

FBI and CIA May Have Misled JFK Death Probe Evidence Withheld

Washington

The Senate Intelligence Committee said yesterday that the CIA and FBI failed to provide the Warren Commission with evidence that "might have substantially affected the course of the investigation" into whether there was a conspiracy to kill President John F. Kennedy.

The committee stressed that "it has not uncovered any evidence sufficient to justify a conclusion that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy."

But the panel said that failure of the CIA and FBI to pursue the possibility of a conspiracy behind the assassination "impeaches the process" that led the Warren Commission to conclude that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

The committee outlined these leads that it said were never adequately investigated:

The possibility that Cuba's Fidel Castro ordered Kennedy's assassination in retaliation for a CIA plot against his life that was in progress at the time of the Nov. 22, 1963, slaying in Dallas;

A report that on the evening of the day Kennedy was killed a Cubana airlines flight from Mexico City to Cuba was delayed five hours waiting the arrival of an unidentified passenger who boarded the plane without passing through customs;

The "strange travel" of a "Cuban-American" who an FBI informant claimed was involved in the Kennedy assassination and who may have been in indirect contact with Oswald.

Senator Richard Schweiker, (Rep.-Pa.), who headed the committee's investigation, said other "interesting leads" had been left out of the 106-page report in order not to jeopardize further investigation.

Schweiker accused the CIA and FBI of "a coverup" and said "there is no longer any reason to have faith in (the Warren Commission's) picture of the Kennedy assassination."

But committee chairman

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Frank Church (Dem-Idaho) said that "whether there was a conscious coverup or not has not yet been determined" and added that he is not yet prepared to call for a full-scale reopening of the assassination investigation.

Senator Gary Hart (Dem-Colo.) the other member of the two-man subcommittee that investigated the assassination, later disputed Schweiker's use of the word "coverup."

"I would not use the description 'coverup,'" Hart said. "It suggests a plan, a collusion. . . . The phrase takes on a conspiratorial ring that didn't really exist here."

Hart said CIA officials did not want the public—or possibly even the President—to know that there had been efforts to assassinate Castro. The FBI was primarily interested in protecting its own image, Hart added.

The report said it did not know why "senior officials in the CIA and FBI permitted the Warren Commission to reach its conclusions without all relevant information" but added that "the possibility exists that senior officials in both agencies made conscious decisions not to disclose potentially important information."

Noting the controversy that has surrounded the Kennedy assassination for more than 12 years, the committee said "regrettably, this report will not put the matter to rest." The panel recommended that the investigation be continued by the new, permanent Senate intelligence committee. The assassination report was the last work of a temporary, special intelligence committee that has now gone out of existence.

The report said that senior

government officials "wanted the investigation completed promptly and all conspiracy rumors dispelled." According to the report, within 14 hours of Kennedy's death, the FBI had narrowed the focus of its investigation to Oswald alone and within weeks issued a report concluding that Oswald was the sole assassin.

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover "perceived the Warren Commission as an adversary" that might criticize the bureau's monitoring of Oswald's activities before the assassination and its investigation of the killing itself, the report said.

Hoover concealed from the commission the fact that 17 FBI agents had been disciplined for their failure to recognize Oswald as a security threat. The commission also was never told about the FBI's destruction of a threatening note that Oswald had delivered to bureau offices in Dallas several days before the Kennedy killing.

Angered by the commission's criticism of the FBI's performance, Hoover on two occasions "asked for all derogatory material on Warren Commission members and staff contained in the FBI files," according to the report.

The report strongly criticized the CIA for failing to inform the commission of the potential significance of a 1963 plot involving an undercover agent, code-named AM-LASH, in a plot to kill Castro.

According to the report, CIA agents were in direct contact with AM-LASH and one senior agency official told him in October, 1963, that he was the personal representative of the President's brother, then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

The report noted that "various reports received by the CIA during the fall of 1963 contained information which should have raised questions about the operation's security," including a suggestion that AM-LASH was a double agent keeping Castro informed of the plot. On Nov. 22, 1963, a CIA agent met with AM-LASH to give him a poison pen device.

"In hindsight, the AM-LASH operation seems very relevant to the investigation of President Kennedy's assassination," the report said. "It is difficult to understand why those aware of the operation

did not think it relevant."

The report quoted CIA officials who knew about the plot as testifying that "they did not relate it to the President's assassination."

The report identified former CIA director Richard Helms, now ambassador to Iran, as the only CIA official who both knew about the plot and was in contact with the Warren Commission.

The report also noted that former CIA director Allen Dulles, who was a member of the Warren Commission, and Robert Kennedy knew about earlier CIA plots involving the underworld in attempts to kill Castro. But the committee concluded that these plots were terminated well before the President's assassination and that Castro could not have been certain that the CIA was behind them.

"The AM-LASH operation was clearly different," the report said. The report related two other cases in which "the Warren Commission staff was apparently not furnished with what now seems to be significant information relating to possible Cuban involvement."

On Dec. 1, 1963, the CIA received information that a November 22 Cubana airlines flight from Mexico City to Cuba was delayed from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. "awaiting an unidentified passenger. This unidentified passenger arrived at the airport in a twin-engined aircraft at 10:30 p.m. and boarded the Cubana airlines plane without passing through customs, where he would have needed to identify himself by displaying a passport. The individu-

al traveled to Cuba in the cockpit of the Cubana airlines plane, thus again avoiding identification by the passengers."

The report said the CIA "had no information indicating that a followup investigation was conducted to determine the identity of the passenger ... and no explanation for why a followup investigation was not conducted."

Also in December, 1963, the CIA received information that a "Cuban-American" had crossed the border from Texas into Mexico the day after the Kennedy shooting, arriving in Mexico City on November 25, the report said. Two days later he departed for Cuba on a late evening flight on which he was the only passenger with a crew of nine, according to information received by the CIA. The CIA passed the information to the FBI which traced the Cuban-American to a November 17 meeting at the Tampa, Fla., home of a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, the report said.

The report noted that in May, 1963, the national president of the Fair Play committee had told Oswald to contact the committee's Tampa chapter about starting his own chapter in New Orleans. "The suspicious travel of this individual coupled with the possibility that Oswald had contacted the Tampa chapter certainly should have prompted a far more thorough and timely investigation than the FBI conducted and the results should have been volunteered to the Warren Commission," the report said.

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