

Defiance by the FBI



Jack Anderson

YESTERDAY we reported that the FBI defied a Warren Commission resolution and held back internal documents about the John F. Kennedy assassination.

The commission, according to its own internal memos, suspected this from the beginning.

Early in 1964, for example, the commission obtained from the Justice Department two FBI memos that could not be found in the commission's files. Staff attorney Charles Shaffer declared in a confidential memo:

"I am morally certain that neither of (the memos) have been transmitted to (general counsel J. Lee) Rankin as they properly should have been. Accordingly, I am disturbed that the Bureau is conducting (an) investigation and not furnishing us with the results.

"Knowing the Bureau as we do, I suggest the matter be informally discussed with their representative in contact with the Commission. In this way, the matter can be corrected with the least amount of friction."

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RANKIN replied in a handwritten scrawl that he had "noted and talked" with the FBI liaison man about the missing documents on Jan. 14, 1964. Nonetheless, hundreds of internal memos were withheld from the commission.

The commission attorneys also

suspected — correctly, it now turns out — that the FBI wasn't leveling with them about its contacts with the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

One of them, Norman Redlich, now dean of the New York University Law School, discovered a startling omission in an FBI summary of the contents of Oswald's notebook. The FBI neglected to mention that one of its agents, James Hosty, was listed in the notebook.

This also disturbed another staff attorney, Howard Willens, who wrote Rankin in the strictest confidence on Feb. 13, 1964: "I share everyone's concern that this is a matter of great importance." He urged Rankin to demand a "full explanation" from the FBI.

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A WEEK LATER, Rankin wrote sternly to the late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover: "The Commission would like to be informed of the circumstances surrounding this omission," including the names of those who ordered it.

An outraged Hoover fired back the astonishing explanation that Hosty's name was omitted because it wasn't needed by the commission as an investigative lead.

Added Hoover crisply, if not incorrectly: "This Bureau from the beginning of this investigation has developed and reported all available and relevant facts and it will continue to do so."