

I. FOREWORD

(1)¹ Early in its investigation, as soon as it was realized that a plot by elements of organized crime in the United States to assassinate President John F. Kennedy warranted serious consideration, the committee decided to assemble the most reliable information available on the subject. The focus was to be primarily on the history of organized crime;² the impact of the Kennedy administration's campaign against it in the United States; possible links of Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby with underworld figures; and the development of new evidence or leads. From this information, the committee hoped to discover if the national syndicate of organized crime, or any of its leaders or members, had the motive, means and opportunity to assassinate the President, and if there was any evidence of their participation in the events in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

(2) At the early stages of its work, the committee reviewed the major groups and major allegations related to the assassination to identify the most likely participants if a conspiracy was involved. A major reason for suspecting conspiracy was Oswald's murder by Jack Ruby. Organized crime—specifically the national syndicate known as La Cosa Nostra or the Mafia—was a logical choice for study. A number of leads to organized crime existed, mostly through Ruby:

- Ruby had moved from Chicago to Dallas in 1946, at a time when the Mafia was said to be moving into that city. It has been alleged that Ruby was a front man.

- Ruby was friendly with various alleged underworld figures, such as Lewis McWillie, a known associate of Santos Trafficante, who was a leading Mafia figure in Tampa, Fla.

- Ruby had made several unexplained phone calls to underworld figures in the months preceding the assassination.

(3) The Warren Commission concluded that Ruby had shot Oswald for personal reasons, had not known Oswald previously, had made his calls to underworld figures because of labor problems with an entertainment union, had only visited McWillie once in Cuba—and that for pleasure—and was friendly with organized crime figures as a result of his gregariousness and the nature of his nightclub business. In summary, "the evidence [the Commission believed did] not establish a significant link between Ruby and organized crime."³

(4) Both the Warren Commission and the FBI, its principal investigative force, have been criticized for their failure to pursue the

¹ Arabic numerals in parentheses at the beginning of paragraphs indicate the paragraph number for purposes of citation and referencing; italic numerals in parentheses in the middle or at the end of sentences indicate references which can be found at the end of each report or section.

² The concept of organized crime can mean many things. See generally G. Blakey, R. Goldstock and C. Rogovin, *Racket Bureaus: Investigation and Prosecution of Organized Crime*, Appendix A, "Uses of the Phrase 'Organized Crime,'" pp. 107-117 (NILE, 1978).

³ Warren Commission Report, p. 801.

organized crime leads more thoroughly. Suspicions about possible organized crime involvement in the assassination were also reinforced by new leads that emerged in recent years and by new allegations. They included:

- In 1975, the Senate committee revealed that the CIA had recruited the Mafia to assassinate Castro;
- Organized crime was said to have turned its back on the CIA and agreed to assist Castro in assassinating the President in revenge for the Bay of Pigs;
- Very little evidence was available on the activities of two key organized crime leaders who remained open questions—Santos Trafficante of Florida and Carlos Marcello of New Orleans; and
- Possible links between Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin, and David Ferrie, an operative of Carlos Marcello, a leading Mafia figure in New Orleans, La., had been alleged.

(5) It was in this context, therefore, that the committee decided to address several issues involving organized crime. They included not just possible ties of organized crime to Oswald and Ruby, but involvement of the Mafia with other anti-Kennedy forces, as well as its potential for independent action. The key issues were:

- Did the national syndicate of organized crime as a group, or individuals within it, have the motive to assassinate President Kennedy? Specifically, was the Mafia being seriously hurt by the Kennedys' campaign against it?
- Was there any evidence, or could any be developed, of involvement in the assassination by the national syndicate of organized crime as a group or by individuals within it? Specifically, was there any evidence that Lee Harvey Oswald or Jack Ruby were associated with organized crime figures in any way? Were there ties between the Mafia and any other potential assassins, group or individual?
- Did the method of assassination itself suggest organized crime involvement?
- Were there reasons why organized crime would not have undertaken to assassinate the President?
- Could more information be developed on Carlos Marcello and Santos Trafficante?

(6) The committee assumed from the outset that organized crime may well have had the means and opportunity to assassinate President Kennedy. The success of its criminal operations, the difficulty of achieving convictions, the tradition of violence—much of it undetected and unsolved—and the existence of a highly disciplined, effective unit of organized crime in major cities in the United States led the committee to this conclusion. Thus, its investigation focused primarily on the questions of motive and evidence of possible involvement.

(7) The committee determined that, in pursuing its investigation of organized crime involvement, the following materials, as they related to organized crime as a whole and to specific key individuals, would have to be reviewed:

- law enforcement agency files at Federal, State and local levels;
 - books, periodicals, committee reports, and other written materials; and
 - reports on electronic surveillance of organized crime figures.
- In addition, the committee planned to interview, depose or otherwise

obtain testimony from key members of the Mafia and their associates, as well as from staff of the Warren Commission and the FBI, the CIA and other agencies involved in the original investigation. Particular attention would be paid to ties between Ruby and organized crime and Oswald and organized crime.

(8) To assist with its investigation, the committee decided to retain a leading expert on organized crime. Ralph Salerno's involvement with the investigation of organized crime dates back to 1946, when he joined the New York City Police Department. For most of his 20 years with the department, he worked on organized crime cases. When he retired in 1966, he was supervisor of detectives in the Central Investigation Bureau, the organized crime investigative unit of the department. Since his retirement, Salerno has served as consultant to many groups, including the Organized Crime Task Force of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, the President's Commission on Violence, and the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals. In 1974-75, he served as chief rackets investigator for the New York (Queens) County, New York District Attorney's office. He has also been active in training law enforcement officers at all levels of government throughout the United States and in Canada. Salerno is the author of numerous books and articles on organized crime, and he has provided expert testimony before numerous legislative bodies.

(9) This volume contains a number of staff summaries of information obtained in the course of the committee's organized crime investigation that were prepared for internal use. As such, it must be emphasized, they are not polished drafts. Because the committee believed that the question of possible organized crime involvement was important, it was decided that these raw working files should be published.

(10) This volume consists of the following materials:

- An edited version of the consultant's report;
 - A review and summary of information available on Carlos Marcello, with a particular focus on his attitude toward the Kennedy administration;
 - A review of Oswald's early life in New Orleans and possible contact with persons associated in some way with organized crime in that city; and
 - An analysis of various links of Jack Ruby to organized crime.
- Additional material on organized crime as it relates to other areas the committee investigated can be found in the following reports:
- "The Evolution and Implications of the CIA-Sponsored Assassination Conspiracies Against Fidel Castro," Appendix to the Hearings before the Select Committee on Assassinations, Volume X;
 - "The Warren Commission," Appendix to the Hearings before the Select Committee on Assassinations, Volume XI.

