

Ruby, Castro Put in JFK-Death Talk

By PAUL MESKIL

A former agent of the Central Intelligence Agency has told the Senate Intelligence Committee that Jack Ruby made a secret trip to Cuba in the summer of 1963 and conferred with Fidel Castro about the possibility of assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

Ruby, a Dallas night-club owner with underworld connections, killed Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas Police Headquarters on Nov. 24, 1963, less than 48 hours after Oswald had assassinated the President.

The News learned that the former agent, a contract operative—that is, not a regular payroll employee—who worked for the CIA in Cuba, had got in touch with an Intelligence Committee investigator recently and told this story:

About 10 weeks before the

Kennedy murder, Ruby made a clandestine trip to Havana, flying there from Mexico City on a Cubana Airlines flight.

"He went there trying to make a dope deal," said the former agent, who has also worked as an undercover narcotics officer for the Drug Enforcement Administration. "He offered to supply arms and military equipment in exchange for permission to use Cuba as a conduit for drug shipments to the U.S."

The former agent said Ruby had been invited to a conference

at Castro's headquarters. Among those at the meeting were Castro; his brother, Raul; Che Guevara; the chief of Castro's intelligence service; a man called "El Mexicano," and a woman from Argentina.

The Cubans, according to the former agent's account, said the CIA had been trying to assassinate Castro. In one such attempt, a Castro aide had been killed. Castro blamed Kennedy for the murder plots, according to the account, and indicated that he was ready to strike back. Ruby was asked whether he would be willing to kill Kennedy or could arrange an assassination, the former agent said. It is not known what the agent said Ruby had replied.

After Kennedy had been killed, a Cuban refugee in Miami received a letter from his half brother, who was an officer in Castro's Army. The brother said he had been present at Castro's conference with Ruby. He gave the names of others who had attended and details of the alleged plot.

The Cuban refugee gave the letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but it wasn't mentioned by the Warren Commission,

which interviewed FBI officials in its investigation of the assassination, or by the Senate Intelligence Committee in its series of reports.

A committee source told The News that the former agent's account might be a "red herring" designed to lead investigators away from possible real conspirators. But he said Ruby's role in the Kennedy case probably was much more significant than the Warren Commission had indicated in its controversial report.

Born and reared in Chicago, where his playmates included several future criminals, Ruby moved to Dallas in 1947 to run a night club owned by his sister. There he became an associate of a narcotics racketeer, Paul Raymond Jones.

Steve Guthrie, who was elected the sheriff of Dallas in 1946, told the Warren Commission that Jones approached him in 1947 and offered him \$150,000 to allow the Chicago branch of the Mafia to set up shop in Dallas.

Guthrie said Jones had told him that Ruby would operate a "fabulous restaurant" as a front for the mob's gambling operations.

The sheriff's conversation with Jones was tape-recorded, and Jones was arrested and convicted

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of bribery. He was also jailed for violations of federal narcotics laws. Ruby eventually became the owner of two Dallas night clubs, both of which were hangouts for gamblers and dope racketeers.

Ruby Tied to Narcotics

In 1956, two undercover informants told the FBI that Ruby was involved in "a large narcotics setup operating between Mexico, Texas and the East." From other sources, the FBI heard that Ruby was the "fixer" who served as the liaison agent between the Dallas gambling mob, the city police and the county authorities.

Ruby had several pals in the Havana gambling mob, including Dave Yaras, a former Chicago hood; Norman Rothman, a high ranking member of the Cuban crime cartel headed by Meyer Lansky and Santo Trafficante of Florida; and Lewis McWillie, a former owner of a night club in Dallas. McWillie left Texas in the 1950s to become the supervisor of a mob-owned casino in Havana.

In late August 1959, Ruby flew to Havana for a "social visit" with McWillie. He spent eight days there and left for Miami after the Labor Day weekend. At the time, Trafficante was in a Cuban jail, where he was treated more as a guest than a prisoner, receiving meals from the best restaurants and visits from fellow mobsters and Castro.

Trafficante had been arrested June 8 in Havana for deportation to the United States, where

federal officers were waiting to question him about Mafia murders and a Cuban-based narcotics ring. Actually, it was reported, because he was aware of the federal interest in his activities, Trafficante had asked the Cuban officials to arrest him and hold him in jail until the mainland heat died down.

Four days after the Kennedy assassination, a British journalist walked into the American Embassy in London and told CIA officials there that he met Trafficante while they were both in a Cuban jail in the summer of 1959. He said one of Trafficante's visitors had been "an American gangster type named Ruby." This information was passed on to the Warren Commission, but it was not mentioned in the commission's report. Nor did the report mention a mystery trip to Havana that Ruby made on Sept. 12, 1959. He left Miami on Pan Am Flight 415 and returned the next day on Pan Am Flight 750.

After Ruby had killed Oswald, FBI agents visited the racketeer Jones in jail and asked for his view of why Ruby had committed the slaying. Jones shrugged and replied, "Ask Joe Civello."

Civello, a convicted narcotics dealer, was the rackets boss of Dallas. A delegate to the 1957 crime convention at Apalachin, N.Y., he was an underboss of Carlos Marcello, the Mafia ruler of Louisiana and Texas. Marcello, a friend and rackets associate of Trafficante, hated the Kennedy brothers because of federal efforts to break up his empire. When President Kennedy died, those efforts stopped.

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