

Secret Service Chief Backed Men

Washington

Secret Service chief James J. Rowley concedes that ten of his men violated regulations the night before President Kennedy was assassinated—but he did not punish them for fear it would place an undeserved stigma on them.

Rowley came to their defense in June 18 testimony before the Warren Commission, made it public yesterday.

He said the men violated Secret Service rules by drinking at the Fort Worth Press Club and visiting a beatnik night spot there during the early morning hours of November 22.

FOLLOW-UP CAR

But he said four of the men involved were assigned to the follow-up car, behind Mr. Kennedy, during the Dallas-motorcade, and did their All told, Rowley said, nine men went to the Press Club and ten men went to a Fort Worth nightspot called The Cellar, which did not serve alcoholic beverages.

Chief Justice Earl Warren asked Rowley whether agents who were not affected by liquor or lack of sleep the night before would not have been more likely to spot a man with a rifle

in a window overlooking the motorcade.

"Well, yes; he would be," Rowley replied.

"... Don't you think that they would have been much more alert, sharper, had they not been doing these things?" Warren persisted.

"Yes, sir; but I don't believe they could have prevented the assassination," the Secret Service chief said.

Rowley said the infractions were investigated, but not disciplinary measures were taken against the agents involved.

"Well," he said, "I did consider what type of punishment would be provided.

"Then I also considered the fact that these men in no way had—their conduct had no bearing on the assassination. And, therefore, I thought that in the light of history, to place a stigma on them by punishing them at that time, from which inevitable the public would conclude that they were responsible for the assassination of the President—I didn't think this was fair, and that they did not deserve that, with their family and children."

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