

Panel Says CIA, FBI Covered Up JFK Killing Data

Continued Hill Inquiry Suggested

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate intelligence committee said yesterday that senior officials of both the CIA and the FBI covered up crucial information in the course of investigating President Kennedy's assassination.

Issuing the final findings of its protracted investigations, the committee said it had been unable to satisfy itself as to why the Warren Commission was kept in the dark, but said that "the possibility exists that senior officials in both agencies made conscious decisions not to disclose potentially important information."

Filled with tantalizing but admittedly inconclusive details, many of them laid out for the first time, the 106-page report emphasized that it had not uncovered evidence "sufficient to justify a conclusion that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy."

But the committee said the "investigative deficiencies" it turned up were substantial enough to raise grave doubts about the Warren Commission's work and to justify continued congressional investigation.

Sen. Richard S. Schweiker

(R-Pa.), who played a key role in the Senate assassination inquiry, said it had turned up "important new leads" that were being kept secret in hopes that the permanent new Senate Intelligence Committee would pursue them effectively.

Other potentially important leads that went unpursued at the time of the assassination, according to the report, included several mysterious flights from Mexico City to Havana.

One of them reportedly involved a Cubana Airlines flight the night Kennedy was killed which was delayed in Mexico City for five hours for an unidentified passenger who finally got aboard "without passing through customs" and then "traveled to Cuba in the cockpit . . . thus again avoid-

See KENNEDY, A10, Col. 1

ing identification by the passengers."

Although the CIA received information to this effect on Dec. 1, 1963, the Senate committee said it was unable to find any indication that the CIA had conducted a follow-up investigation to determine the identity of the passenger.

The study dwelt heavily on the CIA's clandestine plotting against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro at the time of the assassination and the determination of U.S. government officials, especially at the FBI, to depict Lee Harvey Oswald as Kennedy's lone killer.

Just four days after the President's murder in Dallas

on Nov. 27, 1963, the Senate report disclosed, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach sent a memo to the White House declaring:

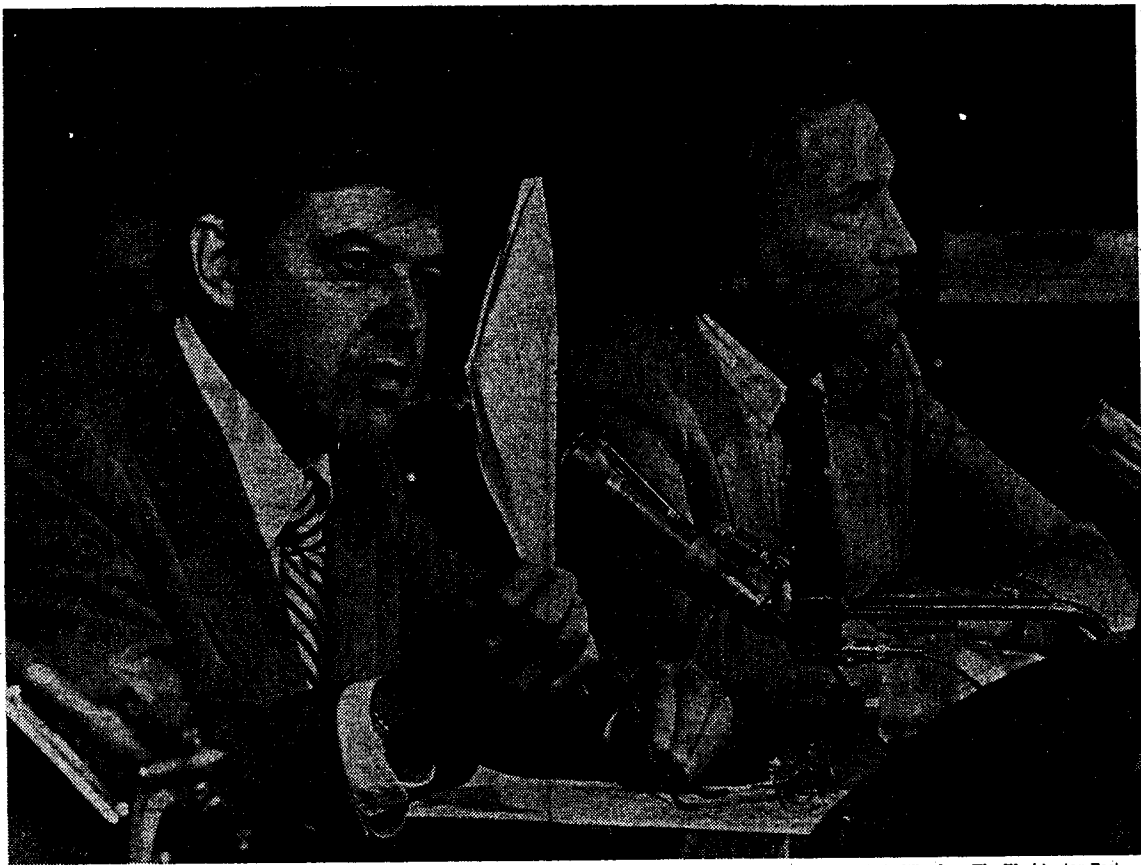
"The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial."

Speculation about Oswald's motives, the Katzenbach memo added, "ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting thought that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists."

By that time, the Senate report showed, the CIA was already making efforts to head off talk of a conspiracy. It attempted, unsuccessfully, on Nov. 23, 1963, to head off the imminent arrest by Mexican police of Sylvia Duran, an employee of the Cuban consulate in Mexico City with whom Oswald had talked on a visit there two months earlier.

Informed by the CIA's Mexico station that the arrest could not be prevented, a top-ranking official in the CIA's Directorate for Plans, Thomas Karamessines, cabled back that the arrest "could jeopardize U.S. freedom of action on the whole question of Cuban responsibility."

Questioned by the committee two months ago, Karamessines, the report said, "could not recall preparing the cable or his reasons for issuing such a message. He speculated that the CIA feared the Cubans were responsible, and that Duran might reveal this during an interrogation. He further speculated that if Duran did possess such information,



By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

Sen. Frank Church holds report on President Kennedy's assassination. Sen. Richard S. Schweiker is at right.

the CIA and the U.S. government would need time to react before it came to the attention of the public."

Repeatedly raising the possibility that the Kennedy assassination might have been a retaliation by Castro or his supporters, the committee said that the CIA had been meeting since early September with a secret Cuban agent code-named AMLASH who was proposing an "inside job" against the Castro regime, including Castro's assassination.

Although the Senate report does not use his real name, AMLASH was a senior Cuban official and Castro intimate named Rolando Cubela whom the CIA recruited in 1961 as an important "asset" inside Cuba, but whom some believe was a double agent. His talk about getting rid of Castro was communicated to CIA headquarters at Langley, Va., on Sept. 7, 1963.

Late on the evening of that same day, Sept. 7, the

against any U.S. efforts to assassinate Cuban leaders and said:

"We are prepared to fight them and answer in kind. United States leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe."

The warning apparently failed to raise any serious apprehensions in Washington.

On Sept. 12, 1963, several

days after publication of the AP dispatch in U.S. newspapers, an interagency Cuban Coordinating Committee met at the State Department and agreed unanimously "there was a strong likelihood that Castro would retaliate in some way against the rash of covert activity in Cuba."

The so-called "brainstorming" session concluded, however, that while kidnappings and attempted assassinations of U.S. citizens

in Latin America might be staged, "attacks against U.S. officials" in the United States were "unlikely."

Some CIA officials, such as the chief of counterintelligence on the Special Affairs Staff for Cuban operations, thought AMLASH's "bona fides were subject to question," but the meetings with the Cuban operative continued.

On Oct. 29, 1963, the late Desmond Fitzgerald, who was then in charge of the

Senate report said, Castro held an impromptu, three-hour interview with Associated Press reporter Daniel Harker at an embassy party in Havana. In the interview, the Cuban premier warned

CIA's Special Affairs Staff, met with Cubela after being introduced to him as a "personal representative" of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

AMLASH, the Senate report recounted, asked for an assassination weapon such as a high-powered rifle with telescopic sights. The matter was apparently left unresolved but by Nov. 19, three days before Kennedy's assassination, Fitzgerald told AMLASH's case officer to inform the Cuban "that the rifle, telescopic sights and explosives would be provided."

AMLASH, who was in Paris at the time, had been planning to return to Cuba, but on Nov. 20, 1963, the report noted, a CIA officer telephoned him and asked him to wait for a meeting on Nov. 22.

"AMLASH asked if the meeting would be interesting, and the CIA officer responded that he did not know whether it would be interesting but it was the meeting AMLASH had requested," the report said.

Thus the Nov. 20 telephone call was the first indication that he might receive the specific support he requested."

The report indicated that AMLASH met only with his CIA case officer on Nov. 22 and not Fitzgerald, as an earlier Senate report suggested. At the meeting, the case officer cited President Kennedy's Nov. 18, 1963, speech in Miami "as an indication that the President supported a coup."

Kennedy had called the Castro government "a small band of conspirators" who constituted a "barrier" which, "once removed," would ensure U.S. support for progressive goals in Cuba.

"The case officer told AMLASH that Fitzgerald had helped write the speech,"

the Senate report said. The CIA official also said a rifle and explosives would be forthcoming and offered the Cuban a poison pen to use against Castro. "As AMLASH and the case officer broke up their meeting, they were told the President had been assassinated."

When Castro heard the news in Havana, the report said, quoting French journalist Jean Daniel who was meeting with Castro at the time, the Cuban Premier asked about President John F. Kennedy: "What authority does he exercise over the CIA?"

Despite the CIA scheming, the report said, neither the Warren Commission nor the CIA nor FBI officials assigned to work on the Kennedy investigation were told of the efforts against Castro.

As a consequence, Schweiker said, no one "ever actually conducted any full-scale investigation to find out whether a foreign government was involved."

At the FBI, the report

disclosed that six days after the assassination, then director J. Edgar Hoover was given a report "which detailed serious investigative deficiencies" in the bureau's handling of Oswald's case after his return from Russia in 1962 as an erstwhile Soviet defector.

The deficiencies resulted in secret disciplinary actions against 17 FBI personnel. The actions were never communicated to the Warren Commission and some were carried out only after the commission concluded its investigation in September 1964.

Hoover, the committee added, citing from various FBI documents, looked on the commission as an adversary and often complained that its chairman, Chief Justice Earl Warren, was "seeking to criticize" the FBI.

On two separate occasions, the report added, "Director Hoover asked for all the derogatory material on Warren Commission members and staff contained in the FBI files."