

Top Spy's Testimony On Murder of JFK

By Michael Dorman
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Master CIA spy James Angleton said in long-secret testimony that the Warren Commission did not adequately investigate reports that Fidel Castro, angry over American attempts to kill him, might have ordered President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

"I personally believe that the United States intelligence services did not have the capabilities" to determine whether Castro was involved, Angleton, long the CIA counterintelligence chief, said in 1978.

A House assassinations committee attorney, Michael Goldsmith, asked: "Regardless of whether the anti-Castro plots would have been made available to the Warren Commission, our intelligence agencies did not have the capability to investigate that thoroughly?"

"Unless they had a code break or a defector or something," Angleton replied.

Angleton, who spent much of his career trying unsuccessfully to discover communist "moles" in the CIA, was fired in 1975 and died in 1987. He offered his testimony about the Kennedy murder to the House committee, but it was not made public until yesterday, when it was released by the U.S. Assassination Records Review Board, which is responsible for screening assassination documents and releasing those that do not endanger national security. The review board deleted some passages on national-security grounds.

Angleton also described discovering by accident that a CIA agent was dealing with Johnny Roselli, a Mafia leader, in an apparent plot against Cuban Premier Castro's life. "An FBI liaison fellow was at my house one evening when the bureau was frantically trying to get hold of him," he said.

Angleton said the FBI agent, Sam Pappich, was told that FBI surveillance on Roselli, a chief mob leader in Las Vegas, had discovered Roselli and a CIA agent were involved in a plot to kill Castro. Roselli later admitted in congressional testimony that he was involved in a CIA/Mafia conspiracy against Castro called Operation Mongoose, but he provided few details. Roselli was murdered in 1975.

Committee counsel Goldsmith, noting that Angleton had not been told through CIA channels about the plots against Castro, asked him: "Do you think that the work of the counterintelligence staff in attempting to facilitate the efforts of the Warren Commission was affected in any way by the failure of other CIA officials to inform them of the anti-Castro assassination plots?"

Angleton replied: "The counterintelligence concern with the assassination could not keep pace with the life of that commission. The commission's requirements had a life of their own, and they had deadlines to meet. They were working at a faster pace than we were, and our activities couldn't coincide."



James Angleton



AP File Photo, 1995

Fidel Castro

*News day
6/20/97*