

diff-jfk: record 157-10002-10148 - Page 1 - (diff between 2025 and 2023)

Highlighted changes between 2025/157-10002-10148.pdf and 2023/157-10002-10148.pdf

Date: 10/05/93
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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : SSCIA
RECORD NUMBER : 157-10002-10148

RECORDS SERIES :
TRANSCRIPT

AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : SSCIA
FROM :
TO :

TITLE :
TESTIMONY OF JAMES P. O'CONNELL

DATE : 05/30/75
PAGES : 168

SUBJECTS :

MAHEU, ROBERT
CASTRO
ASSASSINATION
CUBA
HUGHES
BISSELL
VERONA
VARONA
HARVEY, WILLIAM
ROSSELLI
GIANCANA
MAFIA
TRAFFICANTE
CIA
ROWAN, DAN
MC GUIRE, PHYLLIS

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : T
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED
CURRENT STATUS : P
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 09/30/93

OPENING CRITERIA :

[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED

Date:10/05/93
Page:2

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COMMENTS :

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1 Chairman Church. Would you please take the oath?

2 Do you swear that everything you will testify to in
3 these proceedings shall be the truth, the whole truth and
4 nothing but the truth, so help you God?

5 Mr. O'Connell. I do.

6 TESTIMONY OF JAMES P. O'CONNELL

7 Mr. Schwarz. Would you state your name?

8 Mr. O'Connell. My name is James P. O'Connell.

9 Mr. Schwarz. And what is your address?

10 Mr. O'Connell. [REDACTED] 1333 Elsinore Avenue, McLean, Virginia,
11 [REDACTED]
12 22101

13 Mr. Schwarz. Before we proceed substantively let me
just put on the record some matters.

14 First, you understand that you have a right to counsel?

15 Mr. O'Connell. I understand that. I just read it.

16 Mr. Schwarz. And you should also be advised that you
have your rights under the Constitution, including your
17 rights under the Fifth Amendment, if at any point you wish
18 to assert whatever rights that you do have that are under those
19 Constitutional provisions.

20 Do you understand that?

21 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

22 Mr. Schwarz. And if at any time you feel that you
need an attorney you have the right to ask for an
23 attorney, do you understand that?

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1 pills?

2 Mr. O'Connell. The man that created them is Dr. Raymond

3 Trichler.

4 Mr. Schwarz. Did he hand the pills to you?

5 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

6 Mr. Schwarz. Did he know what the pills were for?

7 Mr. O'Connell. I don't think so.

8 Mr. Schwarz. But he knew they were illegal?

9 Mr. O'Connell. He knew they were illegal.

10 Mr. Schwarz. And were the pills not tried out on some
11 experimental subjects in the U.S.?

12 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

13 Mr. Schwarz. And proven to be lethal?

14 Mr. O'Connell. Well, to the extent -- I will tell you
15 that, we used them on hamsters.

16 Mr. Schwarz. And also monkeys?

17 Mr. O'Connell. No, as far as I know, just the hamsters.

18 Mr. Schwarz. But anyway, you knew they were lethal.

19 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

20 Mr. Schwarz. And you handed them over to Rosselli?

21 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

22 Mr. Schwarz. And had the Technical Services made poison
23 pills before as far as you know?

24 Mr. O'Connell. As far as I know. I have no idea.

25 This was my first experience with that sort of thing.

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1 your possession, that might give you a more accurate timing than
2 I am giving to you now.

3 Mr. Madigan. We don't have it presently.

4 Mr. O'Connell. I am sure it is over there.

5 Mr. Wides. With regard to the discussion of authorization,
6 would it have been following on Mr. Madigan's point, that this
7 was a fairly serious and unusual operation that you were given,
8 and that you would have asked, is this authorized? Or how did
9 the question of Mr. Dulles authorizing it come up, as best you
10 recall?

11 Mr. O'Connell. I told you, I knew that Mr. Dulles -- I was
12 told that Mr. Dulles had authorized it, I can't say quite when
13 it happened, but I know I was told.

14 Mr. Wides. You testified this morning -- I don't want
15 to put words in your mouth -- I thought you testified that you
16 were sure that Mr. Edwards told you at this meeting when he first
17 gave you the assignment that you were not sure that Mr. Bissell's
18 also mentioned that when you later met in your office.

19 Mr. O'Connell. I would stick with that, yes. I think it
20 probably was when I -- when Colonel Edwards called me he
21 said, this probably has the blessing of the DCI.

22 Mr. Wides. Do you know if Dr. V. S. Roosevelt, who
23 was head of the Technical Services Division at the time, was
24 witnessing about this?

25 Mr. O'Connell. I wouldn't want to bet my life that he

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1 wasn't. But he was at a meeting when the bills were delivered,
2 and Dr. Treichler came over to Colonel Edwards' office.

3 Mr. Wides. But you don't recall whether you ever knew
4 that ~~Roosevelt~~ knew what it was in connection with as distinct
5 from merely knowing it was a lethal pill, is that right?

6 Mr. O'Connell. I can't say -- to my personal knowledge,
7 the discussion never came up when I was there. I don't think
8 he is a dummy, and I don't think ~~Treichler~~ is any dummy, and
9 I think they had a general idea.

10 But as far as I know they were never officially told.

11 Mr. Wides. To your knowledge, before you went overseas
12 no one else in the office of Security, Mr. Bannerman, Mr.
13 White or Mr. Hall, none of those men or anyone else knew about
14 the project, only yourself and Mr. Edwards?

15 Mr. O'Connell. Well, I would say this, to my knowledge
16 they were never briefed. However, I think I brought up an
17 incident this morning where Colonel Edwards was on leave and
18 Colonel King called Mr. Bannerman, who was his
19 deputy, and assumed that Bannerman knew all about it and started
20 talking about it, what are we going to do about
21 this -- I don't know what the conversation was about. And
22 Bannerman called in and said, what was this all about?

23 Mr. Wides. This was in 1962 before you left?

24 Mr. O'Connell. Yes. It was while I was up in the office.

25 And I said, I don't have the authority to brief you on it.

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1 Mr. Wides. Were you ever aware, whether you were formally
2 notified or just got a rumble or heard through the grapevine,
3 that the CIA was getting some information about these threats,
4 or some information about groups who might pose a threat in the
5 Washington area, not from Bureau sources or military sources,
6 but from CIA sources, did you ever hear any rumble of that kind?

7 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

8 Mr. Wides. What did you hear?

9 Mr. O'Connell. The only way I got involved in it was that
10 Howard Osborn would have a nine o'clock meeting every
11 morning with his deputies.

12 And they had a proprietary organization in the Office of
13 Security which I think had informants.

14 Now, I don't know their identities, but it would come out
15 in the meeting, and they would have some names for them. I
16 couldn't tell you what they were.

17 Mr. Madigan. What was the proprietary called?

18 Mr. O'Connell. The name that strikes me -- and I
19 know part of it, but I couldn't tell you exactly -- I think it
20 was Anderson --

21 Mr. Madigan. Anderson Stuart?

22 Mr. O'Connell. Anderson Stuart, something like that.

23 Mr. Wides. You say you think they had informants?

24 Mr. O'Connell. They obviously did, I guess, because the
25 way this would come out, so-and-so advised at a meeting last

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1 night.

2 (1)(b) 9 Nov 93
3 Mr. Wides. If you associate that with [redacted]
you must have been told more than just, we have an informant.
4 How would it be discussed at the meeting, through this
5 proprietary we have access to information?

6 Mr. O'Connell. No, it usually would be the Deputy
7 Director that that was under. And that was under OIS.

8 Mr. Wides. Victor White?

9 Mr. O'Connell. Victor White.

10 Mr. Wides. And what would he say about how [redacted]
11 fitted into the picture?

12 Mr. O'Connell. That never came up. I just drew that
13 conclusion, that they had potential.

14 Mr. Wides. Why would you assume that they used a propri-
15 etary as opposed to just having some agents penetrate a group?
16 Why would you think in terms of their using the [redacted] --

17 Mr. O'Connell. I can tell you what I think.

18 First of all, I wouldn't want to use government employees.

19 Mr. Wides. Why couldn't the CIA personnel just run
20 agents who would be --

21 Mr. O'Connell. That is in fact what they were doing.
22 These people that were proprietary were not CIA employees. They
23 were [redacted] contract teams.

24 Mr. Wides. Why would you have thought that they would have
25 gone the route of using the proprietary people as opposed to

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1 Did you have any knowledge during the 1970-1971 time frame
2 of any effort outside of Florida with regard to Cubans to fire
3 on the Keys or on the Florida area there with a boat that
4 would be disguised as a Russian boat, which was really a
5 group of people, some of whom were assets of the Agency?

6 Mr. O'Connell. No.

7 Mr. Madigan. You never heard of anything like that?

8 Mr. O'Connell. Nothing of that, no.

9 Mr. Madigan. Did you ever run across a fellow by
10 the name of Jerry Henning in your dealing with Roselli
11 and Maheu?

12 Mr. O'Connell. No.

13 Mr. Madigan. You never heard of the name?

14 Mr. O'Connell. I never heard of the name.

15 Mr. Madigan. Did you handle the Agency contact with Mr.
16 Maheu about having him coordinate or set up or be involved
17 in ~~the supplying of a female to this foreign leader back in 1959?~~

18 Mr. O'Connell. A couple of them, as a matter of fact.

19 Mr. Madigan. A couple ~~of foreign leaders?~~

20 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

21 Mr. Madigan. What was your involvement in that? Am I
22 right about 1959?

23 Mr. O'Connell. It could be. There were two different
24 occasions.

25 Mr. Madigan. What is your recollection as to the dates?

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1 Mr. O'Connell. Well, the first one was _____ about
2 1959.

3 Mr. Madigan. And how did that come about? Why did it go to
4 you in the Office of Security as opposed to --

5 Mr. O'Connell. Just like this other one came down from the
6 DDP, it came from the _____ Division, as
7 I recall it. And _____ was coming into the --

8 Mr. Wides. Off the record.

9 (Discussion off the record.)

10 Mr. Madigan. What did your first contact with Maheu
11 with regard to this project involve?

12 Mr. O'Connell. Well, the request came to the Security.

13 Mr. Madigan. It came down to you?

14 Mr. O'Connell. It came through Colonel Edwards.

15 Mr. Madigan. To you?

16 Mr. O'Connell. Yes. And the recruitment was a certain type
17 whether to recruit leaders, or to supply compatriots
18 compatriots, etc.

19 Mr. Madigan. the leaders?

20 Mr. O'Connell. the leaders.

21 Mr. Madigan. So did you contact Maheu directly?

22 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

23 Mr. Wides. In this instance you were talking about

24 a leader who would be in America, or to supply compatriots
25 wherever the leader was situated.

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1 Mr. O'Connell. [He was visiting New York, and it was] [redacted]

2 [proposed to be a state visit, and so forth and he really] [redacted]
3 wanted some female companionship. And his case officer, the
4 Agency's case officer that was handling the leader, said,
5 let's stick to business while you are in New York. And we will
6 take you out to the West Coast and that is going to be a
7 pleasure trip, and we will see that you meet the right people.

8 So Maheu lined up this young lady, who was a starlet, a
9 little cutie, and they knew the type he liked, size and
10 everything.

11 So, they arranged a cocktail party for them [many informants] [redacted]
12 [cocktail party]

13 Mr. Madigan. [When did?]

14 Mr. O'Connell. [He was a fellow named Gregg, [redacted], [redacted]]

15 used to be associated to some very famous actress, and he knows
16 just about anything and everything that walks in skirts in L.A.
17 and Hollywood.

18 So Maheu called Gregg and asked him if he could come up
19 with something according to certain specs. And he did. And she
20 was placed in the right atmosphere, at the right time and the
21 leader went head over heels in love with her, to the extent
22 that it was beyond what we planned. [He really fell in love with
23 her.]

24 Mr. Madigan. [Was a fellow named Negro Paul involved?]

25 [Is this?]

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1 Mr. O'Connell. [No,] Local girl at one time was the
[head of the division that I mentioned a little while ago. But]

2 he wasn't involved in it

3 So what we thought was going to be a passing fancy, he
4 decided he had to go back to New York, and he insisted that she
5 go back with him.

6 Well, this was getting a little embarrassing, because here
7 he is the head of his country, and he has got this gal on the
8 strings.

9 So, we agreed to it and she agreed to it, but we had to keep
10 her in one hotel -- she was staying at the Waldorf-

11 Astoria and he was staying in another place. And we got a

12 house out in Long Island so they could have their rendezvous.
13 [and they would never be seen again. They, themselves,]
14

15 Mr. Madigan.

[Was that an Agency house?]

16 Mr. O'Connell. [No, we rented the house from a private

17 individual who was a friend of somebody who was with the
18 Agency.]

19 Mr. Madigan. [Did you handle that?]

20 Mr. O'Connell. [The Field office handled that, the

21 New York Field office.]

22 Mr. Madigan. [In the Office of Security.]

23 Mr. O'Connell. [They handled procuring the house out in

24 Long Island. And then they also supplied people to stay with
25 the young lady while she was in New York, because they didn't

1 I want to have her running around -- it wasn't holding her
2 against her will, it was just to give her somebody that could
3 assist her in any requirements she had while she was waiting for
4 the leader.

5 Mr. Madigan. And was that the end of that particular
6 project that you recall?

7 Mr. O'Connell. That was the end of it, except that we had
8 some repercussions, where he went back to his country
9 and was lovesick, and he was going to give up the throne,
10 which would have caused all sorts of consternation in the Agency,
11 because that was the last guy that the Agency wanted to leave.

12 But he was communicating with her for a while, and then
13 eventually we got her a job in a local musical -- that is
14 really all that she was interested in, trying to make it in the
15 theater. And they eloped off, and she subsequently married.

16 Mr. Wides. Did the Agency monitor the mail between him
17 and the lady, either before she got it or after she got it?

18 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

19 Mr. Wides. Before? Did they intercept the mail, or how was
20 it monitored, obviously special equipment?

21 Mr. O'Connell. We set up a post office box at his residence,
22 and we serviced the box.

23 Mr. Wides. And would you look at the mail before it was
24 passed on?

25 Mr. O'Connell. I wouldn't.

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1 Mr. Wides. [redacted] the Agency? [redacted]

2 Mr. O'Connell. [redacted] the agency? [redacted]

3 Mr. Wides. [redacted] the Leader know about? [redacted]

4 Mr. O'Connell. [redacted] No. [redacted]

5 Mr. Wides. [redacted] How did the letters go back and forth? [redacted]

6 Mr. O'Connell. I don't know. We would just turn it over
7 [redacted] to the Division. [redacted]

8 Mr. Wides. [redacted] Did she understand that the Agency was somehow

9 [redacted] involved in the passage of certain mail from the Lady [redacted]

10 [redacted] to the world leader, that she just didn't drop it on the

11 [redacted] mailbox on the contrary? [redacted]

12 Mr. O'Connell. [redacted] She delivered it to somebody up in the [redacted]

13 [redacted] office, as I recall -- don't hold me to that, but I think that

14 [redacted] was it -- and then it was sent down to headquarters. [redacted]

15 Mr. Wides. Was it your impression that the Agency sent

16 [redacted] that mail, too, on its way back? [redacted]

17 Mr. O'Connell. I would imagine so, because it got out of [redacted]

18 [redacted] control. [redacted]

19 Mr. Wides. Let me go back.

20 [redacted] never reported to the FBI coming in, is it your understanding

21 [redacted] nor do you have information that the Agency was looking

22 [redacted] at the letters? [redacted]

23 Mr. O'Connell. I knew that was being done. [redacted]

24 Mr. Wides. You know from personal knowledge, or you were

25 [redacted] told by people involved? [redacted]

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1 Mr. O'Connell. I was told, the people that were doing it [redacted]
2 [redacted] told me. [redacted]

3 Mr. Wides. [redacted] that they were actually reading the mail and then
4 [redacted] giving it to the lady? [redacted]

5 Mr. O'Connell. Yes. [redacted]

6 Mr. Wides. And as far as you know without either party being
7 aware of the fact? [redacted]

8 Mr. O'Connell. Yes. [redacted]

9 Mr. Madigan. You said there was a second instance.

10 Was there a second instance which involved a female [redacted]
11 [redacted] in this country, or was it sending one overseas? [redacted]

12 Mr. O'Connell. The girl was recruited in this country, but
13 [redacted] she was sent overseas. [redacted]

14 Mr. Madigan. And that was the leader you had told us about.
15 [redacted] off the record?

16 Mr. O'Connell. Yes. [redacted]

17 Mr. Madigan. And was that entire situation handled overseas?
18 [redacted] when you once got over there?

19 Mr. O'Connell. Yes. [redacted]

20 Mr. Madigan. Was there any business of the leader [redacted]
21 [redacted] coming back here with her? [redacted]

22 Mr. O'Connell. Not with her. He came back sometime, maybe
23 a year later, and wanted to know whether he could see her
24 again. And we made arrangements for her to attend the party
25 that was given by Ray Star, the singer. And they threw a

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1 **[redacted cocktail party for him, I think it was in San Francisco.]**
2 **[redacted]**
3 **[redacted]**
4 **[redacted]**

5 Mr. Madigan. Did Maheu set that up?

6 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

7 Mr. Madigan. Both the original contact and the later party
8 in San Francisco?

9 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

10 Mr. Madigan. And were those the only two times now that
11 he was involved in the operations field?

12 Mr. O'Connell. Oh, no. He did a lot of other things.

13 Mr. Madigan. Let me ask you this question.

14 When Maheu was having his problems with the authorities,
15 was there any reference back to his involvement in those kind of
16 activities, or was the only discussion about his role in
17 the so-called assassination plot?

18 Mr. O'Connell. Well, I am not even so sure that they got
19 into that aspect of it. It was just that he was involved
20 to the extent that he had set up the operation against Rowan,
21 or he was the one that got in touch with DuBois to do it.

22 Mr. Wides. When did you come back from overseas?

23 Mr. O'Connell. July of 1965.

24 Mr. Wides. After you came back did you learn of a time,
25 either after you came back or very shortly before you came

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1 veillance?

2 Mr. O'Connell. Never, to my knowledge he never got
3 involved in that, officially or otherwise.

4 Mr. Wides. Or surreptitious entry?

5 Mr. O'Connell. He did one surreptitious entry for us once.

6 Mr. Wides. What were the specifics of that?

7 Mr. O'Connell. There were a group of [redacted] students.

8 [redacted]
9 [redacted] And they were staying

10 in a rooming house up there right outside of Georgetown some-
11 here. And one of the students [came to the case officer]

12 [redacted] said that one of the group was acting very suspiciously,
13 taking a lot of notes where they were not supposed to be taking
14 notes, or certainly after operational briefings, and he would go
15 back to his room and he would write voluminous notes. And
16 he thought that was very strange that this guy was not acting
17 as he should.

18 And that aroused the suspicion [of the case officer]
19 And they wanted to know whether we would get in and photo-
20 graph what he was writing to see whether he was really
21 violating his agreement.

22 So I called Maheu and he went up to the rooming house, and
23 he went to the people who owned the house and asked if they
24 had a room to rent and she had one. And he did know where the
25 students were staying. And she showed him one room. And

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1 he said, anything up on the next floor? And as luck would
2 have it, she had the adjacent room.

3 So he brought what would appear to be a suitcase up there,
4 which was his photographic equipment. And we knew the students
5 were in school, and [the case officer] was going to alert us if
6 they came back, so he wouldn't get caught in the act.

7 And he went in, it was a very simple matter. It was
8 a tin box that he could open with a paper clip and he took it out
9 and photographed it, and put the case back in the drawer and
10 locked up and left.

11 But [the case officer] was a gal, a woman. And she was
12 looking at one part of the school over there. And this guy
13 comes out the back door. And as Maheu was coming down the
14 stairs the students were coming up, with a matter of maybe
15 a split second timing.

16 Mr. Madigan. This wasn't Mendoza?

17 Mr. O'Connell. No. [this was a DDP case officer.]

18 Mr. Wides. What period was this that we are talking
19 about?

20 Mr. O'Connell. This would have been about 1955.

21 Mr. Wides. And other than that, and the two incidents
22 involving female companionship, what other kinds of sensitive
23 things would he undertake? Was that in the period that you
24 were paying him 500 a month?

25 Mr. O'Connell. We stopped paying the 500 way back when he

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1 nature as opposed to routine?

2 Mr. O'Connell. We had word that they wanted to --

3 [redacted] apparently this foreign leader had visited the Kremlin, and we
4 were reasonably certain -- he was quite a lady's man, and he
5 liked just about any time to be accommodated.

6 So, we knew that he went to the Kremlin and stayed at the
7 [redacted] Kremlin. And the division wanted us to come up with a simulated
8 [redacted] photography on a film that showed him going through the act of
9 taking on a female. And they simulated a back drop that
10 looked like it was in a room in the Kremlin, and outside
11 you could see the towers and every thing, and the furniture was
12 according to what they had.

13 And this was all done by people that knew generally what
14 they looked like.

15 Now, we got Bob to make that film.

16 Mr. Wides. Is it correct that the Agency knew that the
17 [redacted] Soviets had made a film of the foreign leader when he was in
18 Russia and was hoping to have a counterfeit film which they would
19 circulate in the country, thereby making the foreign leader
20 angry at the Soviets, was that the purpose?

21 Mr. O'Connell. I don't know whether they knew that the
22 [redacted] Soviets had made the film... But the purpose of the exercise
23 [redacted] was to have a film circulated in his own country, or
24 neighboring countries, that would make him quite upset with
25 the Soviets.

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1 Mr. Wides. You mean they thought that the Russians
2 had made a film?

3 Mr. O'Connell. Yes, to embarrass him.

4 Mr. Madigan. And that was accomplished as far as you know?

5 Mr. O'Connell. The film was made, but they never did
6 release it, because things started to get better with the
7 leader, and they felt that they wouldn't use it.

8 Mr. Madigan. Were Agency facilities used by Maheu for
9 the production of this thing?

10 Mr. O'Connell. No. I hired a small independent studio in
11 Los Angeles.

12 Mr. Madigan. And did Agency officials fly out there,
13 the ones that knew about the backdrop and all that? How was
14 that done?

15 Mr. O'Connell. It seems to me that they were just --
16 at this point I am not too sure whether they superimposed it,
17 I guess is the word, with that background. I am not so
18 sure at this point, it has been so long ago. That was away in
19 the mid-fifties.

20 Mr. Wides. Could we get back to the question that we had
21 started on, which was the files and where they would exist?
22 You said that the operational files from all of your dealing
23 with him would be in the Family Jewels, because they were all
24 sensitive admissions.

25 Mr. O'Connell. Yes.

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1 Mr. O'Connell. No.

2 Mr. Wides. Or Max Gonzales.

3 Mr. O'Connell. No.

4 Mr. Wides. While you were down there -- and this
5 may overlap the question that Mr. Madigan asked before, but
6 I think it is a little more -- did you have any awareness of
7 any other efforts apart from Mr. Verona by Cubans in connec-
8 tion with the Agency to try and assassinate Castro?

9 Mr. O'Connell. No, none whatsoever.

10 Mr. Wides. I don't have any other questions.

11 Mr. Madigan. In your operational activities with Mr.
12 Maheu, particularly in the New York area, did you ever have con-
13 tact with a private investigator by the name of A. J.
14 Woolston-Smith?

15 Mr. O'Connell. No, I never heard of him.

16 Mr. Wides. Do you know why there were two field
17 offices in New York, two offices in Manhattan?

18 What was the difference?

19 Mr. O'Connell. The cover. one was under Treasury cover

20 and the other under Defense. ✓

21 Mr. Wides. Were there two offices?

22 Mr. O'Connell. Why, they had them, it just grew like
23 Topsy. They had two offices in Washington, and they had two
24 offices in New York. And really the basis -- it was that that
25 was the way they started, they figured they needed two

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1 different type covers because of the type of work they were
2 doing.

5 Mr. Wides. What would the New York offices do as dis-
4 tinct from the Manhattan offices, or vice versa?

5 Mr. O'Connell. Nothing. They were basically investigative
6 offices.

7 Mr. Wides. They just happened to have two? *167*

8 Mr. O'Connell. They had two. *One was downtown, right off*

9 *Wall Street, and the other one, at one time was on 14th Street.*

10 The Manhattan field office. And then they eventually merged.

11 Now they are over on *16th Street*. I think.

12 Mr. Wides. Thank you very much. That concludes the session.

13 And we appreciate your staying so long.

14 (Whereupon, at 1:25 p.m., the hearing was concluded.)

15 - - -

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