

JFK Leads Held Not Followed Up

CIA Memo Says Foreign Conspiracy Possibility Not Pursued

By David C. Martin
Associated Press

A Central Intelligence Agency memo says the Warren Commission should have given more credence to the possibility that President Kennedy's assassination was the result of a foreign conspiracy, particularly in light of two promising leads that were not pursued.

"The Warren Commission report should have left a wider 'window' for this contingency," according to a CIA memo written in May, 1975, at the request of the Rockefeller commission. "That, indeed, was the opinion at the working level, particularly in the counter-intelligence component in the CIA, in 1964," the memo says.

The 27-page document stresses that solid evidence to overturn the Warren Commission's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, "did (and does) not exist in Washington. But such evidence could exist in Moscow and/or Havana."

The two most promising leads to such evidence are testimony about 1959 contacts between Oswald and Cuban officials and a public threat by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro against the lives of U.S. leaders, according to the memo.

Both leads must be considered of significance in investigating a possible foreign conspiracy but neither was followed up, the memo says.

Entitled "Review of Selected Items in the Lee Harvey Oswald File Regarding Allegations of the Castro Cuban Involvement in the John F. Kennedy Assassina-

tion," the memo was among some 1,500 pages of documents on the assassination that the CIA turned over to the Rockefeller commission. The files have since been turned over to the Senate intelligence committee, where a panel headed by Sen. Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.) is investigating the Kennedy slaying.

The documents have been declassified by the CIA in response to a Freedom of Information Act request filed by David W. Belin, who served as counsel to both the Rockefeller and Warren commissions.

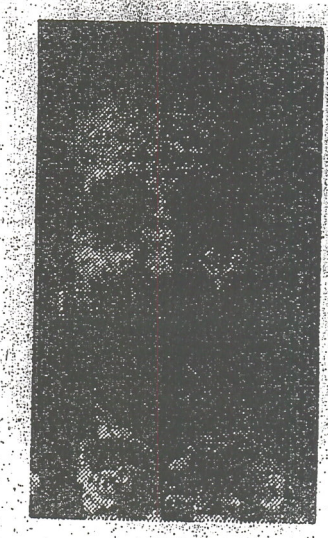
Belin, one of the staunchest defenders of the Warren Commission report, has called for a reopening of the investigation, saying disclosure of all the evidence would restore public confidence in the commission's findings.

The CIA released a separate set of the foot-high pile of documents to the Associated Press Friday.

The name of the memo's author has been deleted, but Belin said in an interview it was written by Raymond Rocca, a former member of the agency's counterintelligence staff.

In the memo, Rocca cites the testimony before the Warren Commission of Nelson Delgado, Oswald's closest friend during training at California's El Toro Marine Corps base in 1959. The Warren report noted that Oswald told Delgado he was in touch with Cuban diplomatic officials.

But, according to the memo, "Delgado's testimony says a lot more of possible operational significance than is reflected by the lan-



DAVID W. BELIN
... seeks disclosure

guage of the report, and its implications do not appear to have been run down or developed by investigation."

In the memo, Rocca cites Delgado's testimony that Oswald told him "right after he had this conversation with the Cuban people . . . that he was going to—once he got out of the service—he was going to Switzerland . . ." Oswald applied to Albert Schweitzer College in Switzerland in March, 1959, was discharged from the Marines in September of that year and entered the Soviet Union the following month, Rocca notes.

Delgado's testimony is "of germinal significance to any review of the background of Lee Harvey Oswald's feeling toward and relations with Castro's Cuba," Rocca adds.

At the time he wrote the memo, Rocca, who had served as CIA liaison with the Warren Commission, was working for the agency as

a consultant. A cover letter states that "the attached review represents the research and analysis of an individual officer . . . and does not necessarily represent the position of this agency."

Castro's threat against the lives of U.S. leaders was made Sept. 7, 1963, during an impromptu interview with AP correspondent Daniel Harker in Havana. "There can be no question . . . that this event represented a more-than-ordinary attempt to get a message on the record in the United States," Rocca maintains in his memo.

Rocca notes that the story appeared in the New Orleans Times-Picayune — "where Lee Harvey Oswald resided"—and quoted Castro as saying that "U.S. leaders would be in danger if they helped in any attempt to do away with leaders of Cuba."

Rocca's memo makes no mention of CIA plots to kill Castro in the early 1960s, but large portions of

the declassified version have been deleted.

If Oswald, who according to the testimony of his wife, Marina, and others was an avid newspaper reader, saw the story, "it must be considered of great significance in the light of the pathological evaluation of Oswald's passive-aggressive makeup . . . irrespective of whether there was any formal mandate or even security service contact with Oswald by the Cubans or the Russians," Rocca says.

However, he adds, "There is no evidence in the files of the Kennedy assassination that this Castro interview was considered in following up leads . . . although (CIA) specifically directed (its) headquarter's attention to the AP story very shortly after the Dallas killing."

Belin has since called for a reopening of the Warren Commission's investigation, saying it would restore public confidence in the report's findings.