
Agency Information

AGENCY : FBI
RECORD NUMBER : 124-90101-10071
RECORD SERIES : HQ
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 92-4194-2

Released under the John F. Kennedy
Assassination Records Collection Act of
1992 (44 USC 2107 Note). Case#:NW
64578 Date: 12-14-2022

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : FBI
FROM : MM
TO : HQ
TITLE :
DATE : 04/23/1963
PAGES : 3
SUBJECTS :
JOSEPH RAYMOND MEROLA
DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : Unclassified
RESTRICTIONS : 4
CURRENT STATUS : Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 07/29/1998
OPENING CRITERIA : INDEFINITE
COMMENTS : MEMO

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO :

DATE:

[Handwritten signature]
April 23, 1963

Director, FBI

April 23, 1963

SAC, Miami (92-463)

FROM: *[Handwritten signature]*

SUBJECT: JOSEPH RAYMOND MEROLA, aka
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On April 22, 1963, CHESTER GRAY (former MM 722-C) advised SA PRUE C. CLINKSCALES that he had just learned from JOSEPH RAYMOND MEROLA, FBI No. 4989299, of Miami Beach, that MEROLA contemplates two "shakedown" kidnapings from which he expects to obtain considerable money. One of the intended kidnap victims is GERARDO V. CATENA, aka Jerry, of Newark, New Jersey, who is known to the Bureau to be a member of the Commission in the La Causa Nostra. Source learned MEROLA is aware of the fact that CATENA visits the South Florida area periodically.

The other intended kidnap victim is MAXIE RAYMOND, aka Maxie Eder, who is considered a Lieutenant for MIKE COPPOLA and looks after COPPOLA's interest in the Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach.

GRAY said he learned that MEROLA has already telephonically contacted AL SEID, aka Al Ross, "The Chinaman," of Pittsburgh and New Kensington, Pennsylvania, an associate of MEROLA's for many years. SEID is reportedly the "trigger man" for the MANNARINOS "SAM and GABE," of New Kensington, Pennsylvania. MEROLA has given some thought to utilizing the services of MIKE SWIATEK, of Chicago, as his "strong arm" man. MEROLA contemplates the use of a boat for holding the kidnap victims until arrangements are made for the pay off money to MEROLA, SEID, or some designated representative.

- 6 - Bureau (Enc. 6)
 - (2) - 92-463 (MEROLA)
 - (1) - 87-3985 (MEROLA)
 - (1) - 92-8172
 - (1) - 92-4192
 - (1) - 137-6257
- 2 - Newark (92-377)
 - (2) - 92-463 (MEROLA) (1 - 87-8049) (MEROLA)
 - (2) - 92-252 (CATENA) (1 - 92-467) (RAYMOND)
 - (1) - 92-101 (COPPOLA) (1 - 137-2065) (GRAY)

PCC:amc

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ENCLOSURE
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MM 92-463

GRAY said that he had been approached by MEROLA to pick up the money. He said he declined such offer.

Former MM 722-C said he did not learn any details as to the exact dates or places of the alleged kidnappings of CATENA and RAYMOND. He continued that it is very unlikely he will learn any further such details, as he declined to participate by picking up the pay off money.

Source advised that above information undoubtedly is known to only three or four individuals other than himself and any utilization or dissemination of this information would without question seriously jeopardize his personal safety and even his life. Source advised that for his own personal welfare and safety he intends to contact both CATENA and RAYMOND in the very near future and advise each of them of MEROLA's plans and intentions with respect to these alleged kidnappings and shakedowns.

The Bureau is aware from previous correspondence that JOE MEROLA and MIKE SWIATEK, mentioned above, were involved in a major jewel theft in the Miami area previously, and MEROLA confided in Departmental Attorney WILLIAM KENNEY, Miami, of their participation in the same.

By previous correspondence captioned "HENRY HARVEY HERMAN - VICTIM; KIDNAPING," furnished to the Bureau by Miami teletype dated January 11, 1961, HERMAN was the victim of a shakedown kidnaping in the Miami area. Continued reports have been received and reported to the Bureau indicating other similar shakedown kidnapings. By teletype dated July 26, 1961, captioned "MM 722-C," the Bureau was advised of a contemplated shakedown kidnaping on the part of MEROLA.

MM 92-463

As the Bureau is aware, MEROLA and the informant in this matter, CHESTER GRAY, have been close associates for many years. They have been jointly involved in illegal activity in the past. MEROLA has no visible means of support, however, the mode of his living is such that he apparently has unlimited funds. This money could be coming from such shakedown kidnaping activity.

No official complaint has been received concerning a violation of the Federal law in the previous kidnapings and investigation and inquiry among informants has failed to reflect such a violation. Based upon the information furnished as to the contemplated action, it does not appear a Federal law would be broken in this instance. It is also known that in some of the past previous alleged kidnapings, which apparently took place according to informants, the victims have even denied these kidnapings for fear of their lives.

The above is submitted for the Bureau's information and the Bureau will be advised as soon as GRAY reports that he has discussed this matter with both CATENA and RAYMOND. In view of GRAY's anticipated action, it is recommended this information not be disseminated to local authorities. There is attached a letterhead memorandum for the Bureau's consideration in disseminating the same to the Department inasmuch as MEROLA is known to this office to be a close acquaintance and informant of Departmental Attorney WILLIAM ~~KENNEY~~ in Miami. File