

5-25-76
Memphis Press Scimitar
p. 8

JFK Death Questions Develop

Hart Regrets Role In Murder Probe

By RICHARD STARNES
Scripture-Honored Staff Writer

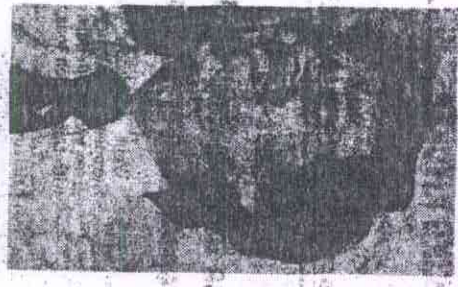
WASHINGTON — Words such as "abcretely," "quietly," "tastefully," "diplomatically" and "professionally" keep recurring when Sen. Gary Hart, D-Ohio, talks about the hottest of Washington hot potatoes — the demand by a Senate committee that there be an investigation of the Castro connection with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

At 53, Sen. Hart is a new political politician who very quickly has learned the can-tious footwork of an old politics veteran. He is frankly dismayed to be at the center of the renewed investigation into the century's most atrocious political murder.

"I am not a conspiracist," Hart said recently. "I deplore those who have made a career out of the John Kennedy assassination. It is pure happenstance that I got into this at all. I am unhappy, very reluctant, to be in it."

But in it Hart is. With Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, R-Pa., Hart is co-chairman of the Senate Intelligence Subcommittee that is just now wading up its investigation of the growing skein of circumstantial evidence that appears to connect the John Kennedy assassination with repeated CIA attempts to murder Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

The Hart-Schweiker subcommittee was formed to investigate the efficiency with which the CIA and the FBI had done their work in probing the Kennedy assassination. The subcommittee learned that both agencies had withheld information from the Warren Commission.



SENATOR HART

A Profusion of Leads

THE MAJOR CONSEQUENCE, Hart and Schweiker believe, was that the Warren Commission, its investigative eyes blinded, could only conclude that it had no evidence of a conspiracy. But the Hart-Schweiker subcommittee had developed a profusion of leads which both senators believe could produce the hard evidence of a conspiracy.

There is no need to call into question the principal finding of the Warren Commission: that Lee Harvey Oswald did in fact pull the trigger," Hart observed. "But the whole question of his motivation is open. The CIA was attempting to assassinate Castro before, during and after the Kennedy assassination. Castro knew this, and had gone out of his way to warn American correspondents that the lives of U.S. leaders would be in jeopardy if the attempt continued. This was the vital connection the Warren Commission remained in ignorance of."

An Overlay of Conspiracy

BUT THERE WAS MORE. Hart notes that a seething hell-brew of intrigue and subversion flooded the southern United States when the CIA's secret war against Castro was called off by President Kennedy after the Cuban missile crisis.

"The CIA's army of Cuban exiles didn't all return to Miami and open restaurants," Hart says. "They, or many of them, went underground in every city in the South from Miami to Dallas. They conspired, they had factional disputes, there were leadership struggles, intrigue, mystery. All during the pre-assassination period, this was going on. It was an incredible overlay of conspiracy, a vast nexus of possible assassination motives."

Hart notes the principal questions that now seem to cry out for answers from beyond the grave: "Where did these conspirators get their money? Their arms? What was the Mafia connection? Why know the Mafia had lost millions in Cuba when Castro took over. We know something of his role in (Castro) assassination attempt. What of possible connections between Oswald and this group?"

It is this "intricate network" that the Senate permanent intelligence committee has been asked to investigate. Hart had hoped his part in it was drawing to a close. "For one thing," he notes, "I think it detracts from some of the much more important initiatives I've taken."

Some Unpopular Initiatives

IMPORTANT AMONG these initiatives, according to Hart's staff, are two that have earned him the disfavor of two of Washington's most formidable pressure groups. One is a bill calling for a pilot project to pass death sentences on a number of federal agencies which fail to pass an automatic period review. More important to Hart's political survival is his co-sponsorship of a bill to break up the big oil companies.

Hart is an unlikely product of both the schools of divinity and law at Yale, a former government attorney, married and the father of a daughter 11 and a son, 9. Running for the Senate was his first stab at elective office. He first won celebrity as a political technician by organizing Sen. George McGovern's successful drive for the Democratic nomination four years ago.

GARY HART
COLORADO

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
PUBLIC WORKS

COLORADO OFFICE:
1200 WILLIAMS STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80218
(303) 837-4421

United States Senate

May 21, 1976

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Rt. 12
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Last week the Senate Intelligence Committee voted to forward all information it has received on the Kennedy assassination to the new Select Committee on Intelligence Activities with a recommendation that the new committee continue and complete the inquiry.

The investigation to date has not been an attempt to reopen the Warren Commission, nor has it been an effort to investigate every new allegation with respect to the assassination of President Kennedy. Rather, in accordance with Senate Resolution 21 which established the Select Committee, it has been an attempt to examine the manner in which our intelligence agencies performed, or did not perform, their intelligence mission in this particular case.

The Select Committee found that in certain important areas, our intelligence agencies did not fulfill their mission very well. Certain leads were not investigated and some relevant information was withheld from the very officials of those agencies charged with the responsibility for investigation of the assassination.

The Select Committee decided that this new information was too important to be put aside. This inquiry must be completed, and I hope it can be completed soon. We must put this tragic chapter in our history behind us.

Sincerely,



Gary Hart
U.S.S.

No reply up to 28jun76

10 June 1976

Sen. Gary Hart
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

The enclosed book review deals with another approach to what has concerned your and Sen. Schweiker's intelligence subcommittee -- the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and its consequences.

It considers conclusions that differ from those of your subcommittee, and I invade your time and attention in the belief that you should know what those differences are.

This is not to criticize. I do not know your problems, and do not underestimate them thanks to the same decades in handling foreign and domestic news that led to this review.

The Pacific Sun is a suburban weekly (near San Francisco) which ordinarily deals with Marin County, but its Literary Quarterly is unrestricted.

With every best wish,

James D. White
35 Castle Rock Drive
Mill Valley, Calif. 94941

Hill Prober Of CIA Gets Agency Quiz

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

Four men with spooky backgrounds interrogated a U.S. senator yesterday in the kind of role reversal that can only happen in Washington.

Two years ago the Senate Select Intelligence Committee embarked on months-long grilling of the highest officials of the CIA about some of their most embarrassing secrets, including assassination plots, domestic operations and other arcane matters.

Yesterday, one of the investigating senators, Gary Hart, D-Colo., cheerfully submitted to a barrage of questions from ex-CIA Director William L. Colby, former CIA counsel Lawrence Huston and two high-ranking, retired military intelligence officers.

THE PROBE of the intelligence committee lasted from January 1975 until May 1976, producing a six-volume report and seven volumes of testimony about CIA attempts to murder Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba and other foreign leaders. Yesterday's turnabout questioning of Hart, which was voluntary and amiable, lasted less than an hour.

It was almost a love feast as the once-beleaguered witnesses who had divulged the CIA's innermost secrets to the senatorial interrogators put hard questions of their own to one of the inquisitors. Some of the old-hand members of the Association of Former Intelligence Agents in the audience grumbled as Hart fielded the panel's questions, as if unable to comprehend how far things have come since the CIA acknowledged its plots, ploys and secret James Bond-type devices.

But all laughed uproariously when the young senator said, "If Congress can rehabilitate its own image, we can move on the images of the intelligence agencies."

HART SAID the mistakes of a few are damaging to all. The difference is, he added, that intelligence officials can never talk about their successes while politicians are always talking about theirs.

Hart — who was there when CIA officials were in the dock before the committee once headed by Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, and now chaired by Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii — told the panelists he does not anticipate any punitive legislation against the intelligence community.

The issue of criminal culpability, he said, is for Justice Department and White House policy-makers to decide. Hart also said, in reply to a question from Colby, that he did not know if the committee planned an annual public assessment of U.S. intelligence performance.

Huston, the one-time CIA counsel, asked how well the committee has kept the secrets and documents furnished it by the intelligence agencies. Hart said the record is very good on the handling of documents. The problem, he said, comes of what the committee should tell the full Senate.

"IF THE COMMITTEE is briefed on a covert operation," Hart said, "we would go into an executive session of the Senate and leave it to them in light of all security considerations. But in the eight months of the Inouye Committee, we haven't had occasion to do that."

Hart also said he did not think there would be any public release of the CIA and other intelligence agency budgets. He said the committee would disclose only comprehensive figures and added, "I see no strong movement for detailed or line-item releases. We may or may not break the figures down by agencies."

Hart told Huston he agrees in principle that more protection of intelligence secrets is needed. "This week," he said, "I asked the committee staff to ask the CIA what such a statute would look like. It's a very fine line but it's not an impossible one. We have to protect sources of information and intelligence methods, but we also have to let the American people know how their money is being spent. Above all, we have to protect the First Amendment."

Hart said some members of Congress are troubled about the excesses of covert operations. The key is to establish a record of responsibility and distinct lines of authority.

The other participants in the panel were Lt. Col. Bert Cumby, former military intelligence officer and employe of the State Department and Col. Walter Hammond, a former Air Force intelligence officer.