

# Ford Opposes Disclosing 'Bits' of Death-Plot Data

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WASHINGTON, June 17 — Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, said today that President Ford felt that it did not serve the national interest to make public "unclear bits and pieces of incomplete information" on alleged assassination plots.

Mr. Nessen's remarks appeared to be in response to the growing number of news articles in the last several days on the question of the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency in plots to assassinate leaders of foreign nations.

In a briefing for reporters, Mr. Nessen said:

"There does seem to be a continuing series of leaks of alleged information or partial information. There seems to be a lack of respect for handling this thing in a careful way."

Mr. Nessen did not identify the sources of any leaks.

"The President feels it's not in the national interest to spew

out unclear bits and pieces of incomplete information every day. He feels quite clearly this is really not the orderly way to handle this."

Mr. Nessen said that his statement was "not meant as a warning or a caution or a criticism" to anyone and specifically not to Senator Frank Church and the members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. He said that his statement was only a perspective on President Ford's attitude to people he knew had a "burning interest" in the question of assassinations.

Mr. Nessen began his remarks on the President's attitude about information on assassination plots in response to a question about an article today in The New York Times in which authoritative Administration sources were quoted as saying that there was material

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pertaining to the question of assassinations in the 1959 to 1963 files of the National Security Council.

Mr. Nessen declined to confirm or deny the report.

The first hint of the N.S.C. files as a repository for data on this question arose last week when the White House made public a memorandum from the President to Attorney General Edward M. Levi.

In the memo, Mr. Ford noted that in addition to assassination-plot material from the Rockefeller commission, he was sending the Department of Justice "... relevant materials on these subjects in the files of the National Security Council and certain State Department and Defense Department files of similar relevance."

The N.S.C. is an advisory group for Presidents which, by law, includes the President, Vice President, Secretaries of Defense and State and, in early nineteen's, a representative of the Office of National Preparedness.

Under President Kennedy, it also included the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy. Also, the Director of Central Intelligence sat in. The President's Assistant for National Security Affairs also sits in.

Several members of the N.S.C. in the early nineteen sixties Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert F. McNamara and a White House aide, Walt W. Rostow, who dealt with national security affairs under President Johnson said that they could not recall ever being involved in a discussion of assassinations.

Mr. Rusk said also that assassinations were "never discussed at Cabinet level," during his years in office.

Another senior adviser in the same period, who declined to comment for the record, said that the policy of the Kennedy Administration, as mentioned in the public press, was to "get rid" of Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba. However, he said that he could recall no specific authorization ever being sought or given for an assassination attempt on Mr. Castro.

'In the Woodwork'

But, he said, assassination, like sabotage and reconnaissance missions to Cuba, was always "in the woodwork" during this period (1961 to 1963), and he added that discussions might have included assassinations.

Another former aide in the Administration of President Kennedy who is familiar with the N.S.C. said that it handled foreign policy matters in various subcommittees. The best known, was the so-called "303 Committee" or "Special Group Augmented," which passed on covert intelligence operations at that time.

This aide said that memorandums were prepared, generally relating what had gone on in some of these meetings. "I would assume it is entirely possible some kind of thing relating to this might still exist [in the N.S.C. files]," he said.

A source familiar with the current investigation and with material found in files as the investigation progressed said that the data there did not include "action" orders for assassinations or clear-cut approval of such plans.

Meanwhile, in Boston, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, called Vice President Rockefeller "utterly irresponsible" for his remarks on a national television panel show Sunday in which he implied that President Kennedy might have been aware of assassination plots.

Senator Kennedy recommended that all material in the files of the Rockefeller commission pertaining to assassination be made public so the public could decide for itself what had happened.

At the White House press briefing today, Mr. Nessen reminded newsmen that President Ford had not ruled out the possibility that the material might be made public in the future.