a central finding of a Presidential review commission, has been criticized by historians as distorting the facts. The commission concluded that Oswald acted alone when he shot Kennedy.

James Lesar, a lawyer who operates the Assassination Archive and Research Center in Washington, told The Associated Press that based on a cursory reading, the documents had been available to researchers.

Mr. Gates and William S. Sessions, the Director of the F.B.I., who also testified today, before, embraced the goal of opening the records. But they warned that the powers the legislation would grant the review board encroached on executive branch prerogatives, like the authority to protect classified information.

DAVID JOHNSTON

Voter Registration

Senate Republicans today managed to kill a measure intended to make voter registration easier, most of all by allowing people to sign up as they renew their driver's licenses.

The Administration had already been promising to veto the bill, asserting that the Democratic proposal would increase fraud at the polls. But the Democrats vowed to make an issue out of what they saw as a Republican effort to keep minority members and the disadvantaged from voting.

The Democrats fell two votes short of the 60 votes needed to limit debate.

Three Republican senators, Mark O. Hatfield and Bob Packwood of Oregon and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, joined 55 Democrats in the vote.

Known in Congress as "motor-voter," the measure would replace the patchwork of registration procedures that differ from state to state. It would require states to allow eligible citizens to register when they obtain or renew their driver's licenses. States would also be required to offer voter registration by mail. The measure would also prohibit removing a voter's name from registration rolls for failure to vote.

Democrats said the inconvenience of registration deters many citizens from voting. Republicans said turnout is high in times of crisis, and have little to do with registration rules.

"It's the vote of fearful people," Senator George J. Mitchell of Maine, the majority leader, said of the Republican effort to defeat the bill. "Why do they fear having people participate in the democratic process?"

Senator Mitch McConnell, the Kentucky Republican who led the effort against the bill, said, "Low voter turnout is a sign of a content democracy." The Democrats failed to obtain the necessary votes because Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum, Democrat of Ohio, was in the hospital for treatment of a blood clot, and Senator James M. Jeffords, Republican of Vermont, changed his position after he could not get a pledge from Democratic leaders to allow a tort reform bill to reach the floor.

CLIFFORD KRAUSS

Budget Amendment

Senator Paul Simon, the Illinois Democrat sponsoring the budget-bal-

Oswald Before 1963

ancing amendment proposal with the widest support in Congress, told the House Budget Committee today that the amendment was needed to force the White House and Congress to get serious about eliminating the deficit.

In his first testimony on the amendment since he began a new push to get it passed, Mr. Simon said, "It forces us to make the painful choice that candidly neither political party is willing to make right now."

Representative Leon E. Panetta, the California Democrat who heads the House Budget Committee, repeatedly asked Mr. Simon how the amendment would suddenly make Republicans and Democrats agree on how to reduce the deficit, after they have been unable to agree for more than a decade.

He pressed the Senator on what specific measures he would take to balance the budget. Mr. Simon said that unspecified tax increases and spending cuts would be needed, and that cutting the \$281 billion military budget could provide most of the savings.

He said he thought the amendment might come to a Senate vote in the next two weeks. "I think we have a good chance, but I'm not predicting it will pass," he said, although many other lawmakers say the amendment will probably pass this year.

Senator Paul S. Sarbanes, the Maryland Democrat who is chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, also criticized the amendment, saying it would restrict Washington's flexibility to use fiscal policy to counteract recessions.

He voiced fears that lawmakers would use their vote for the amendment as an excuse not to get serious about reducing the deficit until the states ratify it years from now.

STEVEN GREENHOUSE

New B-2 Bombers

In the first step toward ending a five-year dispute between the Pentagon and Congress, a House Armed Services Committee panel today conditionally approved the Bush Administration's request to buy 20 B-2 bombers and then halt the program.

The Pentagon originally wanted to buy 132 of the radar-evading planes, but Congress refused for the past two years to buy more than 15. Lawmakers tentatively approved a 16th aircraft last year, but attached several restrictions.

Meeting in closed session today, the panel's procurement subcommittee agreed that the Air Force could buy four more of the bat-winged aircraft until the plane proved its stealthiness and the total program cost did not exceed \$44.4 billion.

The full House Armed Services Committee is expected to approve the measure on Wednesday.

The panel's research and development subcommittee, which also met today, cut \$1.1 billion from the Administration's request of \$5.4 billion for the Strategic Defense Initiative. The reduction, while more conservative than the committee has approved in prior years, would strip space-based weaponry from the program.

The entire House of Representatives as well as the Senate would still have to approve the B-2 plan before it took effect, and there are serious challenges to the B-2's budget this year and next. The Senate voted last week to trim \$1 billion from the B-2 this year.

But the prevailing mood among many B-2 opponents, particularly in the House, is to declare victory and move on to other issues.

ERIC SCHMITT