

JFK Testimony of A Mafia Warning

Washington

An FBI informer nervously testified yesterday that the Mafia gambling chieftain in pre-Castro Havana told him in the early summer of 1963 President John F. Kennedy was "going to be hit."

Anti-Castro exile Jose Aleman told the House Assassinations Committee he did not then know a "hit" was underworld parlance for murder.

Aleman, an acknowledged informant for the FBI, testified that gambling czar Santos Trafficante told him in a Miami conversation in June 1963, Kennedy "is going to be hit." The president was assassinated Nov. 22, 1963.

Aleman maintained under intense committee questioning he thought Trafficante meant the Republicans beat Kennedy in the next election.

Gambling world witnesses appeared for the committee's exploration of possible Cuban and underworld ties to Lee Harvey Oswald, Kennedy's accused assassin, and Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald.

Committee chief counsel G. Robert Blakey said the Cuban government told its investigators several months ago in Havana that Trafficante was the Mafia "don" there until the Castro revolution.

Aleman, escorted at his own request from his Miami home by U.S. marshals who ringed the hearing room, said that he fears for his life and that he believes Trafficante is collaborating with Fidel Castro's secret police.

Trafficante, who is now reportedly a Mafia chief in Tampa, Fla., appeared in closed session before the assassinations committee last year but refused to answer any questions, citing his Fifth and 14th Amendment rights.

Another witness, Las Vegas casino worker Lewis J. McWillie, testified only after all cameras and tape recorders were shut down.

He told the panel, as he had testified to the Warren Commission, that Ruby was his guest in Cuba in 1959, but was "a kind of leech" he was glad to see leave.

The committee produced evidence indicating Ruby made two trips — not just one, as McWillie testified — to Cuba in 1959.

Blakey said Castro government documents and old Cuban and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service papers showed Ruby visited Havana between Aug. 8 and Sept. 11, 1959, left for Miami and returned September 12, for one day.

McWillie, a husky man with thinning reddish hair, said he had sent two tickets to Ruby to come from Dallas but only if he brought Tony Zoppi, then a Dallas nightclub columnist.

But, he said, Ruby came alone and stayed with him about six days.

"He'd stay around the apartment and my swimming pool," McWillie said of his house guest. "He was a kind of leech, a hard guy to get rid of."

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