

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Robert Kennedy assassination rehash

Old bullets may kill probe

NORFOLK — The aging of bullets could make it difficult to determine conclusively whether more than one gun was used in the 1968 assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, says a Virginia state firearms examiner who has been selected to do ballistics work in a new probe in Los Angeles.

Patrick V. Garland of Virginia Beach, firearms examiner with Tidewater Regional Branch of the State Bureau of Forensic Science in Norfolk, was notified Tuesday afternoon of his appointment with six other ballistics experts to a special commission to probe circumstances in the June 1968 murder of

Kennedy in the California city.

For several years there have been demands for a probe to determine whether Sirhan B. Sirhan was the lone gunman in the 1968 assassination.

Garland emphasized that he couldn't make any determination of his own until he examines the evidence when he goes to Los Angeles, probably next week.

But when air gets to bullets made of lead, they could get a white coating that could make it difficult in determining which gun fired them, he said.

In Los Angeles Tuesday, Dewayne Wolfer, the city Police Department's chief forensic

scientist, said bullets and bullet fragments collected after the attack may have undergone significant damage in the intervening years due to oxidation and mis-handling.

The major question raised by those doubting Sirhan acted alone concerns whether all the bullets were fired from the same .22-caliber pistol. Kennedy was killed as he celebrated his California presidential primary victory at the Ambassador Hotel.

Garland, 38, a retired Army master sergeant, has been employed by the state as a firearms expert for 14 months, and frequently is called as an expert witness in court cases.

His selection to take part in the Kennedy probe was viewed today as a signal honor for the State Bureau of Forensic Science by Norfolk State Sen. Stanley C. Walker, chairman of the Virginia State Crime Commission.

The crime commission sponsored the legislation to establish a statewide criminal laboratory system.



GARLAND

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Warren Commission Integrity Doubted

WASHINGTON (AP)—Newly released material contains "serious reasons" to question the quality and integrity of the Warren Commission's investigation into the 1963 slaying of President John F. Kennedy, according to an analysis by editors of The New Republic magazine.

The account, coauthored by Washington journalist Tad Szulc, put forth no theory of its own to counter the commission's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald alone killed Kennedy.

But the story said that through newly released documents "the commission is revealed to be a group of men consumed by doubts, fears, and uncertainties; troubled by suspicions of the investigatory work performed for it by the FBI and the CIA; worried about a parallel inquiry in Texas; and, finally, suffering from a lack of confidence in their own ability to produce a report that would be credible to the American people."

The account said the commission concealed its own doubts from the public, and was motivated in part by politics. It quoted a transcript of a closed commission meeting at which Chairman Earl Warren, then chief justice of the Supreme Court, said "It would be very bad for the country to have this thing discussed" in the midst of the 1964 presidential campaign.

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Cuban, Soviet Embassies

Oswald Visa Talk Recorded by CIA

WASHINGTON (AP)—A pair of telephone conversations involving Lee Harvey Oswald were tape-recorded by the Central Intelligence Agency less than two months before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, according to informed sources.

The sources said the conversations were recorded Sept. 27 and 28, 1963, in the course of the CIA's routine monitoring of phone calls to and from the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Mexico City.

Oswald, who was identified by the Warren Commission as the sole gunman in the Nov. 22, 1963 assassination, was in Mexico City attempting to obtain a visa to travel to the Soviet Union via Cuba.

The tapes were routinely processed and filed without any further action until Kennedy was killed, one source said Saturday, with either the actual recordings or transcripts of them then being flown to Washington.

According to Warren Commission documents, the Sept. 27 conversation was between officials of the Cuban and Soviet embassies involving Oswald's visa request.

The Sept. 28 conversation was

similar except that Oswald himself, who was then in the Cuban Embassy, got on the telephone and spoke in broken Russian to the Soviet official.

The FBI recently acknowledged that a letter threatening an FBI agent was delivered by Oswald to the Dallas FBI office several days before the Kennedy assassination. It said the letter was destroyed and no report of it was ever made to the Warren Commission.

It has not been determined whether the commission was informed of the CIA tapes, but an FBI memo it received states that "another U.S. government agency is in possession of the following information" and proceeds to detail, without naming the source, the content of the two conversations relating to Oswald.

Oswald's trip to Mexico City has been considered by some to indicate that he was part of a foreign conspiracy, a proposition which the Warren Commission rejected.

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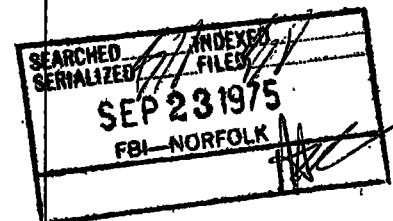
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Oswald letter destruction probe begun

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has begun a criminal investigation of the circumstances surrounding the destruction of a threatening letter delivered by Lee Harvey Oswald to the Dallas office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation shortly before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The investigation, which is being conducted by lawyers in the department's criminal division, is said by authoritative sources to be focusing on "conflicting statements" given by present and former FBI agents and officials about their roles in — or knowledge of — the decision to destroy the letter following Kennedy's murder on Nov. 22, 1963.

The letter in question reportedly contained a threat by Oswald, the accused assassin of the late president, to "blow up" a Dallas police station unless the FBI ceased its efforts to locate and interview him in Dallas and what he described as its harassment of his Russian-born wife, Marina.

According to several sources familiar with the results of a recently ordered administrative inquiry by the FBI into the incident, the Oswald letter made no mention of any intention on his part to commit a murder, or of any animosity toward Kennedy.

The FBI's efforts to seek Oswald in the days before the assassination were prompted by its suspicion that, as a defector who

had taken up residence in the Soviet Union, renounced his American citizenship and then returned to the United States married to a Russian native, his activities might prove to be of some security interest.

The threatening letter was delivered by Oswald to the FBI's Dallas field office in early November 1963, after a special agent there, James P. Hosty Jr., had made two visits to a home where Oswald's wife, Marina, was staying with a friend.

Despite the threatening language, the letter reportedly evoked no extraordinary effort on the part of the Dallas FBI office to locate Oswald, who had left the letter with an office receptionist in Hosty's name and then departed before it could be delivered.

The letter, the sources said, was simply made a part of Oswald's file. Hosty continued his efforts to locate Oswald, a former Marine rifleman, but they proved unavailing up to the time Kennedy was shot and killed while riding in a motorcade on a Dallas street.

Within days of the Kennedy assassination, sources said, the Oswald letter was removed from the file and destroyed. The chain of events that led to that destruction are the focus of the administrative inquiry now underway within the FBI.

It is in that connection that the "conflicting statements" about the responsibility for destroying the letter reportedly have been made to FBI investigators by present or former bureau personnel.

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The Oswald letter mystery

Good ends have not always been served in the recent rash of exposures and investigations affecting such activities as the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Too much probing has been politically motivated or deliberately meant to damage operations which must go on — mostly in secret — for the protection of the nation.

But no doubt at all attaches to the wisdom of efforts to get to the bottom of the Oswald letter mystery. This is the case of the letter delivered to the FBI's Dallas field office shortly before the assassination of President Kennedy in that city.

The existence of the letter, in which Lee Harvey Oswald protested the FBI's questioning of his wife, appears quite well established. As does the removal of the letter from the agency's files without its being made a part of the Warren Commission investigation, which established Oswald as the assassin.

The absence of this particular piece of material does not seem serious enough to warrant reopening the whole inquiry into Mr. Kennedy's death. But the letter episode itself demands the fullest scrutiny, and the inquiry now under way by the Justice Department could be an important first step.

There is simply no acceptable reason for destroying or hiding such a piece of information relating to Oswald's pre-assassination frame of mind — however embarrassing the letter might have been to the FBI or anyone else.

Americans have an urgent right to know just how this incredible obliteration of evidence was decided upon and who participated. No damage to the national security can possibly result from bringing this information out. And the country deserves to be protected in the future from the individual, individuals or type of thinking which led to this abysmal subversion of the evidentiary process.

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