

JFK files may reveal secrets

Moves to open sealed documents could show mob involvement and Oswald's ties to FBI and CIA

By Dan Freedman

EXAMINER WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The release of secret files on John Kennedy's assassination could provide tantalizing leads on possible mob links to the killing and on Lee Harvey Oswald's connections to the FBI and the CIA.

Scattered among hundreds of thousands of documents in CIA and FBI vaults may be the answers to such questions as:

► What do FBI surveillance tapes tell about New Orleans Mafia boss Carlos Marcello's comments on the assassination?

► Why did an FBI official order the destruction of a letter from Lee Harvey Oswald delivered to the bureau's Dallas office?

In addition to the 848 boxes of House Select Committee on Assassinations material gathering dust in the National Archives, the FBI and CIA hold as many as 750,000 pages of unreleased or heavily edited documents, according to

James Lesar, a lawyer who heads the private Washington-based Assassinations Archives and Research Center.

"In all likelihood, there is no smoking gun," he said, "but that doesn't mean there isn't valuable information."

Thanks largely to Oliver Stone's film "JFK," commentators and politicians are calling for release of all secret government files on the Kennedy murder.

Stone's own theory could be among the first to live or die with full disclosure. His movie is based on the theory that an amalgam of CIA, Pentagon, FBI and industrial conspirators designed the assassination because they were dismayed over Kennedy's reported intention to phase out U.S. troops from Vietnam.

So far, the reactions of the FBI and CIA to calls for a public airing have been tepid.

Under the law, the FBI is restricted from releasing information on sensitive investigative methods. "If the Congress changes the law and gives me guidance that says I must deal with those documents in a different fashion, then the law will be followed," FBI Director William Sessions said last week. But he added, "It is always dangerous for any person to suggest we should simply open up our files because of potential damage to investigative techniques."

Moves are under way in Con-

gress to authorize the release of all secret files related to the assassination.

Rep. Henry Gonzalez, D-Texas, a friend of Kennedy who was in the presidential motorcade on the day of the killing, last week introduced a resolution calling for opening of House files now scheduled to stay sealed until 2029. Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, also favors release of the records. Both men chaired the House Assassinations Committee.

House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., also has recommended opening the files.

In a terse statement, the CIA said it had already disgorged all its pertinent files to the House assassinations committee.

G. Robert Blakey, former chief counsel to the House panel, said committee members and staff had unlimited access to the CIA's files, but to only selected FBI transcripts of wiretapped mob conversations. "We could have missed a crucial conversation," said Blakey, now a professor at the University of Notre Dame.

Like Lesar, Blakey doubted the files would disclose definitive answers, "but you might find more circumstantial evidence that will fill out the picture."

Washington is awash with records that could augment the published conclusions of the House committee and the Warren Commission. Both concluded that Oswald was the sole assassin.

What about KGB files? Blakey recalled getting a stone-faced "nyet" from Soviet Embassy officials when he broached the subject in the 1970s. Files of the KGB might contain wiretap transcripts and reports of KGB informants on the circumstances surrounding Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his return to the United States in 1962.

What about the Pentagon and the State Department? Lesar said that anyone giving a whiff of credence to Stone's Vietnam theory would want to look for clues in files there.

Former Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., chaired a Senate panel in the 1970s that looked into the part of the CIA and the FBI in the assassination investigation. He believes the documents could prove that Oswald was both a CIA and FBI informant.

Schweiker said that during his digging he was shocked to learn that the Warren Commission permitted the CIA and the FBI to coordinate their answers to questions about official links to Oswald.

Now the president of the American Council of Life Insurance, Schweiker recalled seeing a transcript of a phone conversation in which CIA and FBI liaisons agreed they would both tell the Warren panel that Oswald never worked for either agency.

"A release would clear the air," Schweiker said. Examiner news services contributed to this report.

JFK: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Among the mysteries that might be illuminated through document disclosure are:

Mafia

Were Teamsters Union boss Jimmy Hoffa, New Orleans Mafia boss Carlos Marcello and Florida Mafia boss Santos Trafficante involved in the assassination?



Hoffa

Earlier this month, Hoffa's lawyer, Frank Ragano, said that in early 1963 he carried a message from Hoffa to Marcello and Trafficante that "they had to kill the president."

In 1979, the FBI bugged Marcello and made three still-secret tapes in which Marcello discusses the Kennedy assassination. In one, Marcello reportedly tells an FBI informant asking questions about the assassination to "shut up" because of possible surveillance.

According to the informant, Joseph Hauser, Marcello said he employed Oswald as a runner in his betting operation. Hauser also said Marcello's brother Joseph, when asked about the dead president and his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy who was assassinated in 1968, responded: "Don't worry. We took care of them, didn't we?"



Kennedy

Central Intelligence Agency

The CIA monitored Lee Harvey Oswald's trip to Mexico City one month before the JFK assassination. On Sept. 27, 1963, Oswald applied for a visa at the Cuban Embassy. The CIA later said its surveillance camera outside the embassy was on the blink throughout Oswald's visit.

But on Oct. 10, the CIA tipped off the FBI that it had caught Oswald in the cross-hairs of its camera outside the Soviet Embassy. It isn't clear why the CIA believed it was Oswald, since the photos showed a man who did not look anything like him.



Oswald

Federal Bureau of Investigation



Ruby

SOURCE: Examiner Washington Bureau

FBI agents kept tabs on Oswald in New Orleans in early 1963 when he was distributing leaflets supportive of Cuban leader Fidel Castro. A few weeks before the assassination, Oswald was in Dallas delivering a handwritten message to an FBI agent, James Hosty, who had been making inquiries based on Oswald's receipt of leftist literature. According to Hosty, Oswald warned him to refrain from questioning Oswald's Soviet-born wife Marina.

For inexplicable reasons, Gordon Shanklin, the FBI agent in charge in Dallas, ordered Hosty to "get rid" of the note after Oswald was himself assassinated by Jack Ruby. Hosty complied by flushing it down a toilet.

EXAMINER GRAPHICS

N.Y. pro-Castro rally draws 3,000

REUTER

NEW YORK — A controversial pro-Fidel Castro indoor rally drew 3,000 supporters Saturday while more than 15,000 opposition demonstrators braved howling winds and sub-freezing temperatures to protest outside.

Security was tight for the pro-Castro rally at the Jacob Javits

Convention Center. The rally, which made a plea for better U.S. relations with Cuba and an end to the economic blockade against the troubled Communist country, featured actors Martin Sheen, Harry Belafonte, and former Attorney General Ramsey Clark.

Actor Kris Kristofferson, who was unable to attend, had a statement read to the capacity crowd.