Hart regrets role in murder probe

By RICHARD STARNES

WASHINGTON — Words such as "dimly," "quietly," "vastly," "diplomatically" and "professionally" keep recurring as Hart, a senator from Arkansas, very quickly has learned the cautious footsteps of an old politician. He is frankly dismayed to be at the center of the renewed investigation into the century's most atrocious political murder.

"I am not a conspiracist," Hart said recently. "I deplore those who have made a career out of the John Kennedy assassination. It is pure happenstance that I got into this at all. I am unhappy, very reluctant, to be in it."

But in it Hart is. With Sen. Charles S. Schwelkes, R-Pa., Hart is cochairman of the Senate Intelligence Subcommittee that is just now weighing the evidence of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

"There is a profusion of leads that both senators believe may produce the hard evidence of a conspiracy," said rep. Miami Herald's editor.

"But there is no need to call into question the principal finding of the Warren Commission: that Lee Harvey Oswald did in fact pull the trigger," Hart observed. "But the whole question of his motivation is another story."

The CIA was attempting to assassinate Castro before, after the Kennedy assassination. Castro knew this, and had gone out of his mind to warn American correspondents that the lives of U.S. leaders would be in jeopardy if the attempt continued. This was the vital connection the Warren Commission remained in ignorance of.

An Overlay of Conspiracy

Hart notes that a seething bell of intrigue and subversion flooded the southern United States as the CIA's secret war against Castro was called off by President Kennedy after the Cuban missile crisis.

"Where did these conspirators get their money? Their arms? What was the Mafia involved in? Were they behind the Bay of Pigs invasion?"

The complex web of complicity is a vast nests of possible assassination motives. Conspiracies are the principal questions that seem to cry out for senators from beyond the grave: "Where did these conspirators get their money? Their arms? What was the Mafia involved in? Were they behind the Bay of Pigs invasion?"

"I think it's important that no one calls for the Senate to do anything," Hart said. "The Senate is not a police force, it's not the CIA, it's not the FBI."

"We're not going to start an investigation of the Senate Intelligence Subcommittee. The information we've got is more than enough to go on."

Some Unpopular Initiatives

Important among these initiatives, according to Hart's staff, are two that have earned him the disfavor of two of Washington's most formidable pressure groups. One is a bill to force the Defense Department to review its policies on the sale of nuclear weapons. More important to Hart's political survival is his co-sponsorship of a bill to break up the big oil companies.

Hart is an unlikely product of both the schools of divinity and law at Yale. A former government attorney, married and the father of a daughter 11 and a son, 9. Running for the Senate was his first stab at elective office. He first won celebrity as a political technician by organizing Sen. George McGovern's successful drive for the Democratic nomination four years ago.
Mr. Harold Weisberg  
Rt. 12  
Frederick, Maryland  21701  

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Last week the Senate Intelligence Committee voted to forward all information it has received on the Kennedy assassination to the new Select Committee on Intelligence Activities with a recommendation that the new committee continue and complete the inquiry.

The investigation to date has not been an attempt to reopen the Warren Commission, nor has it been an effort to investigate every new allegation with respect to the assassination of President Kennedy. Rather, in accordance with Senate Resolution 21 which established the Select Committee, it has been an attempt to examine the manner in which our intelligence agencies performed, or did not perform, their intelligence mission in this particular case.

The Select Committee found that in certain important areas, our intelligence agencies did not fulfill their mission very well. Certain leads were not investigated and some relevant information was withheld from the very officials of those agencies charged with the responsibility for investigation of the assassination.

The Select Committee decided that this new information was too important to be put aside. This inquiry must be completed, and I hope it can be completed soon. We must put this tragic chapter in our history behind us.

Sincerely,

Gary Hart  
U.S.S.
10 June 1976

Sen. Gary Hart
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

The enclosed book review deals with another approach to what has concerned your and Sen. Schweiker's intelligence subcommittee -- the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and its consequences.

It considers conclusions that differ from those of your subcommittee, and I invade your time and attention in the belief that you should know what those differences are.

This is not to criticize. I do not know your problems, and do not underestimate them. Thanks to the same decades in handling foreign and domestic news that led to this review.

The Pacific Sun is a suburban weekly (near San Francisco) which ordinarily deals with Marin County, but its Literary Quarterly is unrestricted.

With every best wish,

James D. White
35 Castle Rock Drive
Mill Valley, Calif. 94941
Hill Prober
Of CIA Gets
Agency Quiz

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

Four men with spooky backgrounds interrogated a U.S. senator yesterday in the kind of role reversal that can only happen in Washington.

Two years ago the Senate Select Intelligence Committee embarked on months-long grilling of the highest officials of the CIA about some of their most embarrassing secrets, including assassination plots, domestic operations and other arcane matters. Yesterday, one of the investigating senators, Gary Hart, D-Colo., cheerfully submitted to a barrage of questions from ex-CIA Director William L. Colby, former CIA counsel Lawrence Huston and two high-ranking, retired military intelligence officers.

THE PROBE of the intelligence committee lasted from January 1975 until May 1976, producing a six-volume report and seven volumes of testimony about CIA attempts to murder Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba and other foreign leaders. Yesterday's turnabout questioning of Hart, which was voluntary and amiable, lasted less than an hour.

It was almost a love feast as the once-beleaguered witnesses who had divulged the CIA's innermost secrets to the senatorial interrogators put hard questions of their own to one of the inquisitors. Some of the old-hand members of the Association of Former Intelligence Agents in the audience grumbled as Hart fielded the panel's questions, as if unable to comprehend how far things have come since the CIA acknowledged its plots, ploys and secret James Bond-type devices.

But all laughed uproariously when the young senator said, "If Congress can rehabilitate its own image, we can move on the images of the intelligence agencies."

HART SAID the mistakes of a few are damaging to all. The difference is, he added, that intelligence officials can never talk about their successes while politicians are always talking about theirs.

Hart — who was there when CIA officials were in the dock before the committee once headed by Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, and now chaired by Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii — told the panelists he does not anticipate any punitive legislation against the intelligence community.

The issue of criminal culpability, he said, is for Justice Department and White House policy-makers to decide. Hart also said, in reply to a question from Colby, that he did not know if the committee planned an annual public assessment of U.S. intelligence performance.

Huston, the one-time CIA counsel, asked how well the committee has kept the secrets and documents furnished it by the intelligence agencies. Hart said the record is very good on the handling of documents. The problem, he said, comes of what the committee should tell the full Senate.

"IF THE COMMITTEE is briefed on a covert operation," Hart said, "we would go into an executive session of the Senate and leave it to them in light of all security considerations. But in the eight months of the Inouye Committee, we haven't had occasion to do that."

Hart also said he did not think there would be any public release of the CIA and other intelligence agency budgets. He said the committee would disclose only comprehensive figures and added, "I see no strong movement for detailed or line-item releases. We may or may not break the figures down by agencies."

Hart told Huston he agrees in principle that more protection of intelligence secrets is needed. "This week," he said, "I asked the committee staff to ask the CIA what such a statute would look like. It's a very fine line but it's not an impossible one. We have to protect sources of information and intelligence methods, but we also have to let the American people know how their money is being spent. Above all, we have to protect the First Amendment."

Hart said some members of Congress are troubled about the excesses of covert operations. The key is to establish a record of responsibility and distinct lines of authority.

The other participants in the panel were Lt. Col. Bert Cumby, former military intelligence officer and employee of the State Department and Col. Walter Hammond, a former Air Force intelligence officer.