

Cover-Up In Slaying Of JFK?

Schweiker Asserts There Was
As Senate Report Is Released

By Vernon A. Guidry Jr.
Washington Star Staff Writer

The cable traffic from the CIA's Mexico City station was heavy that week in early December of the year President John F. Kennedy was killed.

Three messages to Washington headquarters might have been particularly intriguing to the Warren Commission had it known of them.

They dealt with the suspicious movements of a young Cuban-American with an out-of-date U.S. passport and a Cuban "courtesy visa."

The chain of events that the CIA learned of began Nov. 23, the day after Kennedy was shot to death as he rode in an open car in Dallas. On the 23rd, the young man entered Mexico from Texas, crossing a border that Mexican authorities had sealed the day before in response to the assassination.

IN TWO DAYS, the man had made his way to Mexico City and holed up in a hotel. Late on the evening of Nov. 27, he boarded a regularly scheduled Cubana airlines flight to Havana. He was the only passenger on the plane that had a crew of nine.

Three months later, the CIA heard from a source that the young man had won permission to enter Mexico on Nov. 20, while he was in Tampa, Fla. This same source also told the CIA that this young man was somehow involved in the death of John F. Kennedy. The CIA scarcely pursued this story but shipped the information to the FBI, which did push the plot a little further along. What the FBI came up with, according to the final report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, was a little more "confusing and incomplete information." None of it was passed on to the Commission," says the report.

ACCORDING TO Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, R-Pa., who headed the committee's examination of FBI and CIA performance as it pertained to

the investigation of Kennedy's assassination, it's just one example — and apparently far from the most promising — of the kind of information the commission needed if it was to adequately weigh the possibility that the assassination was part of a conspiracy, Cuban-hatched or otherwise.

Schweiker said that new leads requiring further investigation were purposely left out of the report in order to aid any future probe.

The chief fact kept from the commission was that the United States had hatched plots to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. Kennedy's death might have been retaliation.

In short, said Schweiker, it was a cover-up.

THAT WAS STRONG language, and the Senate colleague who participated most closely in the probe with Schweiker, Gary Hart, D-Colo., was not ready to accept it. Hart told reporters, a cover-up implies planning, collusion and conspiracy, and those elements were not present.

The men differed on the Warren Commission finding that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy. Schweiker said the CIA and FBI had withheld such vital information from the commission that "there is no longer any reason to have faith in its picture of the Kennedy assassination."

Hart said he retained confidence in the findings of the commission but believes that more investigation into Oswald's motivation could prove fruitful. Perhaps more to the point, the senators differ on the urgency with which the new, permanent successor to the Senate select committee should pick up the pieces and continue the investigation.

SCHWEIKER WAS ready to urge swift action to pick up the committee's probe. Hart, a member of the new, permanent panel, said he would favor continuing the investigation

but wasn't sure he would go all out to convince his fellow members of it.

The chairman of the new committee, Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, clearly had other priorities. A spokesman said the first priority would be forming guidelines and procedures for oversight of the intelligence agencies, and the writing of new charters for the spy arms. A decision on whether to continue the examination of the assassination investigation's adequacy could be six months away, Inouye said.

Regardless of disagreements, the language of the report endorsed by 9 of 11 members of the select committee was strong.

For one thing, the report suggests that senior officials in both agencies who kept information from subordinates doing the actual investigation may have done so consciously. The committee offers no answer, pleading the shortness of time.

The report is emphatic on one point: It "has not uncovered any evidence sufficient to justify a conclusion that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy."

The FBI, which had had brushes with Oswald before the assassination, was not too happy with its own investigative work. Within six days of the assassination, J. Edgar Hoover had a report on the FBI's performance that prompted him to discipline 17 of his men, including an assistant director. Hoover, who thought of the commission as his adversary, saw no reason to disclose this, either.