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MEMORANDUM - February 5, 1978

005062

TO: G. Robert Blakey

FROM: Fonzi & Gonzales

RE: Interview with CHARLES SIRAGUSA AKA "CHARLIE CIGARS"

Background: On January 4, 1978, a syndicated column by Jack Anderson was published in the Miami Herald. The column reported that a former Federal Narcotics Bureau official named Charles Siragusa was approached by a CIA official "around 1960" in Washington with the suggestion "that Siragusa, drawing on his knowledge and contacts in the underworld, would recruit a crew of Mafia torpedoes for standby assassination duty." The CIA official reportedly told Siragusa that a "bounty" of \$1 million would be paid for each "kill." The Anderson column also reported that Siragusa had been involved in at least two other operations with the CIA: One was in helping to gain the freedom of three CIA operatives imprisoned in Cuba; the other was in helping establish a "safe house" in Greenwich Village which was allegedly turned into a "sex trap for foreign diplomats."

Purpose of interview: To determine if Siragusa had any direct knowledge of any CIA relationships with any assassination operations beyond what was reported in the Anderson column; if his knowledge of organized crime figures or activities included any relationship with the John F. Kennedy assassination; if his activities with the Federal Narcotics Bureau included an association with the CIA that led to the recruitment and employment by the Agency of QJ/WIN and/or WI/ROGUE; and if Siragusa had any additional knowledge concerning Daniel Carswell, one of the CIA agents he reportedly helped get released from Cuban prison.

Details: Charles Siragusa was interviewed on January 30, 1978, in his seasonal residence at 4215 Wilkinson Drive, Lake Worth, Florida (305-965-2523). He also maintains a residence in Chicago (312-634-3432). Siragusa said he had been a narcotics agent in New York before being assigned to Europe in 1950 by the Federal Bureau of

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Narcotics. In 1955 he was appointed supervisor of a territory which included Europe and the Middle East. He was stationed in Rome and supervised branch offices in Beirut, Istanbul, Paris and Marseilles. In 1958 he was transferred back to Washington as a field supervisor. In 1962 he became the Deputy Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, a position he described as "the number two slot." He retired from the Bureau of Narcotics in 1963 and became executive director of the State of Illinois Criminal Investigations Commission. He retired from that post in 1975.

Siragusa said he held the rank of Lt. Commander in the U.S. Navy during World War II. However, he said, he was actually in the Office of Strategic Services, Counter Intelligence. He said his immediate superior was James Angleton. Siragusa said that when he was reassigned from Europe to Washington in 1958, he resumed regular contact, including frequent luncheon meetings, with Angleton, then Chief of Counter Intelligence of the CIA. Angleton subsequently introduced Siragusa to other CIA officials, including Dr. Ray Treichler, Vincent Thill and a fellow whose name he doesn't recall with certainty but says might have been John Mohr or Morse. Siragusa said that it was with Dr. Treichler that a "safe house" was established in Greenwich Village. Siragusa said he also worked with Dr. Treichler on an anti-opium operation involving the the passing of CIA funds [redacted]

Sometime in 1960 or 1961, according to Siragusa, he was told by John Mohr (or Morse) that the CIA had three agents in Cuban prison who had "pulled a Watergate" on the Chinese News Agency in Havana. Mohr told him that one of the agents was especially important because he knew the names of a "couple of hundred" other agents and, if Castro discovered that, the agent would be pressured into revealing them. Siragusa said that Mohr told him the CIA was willing to pay \$1 million to anyone who gained the release of these agents from Cuba. As a result, Siragusa said, he went to Miami and obtained the name of an informant from the Federal Narcotics agent in charge of that office, Eugene Marshall.

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(The name of Eugene Marshall had, coincidentally, been provided by Gerry Patrick Hemming in a discussion with him at his office on January 20, 1978, with Team Leader #3 Bill Triplett present. Hemming mentioned Marshall as someone who could confirm the attempt of Lee Harvey Oswald to join his No Name Key group in Miami following the group's arrest in December, 1962. According to Hemming, Marshall was an associate then of attorney (now California radio personality) Charles Ashman, who had arranged for the group's accommodations in the Miami motel where Oswald appeared. Marshall was subsequently dismissed from the Bureau of Narcotics for illegal activity. Hemming says he is currently working for attorney Melvin Belli in California and that Bill Turner can arrange an interview with him.)

Siragusa said that Marshall put him in touch with a Cuban informant who reportedly had the contacts and ability to obtain the release of the CIA agents. Siragusa does not recall the name of the informant, only that he had a small private detective agency in Miami, was a fast talker, was about six feet tall, weighed about 240 pounds and had a very unattractive wife who worked with him. Siragusa said that the informant claimed he could get the job done, but after a few ineffectual attempts it became obvious that he couldn't. Siragusa then went to Chicago and contacted an old informant he refused to name. That informant put him in touch with a Chicago attorney he also did not name. That attorney, who Siragusa said was a Greek, was a personal friend of Raul Castro. Siragusa took the Greek attorney to Washington for a meeting with an attorney named James Murphy, whom Siragusa assumed was working for the CIA. (Siragusa said he had known Murphy from his OSS days when Murphy was with him in the "X-2" counter intelligence branch.) Siragusa said that Murphy gave the Greek lawyer \$10,000 on each of two occasions for trips to Cuba. Eventually, says Siragusa, the Greek lawyer obtained a Havana lawyer to negotiate the release of the three CIA agents.

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Siragusa said he does not know the details of their release, nor does he recall their names. He said the name of Daniel Carswell only "sounded familiar." He failed to identify a photograph of Carswell. He could offer no other information concerning the incident but, he said, he has a file box of index name cards still at his old office in Chicago and, he said, when he returns there in May he will review the file and refresh his memory on any names.

Siragusa confirmed the information provided in the Anderson column concerning the interest of a CIA official in forming a "hit squad" for standby assassination duty. He said he doesn't recall whether it was Sheffield Edwards, Vincent Thill or John Mohr (or Morse) who put the proposition to him. He said he was told that since he had a lot of contacts in the underworld, would he put together an assassination squad which would be paid \$1 million a hit. Siragusa said he at first thought the CIA officer making the proposition to him was joking but as the conversation progressed he decided that he was not. Siragusa said he immediately declined the proposition and told his contact "no dice." He said he told him that it would "be different if it were war time," but he wouldn't consider it in peace time. Siragusa said the conversation took place sometime in the "early 1960s."

Siragusa said that most of his underworld contacts had come from the Chicago area, but that he never met John Roselli or Sam Giancana. He also said he never heard of Jack Ruby or Rubenstein in Chicago. He said the first time he heard of the name of Ruby was after the Kennedy assassination and that he knows of no connection of Ruby to the narcotics business.

In relation to QJ/WIN and WI/ROGUE, Siragusa was asked if he was familiar with any undercover agent or informant who was used by the Federal Narcotics Bureau and then subsequently given to the CIA for its use. (Re Senate Select Intelligence Committee Report on "Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders.") Although, Siragusa said, his position should have given him such knowledge of an agent transfer, he does not recall any. He said, however, that the CIA would often come to him for credentials from the Federal Narcotics Bureau for use by the Agency's agents. "A lot of guys were floating around Europe with phony narcotic agent credentials," he said.

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Siragusa said it was also possible that the agent transfer could have been handled by one of his supervisory employees who was surrepticiously working for the CIA. One such possibility, he said, was his Narcotics Bureau agent in the Middle East. Siragusa said he put in charge of the Beirut office in 1955 and the Paris office in 1958. He said later resigned from the Narcotics Bureau and officially went to work for the CIA. He said was fluent in French, German and Arabic, and is today in his late 40s or early 50s.

Another individual who may possibly have knowledge of QJ/WIN and WI/ROGUE, said Siragusa, was a close friend and associate of his in Europe, who died in 1966 or 1967. he said, was formerly with Army CID and later with the Narcotic Bureau. Siragusa thinks he joined the CIA in 1958. His widow, currently lives at 1373 Canterbury Way, Rockville, Md (424-5142).

Siragusa also mentioned a CIA agent he met through in Europe. He recalled only that his first name was Bob and that his last name sounded Irish. Bob was subsequently sent to the Congo by the CIA and the last Siragusa heard was that he was in Madrid running an import-export business.

Siragusa said he was unfamiliar with all the other CIA officials whose names he was asked about. He was also unfamiliar with all the organized crime and Cuban figures whose names he was asked about.

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