

Church Doubts Plot Links to Presidents

NYTimes By JOHN M. CREWDSON JUL 19 1975

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WASHINGTON, July 18 — Senator Frank Church said today that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence had thus far found "no hard evidence" linking any former Presidents to alleged attempts by the Central Intelligence Agency to assassinate foreign heads of state.

Mr. Church, who heads the committee, said he had now concluded that there was "a very real possibility" that the C.I.A. had conceived and attempted to carry out such plots without the knowledge of anyone outside the agency.

The C.I.A., he declared, "may have been behaving like a rogue elephant on a rampage."

Senator Church, an Idaho Democrat, spoke to reporters after a closed committee session in which testimony was taken from John S. Eisenhower,

son of the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower. John Eisenhower was a White House aide.

A source close to the Church committee asserted today that the panel had evidence that the Central Intelligence Agency continued to plot against the life of Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba for at least four years after the unsuccessful invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

The source said he understood that committee investigators had knowledge that such schemes, of which he said there were "many," were devised by the C.I.A. as late as 1965 under the Administration of President Johnson.

There have been several recent published accounts of a C.I.A.-backed attempt on Mr. Castro's life in early 1961,

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Associated Press

John S. D. Eisenhower after testifying on C.I.A.

The cable, which was made available to the New York Times, carries the warning from Mr. Kennedy that "we must not run risk of U.S. association with political assassinations, since U.S. as matter of general policy cannot condon assassination."

Insist on Ignorance

Although the earliest attempts on Mr. Castro's life, of which there allegedly were three, were carried out shortly after Mr. Kennedy took office in January, 1961, several former aides have asserted that the attempts were planned during the last days of the Eisenhower Administration and have insisted that neither they nor Mr. Kennedy knew anything about them in advance.

The Dominican cable, the well-placed source said today, was prompted not by the attempts on Mr. Castro but by a C.I.A. "contingency memorandum" delivered to the Kennedy White House on May 16, 1961, which notes that C.I.A. officers in Ciudad Trujillo had pistols and three carbines to "passed by secure means" three leaders of General Trujillo's underground opposition.

The memorandum adds that "the recipients have repeatedly requested additional armed support," and it suggests that sub-machine guns and grenades "in the direct custody of our station in Ciudad Trujillo" might be provided "to the internal opposition for their use in personal defense attendant to their projected efforts to remove Trujillo."

Repeated Prohibition

Although the cable to the American consul noted that Mr. Kennedy had approved most of the intelligence agency's contingency plans for assisting the Dominican dissidents, it repeated that the prohibition against involvement in any assassination attempt was "overriding and must prevail in doubtful situation."

During today's briefing, Senator Church also disclosed that his committee had found no support for charges that Alexander P. Butterfield, a onetime aide to President Nixon, had been a "contact man" for the C.I.A. while working in the Nixon White House.

"Because of my effort to conduct an even-handed investigation," Mr. Church explained, "it is necessary for me to speak up for the C.I.A. when I think they've been handed a bum rap."

The committee, he said, has "found no evidence to support such a charge" against Mr. Butterfield. "In fact," he added "all of the evidence is directly contrary to that charge."

The uproar over Mr. Butterfield's possible link to the agency while a member of Mr. Nixon's Oval Office staff arose last week when L. Fletcher Prouty, a retired Air Force colonel, suggested that Mr. Butterfield had been what he termed a "contact man" for the agency.

Unable to Substantiate

But Mr. Church said today that "on close interrogation, Mr. Prouty is unable to substantiate his earlier statement, and acknowledges this to be the case."

The Senator added, however, that his committee would continue to investigate the C.I.A.'s practice of lending staff employees to other Government branches, including the White House.

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shortly before the Bay of Pigs invasion in April of that year, that was arranged at the agency's behest by the late Sam Giancana and John Roselli, two organized crime figures with connections in pre-Castro Cuba.

Senator Church has mentioned previously that his committee's investigation of assassination plots in the agency ranged over three Administrations, but he did not name the Presidents involved or give any date for the termination of such activity.

John Eisenhower, who served his father as assistant staff secretary at the time of the planning, in 1960, for the Bay of Pigs invasion, said in a statement following his secret testimony that his father had had nothing to do with, or even any knowledge of, such assassination schemes.

Attitude of Contempt

"I was so close to President Eisenhower," he said, "that I don't how he could have done anything without my knowing it, and I know nothing."

Asked how he would characterize the President's attitude toward political assassination, Mr. Eisenhower replied that "I think contempt is a pretty good word."

The Church committee, one well-placed source said today, has also received documents indicating that Mr. Kennedy was emphatically opposed to any United States involvement in or inspiration of such assassinations while he was President.

One particularly instructive document examined by committee investigators is a cable from Mr. Kennedy to the American Consul in the Dominican Republic that was sent four days before the Dominican dictator, Gen. Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, was killed by partisans on May 30, 1961.