

Jack Anderson

A Return to the Garrison Probe

House probers have quietly returned to the scene of New Orleans ex-District Attorney Jim Garrison's flamboyant investigation into the John F. Kennedy assassination.

The House Assassinations Committee has set up offices in New Orleans where the investigators are retracing Garrison's steps and questioning his witnesses of a decade ago.

Secret testimony has been taken, for example, from Carlos Marcello, the reputed boss of the New Orleans underworld. He was summoned to Washington for questioning under oath about his relationship with a New Orleans private eye, the late David William Ferrie, whom Garrison arrested.

Garrison charged that Ferrie was Lee Harvey Oswald's getaway pilot. Ferrie was a strange, conspiratorial figure who had ties to right-wing militants and once reportedly flew a private plane on a bombing mission over Cuba.

He was found dead in 1967, possibly a suicide victim. But mystery surrounds his death as it did his life.

Garrison became convinced that Ferrie was implicated in a right-wing conspiracy to murder President Kennedy. Oswald was supposed to be set up as the assassin because of his pro-Fidel Castro activities. The presumed secret plot was to throw suspicion on Castro for the killing.

It has been reported that Ferrie showed up in Texas not long after the assassination, supposedly to fly Oswald to safety. Ferrie had also told friends that he had no use for President Kennedy. The late President's brother, Robert F. Kennedy, had used his position as attorney general to hound

Marcello. It was suggested, therefore, that Marcello might have joined in the alleged conspiracy to murder Kennedy.

Under oath, Marcello acknowledged that he had made payments to Ferrie at the time of the Kennedy assassination. But the mobster testified that he had paid Ferrie to investigate the credibility of a government witness against him in an immigration case.

On the day of the assassination, Marcello told the committee behind closed doors, he and Ferrie were together at the federal courthouse in New Orleans. Marcello was questioned by the committee as a witness, not a suspect.

Death Plane?—The Air Force's chairborne generals still persist in tolerating dangerous flight practices, which have already wiped out the crew of one C141 transport plane and are imperiling the lives of others. Pilots and airmen who protest have been branded troublemakers.

As far back as 1970, Air Force Maj. Carl Mollnow warned his superiors that the approach systems for the huge transports made a disastrous crash inevitable in Washington state's Olympic Mountains.

The higher-ups not only ignored his warnings; they tried to railroad him out of the reserves on trumped-up psychiatric grounds. But Mollnow's forebodings came tragically true in 1975, when a C141 crashed in the Olympic area, killing all 16 aboard.

Now another C141 pilot is willing to lay his career on the line by coming to us. He grimly related that those killed in the 1975 tragedy were his friends.

They had been without sleep for almost 30 straight hours, he alleged, before the crash.

Because of the harassment Mollnow endured, we are withholding the other pilot's name. But he signed a statement attesting to the plight of his fellow pilots. They are assigned duty hours, he said, that can stretch up to 36 hours without any off time.

"I'm not out for revenge," he said, "only to change what has become a gross and systematic abuse of Air Force crew members by upper level commanders." He said too many generals in their swivel chairs are "so out of touch with the reality of flying these missions that they simply don't believe it can happen."

After the crash into the Olympic Mountains, our source related, a group of pilots complained of their hazardous hours to their boss, Maj. Gen. John Gonge (now retired), and received a royal chewing out for their efforts. A colonel who sided with them was abruptly transferred, our informant charged.

The general, now comfortably retired as head of an Air Force credit union in California, acknowledged that the protest meeting took place, but denied he chewed out the pilots. He confirmed also that he had transferred a colonel afterward. But he contended that the transfer was unconnected with either the crash or the colonel's stand on behalf of the pilots.

Footnote: An Air Force spokesman said regulations have been adopted specifically to avoid having pilots go too long without sleep.