

Rocky's Hint About Kennedys and CIA

Possible Death Plot Knowledge

By Robert L. Jackson
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Washington

Vice President Nelson Rockefeller said yesterday that former President John F. Kennedy and former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy might have played a role in foreign assassination plans of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Although Rockefeller stated he had no conclusive evidence on their involvement, it was the first time a high government official had suggested that the Kennedy brothers might have been involved in CIA improprieties.

The vice president's statement — because he declined to provide any supporting details — seemed certain to bring charges that the Ford Administration was seeking to discredit a possible presidential candidacy of Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.) by tarnishing the reputations of his late brothers.

However, Rockefeller emphasized that the eight-member CIA study commission which he headed "did not have sufficient evidence to come to any hard conclusions" on the foreign assassination issue.

Appearing on NBC's television "Meet the Press," Rockefeller first said, in describing why his commission neither drew nor made public any conclusions on the CIA assassination issue:

"Many of the people have

died who were allegedly involved and others were assassinated in this country, a tragic thing."

Later Rockefeller engaged in this exchange with panelist H. Clifton Daniel, Washington bureau chief of the New York Times.

Question — "Do you say that some of the American leaders who might have been involved in possible as-

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sassination plots had themselves been assassinated?"

Answer — "I did."

Question — "Would you be willing to name me those particular leaders?"

Answer — "Well, as I said, we had no conclusive information. But the President of the United States and the attorney general of the United States were both assassinated tragically in this country."

Minutes later Rockefeller was asked to define "what constitutes involvement" by the Kennedy brothers in alleged assassination plans.

The vice president replied:

"Well, I say we have no evidence on the basis of which to draw conclusions. I said it was very difficult to get information because — to go back 15 years — many of the people who were involved in the CIA and in the White House are no longer living."

But he added:

"I think it's fair to say that no major undertakings by the CIA were done without either the knowledge and/or approval of the White House."

It has not been documented that John Kennedy or

Robert Kennedy were linked to alleged CIA assassination plots, including reported attempts on the life of Cuban

Premier Fidel Castro in the early 1960s.

Rockefeller did not imply that the 1963 murder of John Kennedy or the 1968 slaying of Robert Kennedy were in any way linked with their possible CIA roles. The commission last Tuesday ruled out any CIA role in the death of Robert Kennedy.

Rockefeller denied that any political considerations, including a possible presidential candidacy next year of Senator Edward Kennedy, had played any role in the commission's decision to hand over its material on the CIA assassination issue to Congress and the Justice Department without making it public.

"Our commission was not a political commission," the vice president said. The body was bipartisan both in membership and staff, he said.

While the commission sought to avoid naming names in its 299-page report, Rockefeller said former Democratic Attorney General Ramsey Clark was responsible for CIA involvement in domestic spying on anti-war radicals beginning in 1967.

He did not accuse Clark of any improprieties. But Clark's co-ordination of government intelligence efforts against the anti-war movement caused the CIA to be "drawn in" to probe possible foreign ties to the movement, Rockefeller said.

At the same time, Rockefeller defended a similar involvement of Henry Kissinger mentioned in the report. The commission said that Kissinger — now secretary of state but then national se-

curity adviser in the Nixon White House — received a memo in February, 1969, from then-CIA director Richard M. Helms saying the agency's involvement in anti-war student studies was outside its legal charter.

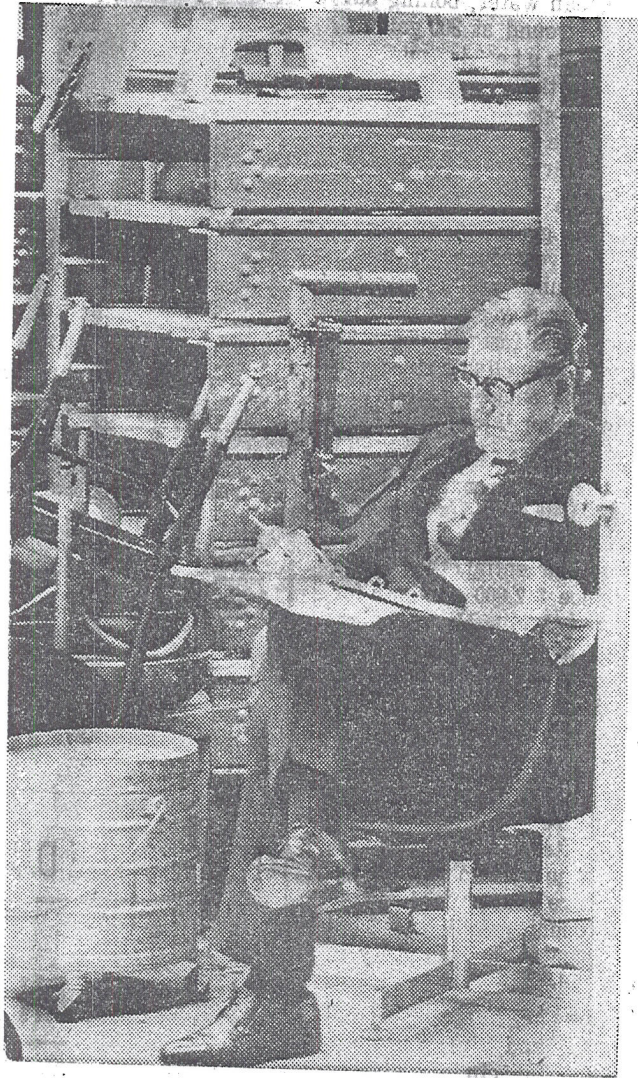
"Shouldn't Dr. Kissinger or somebody have ordered an immediate stop to that kind of thing at the time?" Rockefeller was asked.

He replied: "No, because the CIA involvement was due to its international aspect and by that time, this having started in 1967, they were the ones who had all the information and the files."

Rockefeller defended the CIA as an "essential instrument" of government that ought to undergo some legal reforms but should not be abolished.

He went so far as to say that CIA "covert actions" abroad, sometimes called "dirty tricks," ought to remain within the CIA's responsibility.

Rockefeller called covert actions "a middle ground, a gray area between diplomatic action and war."



UPI Telephoto

Vice President Nelson Rockefeller checked over his notes backstage before his television appearance