

Names Tangled

U.S. Goof in Kennedy 'Plot'

The Justice Department acknowledged yesterday that it goofed in ever suggesting that Clay Shaw was the mysterious "Clay Bertrand" sought after the assassination of President Kennedy.

Attorney General Ramsey Clark took responsibility for the error in a statement issued by a department spokesman. Clark, the spokesman said, felt that justice would best be served by the embarrassing admission.

Shaw, a 54-year-old New Orleans businessman, has been accused by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison of plotting to kill the late President under the alias of "Clay Bertrand."

DENIAL

Shaw has vehemently denied any role in the conspiracy that Garrison has alleged. He has also denied ever using "Clay Bertrand" as an alias.

After Shaw's arrest March 1, however, Attorney General Clark told reporters in an impromptu press conference that Shaw had been "checked out and cleared" by the FBI in the week following the assassination in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

For Shaw, the statement caused only trouble. The FBI never investigated anyone named Clay Shaw in 1963. It did check into allegations surrounding a "Clay Bertrand" — who was said to have sought legal help for Oswald after the assassination — but decided, without ever finding "Bertrand," that they were without substance.

For Clark to say that Shaw had been "checked out" consequently amounted to saying that Shaw was Bertrand. "We think it's the same guy," one department official said on March 2.

CLAIMS

In recent weeks, Garrison has seized on this as proof of his claims.

The Justice Department's initial impression, however, apparently based on first-blush reports of informants in New Orleans, was repudiated by the new statement. It was issued following a May 24 request by Shaw's attorney, Edward F. Wegmann, for "a public clarification."

"No evidence was found (in 1963) that Clay Shaw was ever called 'Clay Bertrand,'" the Justice spokesman said, adding that the department still has no reliable evidence to indicate otherwise.

"The Attorney General's comment on March 2 that Mr. Shaw was involved in the investigation," the department added, "was based on a briefing that morning."

"The Attorney General has since determined that this was erroneous. Nothing arose (in 1963) indicating a need to investigate Mr. Shaw."

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'JFK Plot'

Error

By U. S.

FBI Never Checked Shaw

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Attorney General Ramsey Clark says he was in error in stating an FBI investigation cleared Clay Shaw of involvement in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Actually, the Justice Department said, the FBI had not even investigated Shaw, a retired businessman now under indictment in New Orleans on a charge of conspiring to assassinate Kennedy.

A department spokesman issued a statement he said aimed at clearing up an erroneous claim last March 2 by Clark.

At that time, Clark was quoted as saying Shaw had been cleared by the FBI of involvement in the slaying.

The Justice Department statement said "the attorney general has since determined this was erroneous. Nothing arose indicating a need to investigate Mr. Shaw."

The department said the clarification was requested by Edward F. Wegmann, Shaw's lawyer.

Shaw, 54, a decorated World War II Army major, is free on \$10,000 bail. No date for his trial has been set.

New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison says Shaw, the late David W. Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald conspired to assassinate Kennedy.