

# Gangster Admits Plot on Castro

Washington

A reputed Mafia boss yesterday admitted to a House committee he had been in the middle of a CIA-sponsored plot to kill Fidel Castro, but he shed no new light on speculation the conspiracy was linked to John F. Kennedy's death.

Santo Trafficante, described by the Cuban government as chief of mob gambling operations in pre-Castro Cuba, also denied publicly he told an FBI informer five months before Kennedy's 1963 shooting the president would be "hit."

Trafficante, 63, was the last major witness scheduled to appear in the House assassination committee's month-long open hearing into Kennedy's killing.

Conspiracy theorists have speculated that Castro learned of the 1960-61 CIA plot for U.S. gangsters, working with anti-Castro exiles, to kill him. In revenge, according to this theory, Castro engineered a counterplot, involving Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby, to assassinate the president.

Committee chief counsel G. Robert Blakey said the panel also believes "a Mafia plot to assassinate the president warranted serious consideration."

But testimony by underworld figures Wednesday and yesterday centered on Ruby's Cuban and mob

connections and the plot to kill Castro.

Trafficante testified under a grant of immunity from prosecution. No films, photographs or recordings were permitted in the hearing room.

Trafficante said he had been brought into the anti-Castro plot by Mafia figures Sam Giancana and John Roselli, both since murdered.

Roselli and Giancana, he said, had been recruited for the CIA operation by Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent and later a top aide to multimillionaire Howard Hughes.

He said he introduced Maheu, Giancana and Roselli to some "very active" Cubans in Florida and because the CIA group didn't speak Spanish, "I assisted as interpreter — that's the only thing."

Trafficante said he "did not get a dime" for his cooperation with the CIA.

"I thought I was helping the United States government," he said. "That's what my reason was."

As for killing Castro: "I think it was a good thing. He had established a Communist base. And being that the government of the United States wanted it done, I went along with it."

Trafficante sought to rebut Wednesday's testimony from FBI



AP Wirephoto

**SANTO TRAFFICANTE**  
**'I thought I was helping'**

informer Jose Aleman that Trafficante told him in June, 1963 Kennedy would be killed.

Trafficante testified, "I'm as sure as I'm sitting here that I never made a statement (to Aleman) that Kennedy was going to be hit."

"I spoke to him in Spanish," the witness said. "He spoke in Spanish because he's a Cuban. There was no reason for me to tell him in English that Kennedy was going to be hit, so I deny that statement."

Aleman insists Trafficante discounted his prediction Kennedy would be re-elected. "He's not going to be re-elected," Aleman quoted Trafficante as saying. "No, Jose, he's going to be hit."

There is no way to say that in Spanish, Trafficante said.

Trafficante also said he could "never remember meeting Jack Ruby" or Oswald.

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