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F.B.I. Chiefs Linked To Oswald File Loss

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 14— Top officials of the Federal Bureau of Investigation—probably including former Director J. Edgar Hoover—ordered the destruction of a letter in which Lee Harvey Oswald, assassin of President Kennedy, conveyed violent threats about 10 days before he killed the President, according to a source familiar with the meeting where this decision was made.

The sources said that the decision to destroy the letter, which made threats against the Dallas police, was taken at a meeting of top F.B.I. officials

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in Washington on the weekend after President Kennedy was murdered in Dallas on Friday, Nov. 22, 1963.

The F.B.I. has always maintained that it had no reason to believe that Oswald was capable of violence and therefore had not filed reports on him with the Secret Service.

The source said that the decision to destroy the letter was made because of potential embarrassment to the F.B.I., and not to hinder the investigation of President Kennedy's death.

The existence and destruction of the letter was first reported two weeks ago by The Dallas Times-Herald.

The letter's destruction was cited by Senator Richard S. Schweiker, Pennsylvania Republican, as a prime reason for his introduction of a Senate resolution on Sept. 8, directing the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to inquire into Mr. Kennedy's murder as part of its investigation of the F.B.I. and Central Intelligence Agency. The resolution is pending.

Senator Schweiker said in an interview last week that since

he introduced his resolution, his office received information that strengthened his belief that 17 still-secret reports from the F.B.I. and 23 from the C.I.A. to the Warren Commission might contain information that the public should have.

The order to destroy the letter was relayed to Dallas, where the letter was on file, by one of Mr. Hoover's assistants, but the assistant would never have ordered the destruction of possible evidence except on Mr. Hoover's expressed order, the source said.

Both Mr. Hoover and James P. Hosty Jr., the F.B.I. agent who received the Oswald letter, told the Warren Commission that they had no reason to believe that Oswald was capable of violence.

When he testified in April, 1964, before the commission, which investigated the assassination and found that Oswald was the lone assassin, Mr. Hosty said:

"Prior to the assassination of the President of the United States, I had no information indicating violence on the part of Lee Harvey Oswald. I wish the record to so read."

Clarence M. Kelley, who became F.B.I. Director in 1973 after Mr. Hoover's death, has said that there is evidence that the letter was received and de-

The F.B.I. refused last week to direct Mr. Hosty to break his silence and discuss the destruction of the letter, an action that has prompted a growing demand to reopen the investigation of the assassination. Mr. Hosty, now working in the F.B.I. office at Kansas City, Mo., has refused to be interviewed.

An F.B.I. spokesman said that any comment would be "inappropriate" at this time, because an internal F.B.I. investigation of the incident was under way.

The Oswald letter contained a threat to "blow up" the Dal-

las Police Department, said the source familiar with the meeting that ordered the destruction of the letter.

Gave Name To Oswald

Early reports said that the letter threatened violence to the F.B.I. office as well as to the police department. But the source said that the letter threatened only the Dallas police, although it also told the F.B.I. to stop trying to interview Oswald's wife, Marina.

Oswald married his Russian-born wife in the Soviet Union while he was living there in 1961.

He wrote the letter in November, 1963, after Mr. Hosty had twice called on Ruth Paine, an Irving, Tex., housewife who was befriending Mrs. Oswald and her two small children.

Both Mrs. Paine and Mr. Hosty told the Warren Commission that Mr. Hosty left his name that Mr. Hosty left his name and telephone number with S. Paine on Nov. 1, 1963, to give to Oswald, who at the time was residing in a Dallas rooming house.

Mr. Hosty's name, telephone number, office address and a close approximation of his automobile license number were found in Oswald's address book by Dallas police officers after Oswald's arrest on the afternoon of Nov. 22, 1963.

Mrs. Paine said that she had given Mr. Hosty's name and telephone number to Oswald, and that Oswald later told her he had gone to see the F.B.I. agent.

Mr. Hosty testified that he had gone to Mrs. Paine's home as part of a routine check that he was making on Oswald. He said that a file on Oswald, which had been closed, was reopened because of Oswald's activities with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Castro group, and because Oswald had begun subscribing to the Com-

munist party newspaper, The Worker.

The file had originally been opened because of Oswald's attempts to defect to the Soviet Union.

Oswald's threatening letter was apparently written and delivered after Mr. Hosty paid a second visit to the Paine home on Nov. 5.

The source outlined what occurred after Mr. Hosty's second visit, as follows:

Official Document

Several days later, Oswald hand carried the letter to the F.B.I. office in downtown Dallas. The F.B.I. office was about a quarter of a mile from the Texas School Book Depository — a textbook warehouse — where Oswald was working as a laborer.

The letter, addressed to Mr. Hosty, was left with an F.B.I. receptionist.

When Mr. Hosty read the letter, he showed it to the agent in charge of the Dallas F.B.I. office, J. Gordon Shanklin, who asked Mr. Hosty if Oswald were capable of carrying out the threat. Mr. Hosty replied that he did not know.

Mr. Shanklin then suggested that Mr. Hosty continue his search for Oswald and interview him.

In presenting the basic outline of the circumstances surrounding the letter, the source said that when the letter was given a file and item number in November, 1963, it became an official document, and that destruction of it might have violated Federal law.

In testimony and affidavits given to the Warren Commission some month after the assassination, Mr. Hoover and Mr. Hosty said that they had no reason to believe that Oswald was capable of violent action.

Shortly after the assassination, the F.B.I.'s Dallas office notified its headquarters in Washington of the existence of the letter. The meeting to discuss what to do about the letter ensued.

Some time later, Mr. Hoover sent out letters of censure to 17 agents and officials because of the incident, and Mr. Hosty was suspended without pay for 30 days and transferred to his present post in Kansas City.

The source said that Mr. Hoover "was madder than hell."

In Dallas, Mr. Shanklin, who has retired from the F.B.I. and now practices law, said that he would not discuss the letter.

"I know nothing about it," he said. "I handled only one phase of the investigation."

In one of a number of affidavits that he filed with the Warren Commission, Mr. Hoover denied rumors that Oswald had been an F.B.I. informer. Mr. Hoover listed "all" contacts that he said the F.B.I. had had with Oswald. The list did not mention the letter.