

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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48

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1 in that respect, buttressed at all by this one page from a
2 document we have, entitled Nine Pages from the Inspector General
3 21 May 1973, which I read very quickly.

4 It says: "Early in the Kennedy Administration, the 'White
5 House' urged Richard Bissell to create an Executive Action
6 capability, that is, a general standby capability to carry out
7 assassinations. The Executive Action program came to be known
8 as ZRRIFLE. It's principal asset was an agent [redacted] who had
9 been recruited earlier by [redacted] for use in a special operation
10 in the Congo for the [redacted] and to
11 be run by [redacted]. [redacted] made a survey of the scene, decided
12 that he wanted no part in the assassination attempt and asked
13 to be released."

14 Is the "blank" in that case Mr. O'Donnell?

15 Mr. Bissell. Yes, it is.

16 Senator Baker. Which Bissell granted. "Project named
17 ZRRIFLE first appears in the files in May 1961 although the
18 first recorded approval is dated 19 May 1962."

19 Skipping down to the last paragraph, "ZRRIFLE was not
20 exercised in the Congo. It did, however, find application
21 against Castro in a conspiracy to assassinate or incapacitate
22 him that was already underway under other auspices."

23 Now this memo alleges The 'White House' laid a
24 requirement on you for an assassination capability and that
25 it was you in connection with the Castro situation. Is all

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1 Mr. Bissell. I believe there was such conversation very
2 shortly before I left the Agency but not when the ZRRIFLE
3 project was first initiated.

4 Senator Schweiker. What was the nature of it? If you
5 don't say it was that specific application, what application
6 was it?

7 Mr. Bissell. It wasn't directed at any specific application.
8 It was to develop a capability, meaning to identify potential
9 agents probably in different kinds or parts of the world and
10 command the control channels and techniques and the like.

11 Senator Schweiker. Well, you're contradicting what
12 Mr. Harvey's not says on 11/16/61 when he discussed with you,
13 according to his notes, "Application of ZRRIFLE to Cuba."

14 Mr. Bissell. Well, I said that I thought there was
15 some conversation shortly before I left the Agency, and I think
16 that is the one to which I refer.

17 Senator Schweiker. You are acknowledging --

18 Mr. Bissell. Oh, yes. I am acknowledging that I did
19 eventually talk to Harvey about directing this towards Cuba,
20 but that was not the nature of my conversation with Harvey when
21 I first asked him to take on the task of developing a new
22 ZRRIFLE capability.

23 Senator Schweiker. Was your asking Mr. O'Donnell to
24 part of the Executive Action program?

25 Mr. Bissell. I suppose it could be said to be fitted within



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1 Senator Schweiker. Are you aware that a virus did end
2 up in the Congo?

3 Mr. Bissell. Well, I repeat I have little recollection.

4 Senator Schweiker. Well, Mr. O'Donnell did testify that
5 a virus did get there. How would virus like that get there,
6 without your knowledge?

7 Mr. Bissell. Well, if I'm correct, the virus was in
8 the hands of the Station Chief before O'Donnell went down
9 there.

10 Senator Schweiker. Well, wait. I haven't told you -- I
11 thought you didn't know anything about whose hands it was in.
12 How did you know it was in the Station Chief's hands?

13 Mr. Bissell. Because I was told that is what Mr. O'Donnell
14 testified.

15 Senator Schweiker. Who told you that?

16 Mr. Wides. I did, Senator.

17 Senator Schweiker. Okay, go ahead.

18 Mr. Bissell. And that could have happend with my not
19 in any way remembering it. In other words, I didn't remember
20 until I reread them this morning, any of the details about
21 what was in the Embassy in the Dominican Republic. I think
22 that is a little clear in my mind now.

23 I don't remember this. This could have happened without
24 my own approval, that is, the forwarding of the virus. It
25 could have happened with my approval but under circumstances

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1 which I wouldn't have reason to remember today.

2 Senator Schweiker. Does it surprise you that in view of
3 ~~Mr. O'Donnell~~'s position of refusing to assassinate a leader
4 that the virus did appear? Does that surprise you?

5 Mr. Bissell. Yes, it does on the whole, unless it was
6 some quite different purpose.

7 Senator Schweiker. What might that be?

8 Mr. Bissell. Well, I can't guess, but my judgment is that
9 before ~~Mr. O'Donnell~~ ever got there the assassination plan had
10 been decided to be inappropriate and unnecessary and had been
11 dropped.

12 Senator Goldwater. I will have to say, I get more confused
13 as the afternoon goes on.

14 If you were not instructed by the White House to set up
15 a committee which among other things could accomplish assassina-
16 tion, could you have done this on your own?

17 Mr. Bissell. Yes, I could, sir.

18 Senator Goldwater. Could you have done it on instructions
19 of anyone other than at the White House?

20 Mr. Bissell. The plan of the capability I could have
21 done on my own or ordered on my own.

22 Senator Goldwater. Well, did you originate the idea your-
23 self and start it yourself?

24 Mr. Bissell. I have already told you that I don't remember
25 specific conversations with regard to the White House, but

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103

1 apparently we had briefed him about it. I just really wonder
2 if we should question our own techniques here, because he was
3 prepared for the question because he had heard Mr. O'Donnell's
4 statement. I'm not sure he should have heard Mr. O'Donnell's
5 statement before he made the statement. I think we ought to
6 look into that.

7 Mr. Schwarz. That's a very hard question because take
8 Mr. McNamara -- I would appreciate some instructions on this,
9 Mr. McNamara and Mr. Bundy have both said that they want an
10 opportunity to know the matters with which they should be
11 concerned. Now on the one hand there are disadvantages to
12 doing that because you will look into what they are to be on
13 guard against. On the other hand there are advantages to doing
14 it because you generally do refresh their recollection about
15 matters which are relatively old.

16 Senator Schweiker. Wouldn't it be whether you've got a
17 hostile witness or a friendly witness?

18 Mr. Schwarz. Well, I don't think in advance we know what
19 they are.

20 Senator Schweiker. This fellow sounded pretty hostile
21 to me.

22 The Chairman. Senator Hart?

23 Senator Hart of Colorado. Frank, on your first question
24 about how to deal with the Press, first of all, I'm not nearly
25 as experienced as most of the other people and second, advice

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