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**Subject: memorandum by J.E. Hoover on 11/29/63 re: his meeting with LBJ**
**Keywords: J.E. Hoover's FBI "spoon fed" the Warren Commission its data**
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**Summary:** The second half of this post includes the copy of a memorandum written by J. Edgar Hoover immediately after he met with LBJ in the Oval Office seven days after President Kennedy had been murdered. The first half analyzes some of the more remarkable details of this memo.

In 1963, John Edgar Hoover and Lyndon Baines Johnson knew each other very well. They had lived across the street from each other for the past 19 years. A professional bureaucrat of formidable talents, a 29-year-old Hoover was appointed director of the Bureau of Investigation in 1924 (Hoover added "Federal" to the title in 1935) by then Attorney General Harlan F. Stone to clean up a corrupt organization. During WWII, President Roosevelt expanded the FBI's reach charging Hoover with investigations of Nazi and Communist activities in the U.S. The Cold War gave the Bureau new power and Hoover new glory. Hoover's dossiers continued to grow as well as his command of Congress, his manipulation and intimidation of the press, and his stature in the country. Hoover supplied Joe McCarthy with a great deal of the ammunition which enabled McCarthy to sustain his "crusade" far longer than would have been possible without Hoover's connivance.

When Robert Kennedy became Attorney General in 1961, Hoover's entrenched power-structures suffered a two-year, 10-month setback. Long before 1961, Hoover had created a direct channel of communication with whoever was the current occupant of the Oval Office—bypassing the actual chain of command which went from the President, through the Attorney General, to Director of the FBI.

When LBJ assumed the Presidency, Hoover's direct link into the White House was re-established. Johnson's official relationship with Hoover was enhanced by personal friendship as well. "As majority leader [in the Senate], Johnson already had been receiving a steady stream of reports and dossiers from the Director . . . which he prized both as a means of controlling difficult senators and as a gratification of earthier instincts. For President Johnson, secrets were in themselves perquisites of power. . . . No chief executive praised the Director so warmly. In an executive order exempting Hoover, then sixty nine, from compulsory retirement at seventy, Johnson hailed him as 'a quiet, humble and magnificent public servant . . . a hero to millions of citizens and an anathema to all evil men. . . . The nation cannot afford to lose you. . . . No other American, now or in our past, has served the cause of justice so faithfully and so well' ("Johnson Hails Hoover Service, Waives Compulsory Retirement," *New York Times*, May 9, 1964)."[1]

1. *The Age of Surveillance, The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System*, by Frank Donner, (c) 1980, Knopf.

The following memorandum, written by Hoover immediately after his meeting with President Johnson, just seven days after the assassination of President Kennedy, is a remarkable document to say the least. There is much information imparted in the memo regarding just how fluid and unstable the cover story about who killed JFK still was shaping up to be at that time. By analyzing the discrepancies between the story Hoover briefed Johnson about on November 29th, and what the final cover story handed down by the Warren Commission would claim almost a year later, we can better appreciate the degree to which the final "official report" was sculpted to fit the constraints the Commission was forced to adhere to, regardless of the actual facts of the assassination.

This document is what is known in bureaucracy-speak as a "memo for the record." It was a customary practice in the upper levels of the bureaucracy in the days before electronic technology in Washington, D.C. An official of high rank would usually return to her or his office after such a meeting and dictate a memorandum of as many details of the discussion as could be remembered. It was a way of recording one’s own professional dealings for future reference.

Hoover starts out recounting that Johnson brings up "the proposed group"—what will become the Warren Commission—to study the report Hoover is trying to complete by the end of the same day. This has been initiated by Johnson to prevent an independent investigation by Congress of the assassination (Reagan tried to do the same thing with the Tower Commission). Johnson would publically announce the creation of the Warren Commission later that same day. This was a critical move by Johnson: by appointing the Warren Commission, they effectively bottled up Bobby Kennedy, they bottled up the Senate, and they bottled up the state of Texas. The Tower Commission didn’t succeed in pre-empting an investigation by Congress. In the end, the Warren Commission didn’t either, but it did keep the cork in place preventing any other "official" examination for well over another decade.

It is interesting to note that of all the people listed at the bottom of page one, retired General Lauris Norstad (who had been head of the NATO forces at SHAPE headquarters in Europe before his retirement) was the only one who somehow succeeded in not serving on this Presidential Commission. Earl Warren did **not** want the job and had sent a memo ahead to the Oval Office, before he answered LBJ’s summons, stating he would not participate in such a commission. But when push came to shove, Johnson’s formidable powers of persuasion turned Warren’s no into a yes. Apparently even such focused persuasion could not win Norstad’s agreement.

The six topic bullets at the bottom of page one are file listings. This is important for anyone ever finding themself searching for documents from the government through Freedom Of Information Act requests. This type of listing is very useful because it lets you know that these files exist, and that it may be possible to locate documents using this method which you might not find (or even know about) any other way.

In the middle of the first paragraph on page 3, Hoover relates how the Dallas police didn’t even make a move to stop Ruby. This is a pretty heavy line by Hoover. He implies the Dallas cops must have somehow been in collusion to silence Oswald from living to stand trial. But the implication is never fleshed out.

The second half of page three contains some of the most enlightening statements of the whole memo. Hoover tells Johnson three shots were fired. Johnson asks "if any were fired at him." This question goes a long way towards explaining the duress under which he served as president. LBJ had heard bullets flying overhead—he had been that close to the action. It was completely out of keeping with the standard security procedures the Secret Service employed to have any such parade appearance be attended by *both* the president and the vice president. Johnson heard the sounds of those guns very clearly and the message they conveyed. He lived out the rest of his public life always aware of their possible return. Not long before he died, LBJ was interviewed by his friend and writer Leo Janos. In the July, 1973 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Janos relates that LBJ told him:

1. "that the assassination in Dallas had been part of a conspiracy;
2. "I never believed that Oswald acted alone . . .;
3. "we had been operating a damned Murder Inc. in the Carribean."

The presence of the vice president 2 cars behind the president in the parade in Dallas was a fundamental breach of the level of security normally adhered to by the Secret Service. He took the experience back to the White House and never forgot its meaning. He could just as easily be snuffed out if he ever got out of line.

Then there follows a most curious and confused explanation by Hoover of the three shots fired: "the President was hit by the first and third bullets and the second hit the Governor". Obviously Hoover did not yet know about the injury suffered by James Tague. Tague's face was nicked by a bullet fragment (or a fragment of the curb it hit) which missed the limousene entirely and struck the curb at his feet, approximately 160 feet past the location of the president's car. This shot would end up having to be one of "the three bullets fired" in the official story.

Johnson then explicitly asks again "were they aimed at the President." It would appear that LBJ needed repeated assurance by Hoover that no one had intended to shoot him. Hoover then says a mouthful when he states "I further advised him that we have also tested the fact you could fire those three shots in three seconds." Apparently they did not yet understand the implications of the Zapruder film (or perhaps they were confident they would be successful in never allowing the public to gain any kind of access to it) and that it would be used as a clock.

Probably the most confused statements Hoover recounts making are when he describes for Johnson's benefit how Connally was hit: "I explained that Connally turned to the President when the first shot was fired and in that turning he got hit. The President then asked, if Connally had not been in his seat, would the President have been hit by the second shot. I said yes." All we can conclude about this muddled explanation is that Hoover was doing his best to explain things that he himself did not understand or appreciate the complexity of.

Hoover goes on to claim they found the gun and shells on the fifth floor. As you can see at this point, the number of variations on what would become the official cover story are quite numerous. All of the the facts of the assassination were working against them. They had a story all worked out—3 seconds, 3 shots, fifth floor—and yet they didn't know the facts.

Fletcher Prouty commented on this issue to me while we were discussing this memo recently. "It reminds me so much of when the U-2 was lost and the guys from NASA began to explain the U-2 flight until a couple of days later when somebody told them, 'hey—it wasn't a NASA flight, we can't do it that way.' And they began to change the cover story. But then Kruschev said, 'look, I’ve got the pilot, I know the story.’ The U-2 boys used to work across the hall from me—I’d see them coming and going—oh they were shattered, because their cover story had been totally wrong. So Hoover is in the same kind of a box here—he is trying to explain something that is nothing but a cover story, and almost everytime he turns around, he finds there’s another hole in it."

Near the end Johnson extolls the virtues of his relationship to Hoover stating "I was more than head of the FBI - I was his brother and personal friend; that he knew I did not want anything to happen to his family; that he has more confidence in me than anybody in town." Pretty laudatory words which substantiate the unusally close rapport these two men had. Then Hoover writes that Johnson tells him "he would not embroil me in a jurisdictional dispute . . . " This was the reference to Bobby Kennedy and the pre-empting of any other legitimate, independent and official investigation that would not be under the control of the FBI. They would see to it that there would not be the kind of "rash of investigations" Hoover said at the beginning of this meeting "would be a three-ring circus."

It is a known fact that in his later years Hoover’s meglomania approached epic proportions. He had various reasons why he did not want any independent investigation which would *not* be dependent upon his agency for the collection of data and use of his investigative staff. Johnson was feeling quite vulnerable in these first days and was very dependent on Hoover to tell him what to do concerning how to consolidate his position and "reassure" the nation the assassination was not political in any way but rather the random occurence of one lone sick mind. That was the only approach to take if they wanted to avoid having to deal with why Kennedy had been killed. By de-politicizing the assassination, they were able to ignore the basic question of why.

This memorandum demonstrates how the people in the federal government who were responsible for creating the Warren Commission (and providing it with only a very selected and specific set of "data" by which the Commission reached the conclusions that became the official report), did not start with the final cover story—they created it later because even Hoover and Johnson didn’t know about it a week after the event. They were still making things up a week later. It goes back to the old truth that it’s a big mistake to overestimate the abilities and knowledge of people—even in high office. They can make pretty stupid mistakes and then when they have to recant their stories, you are left with the kind of contrivance we know as the Warren Report.

—ratitor

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daveus rattus

yer friendly neighborhood ratman

**KOYAANISQATSI**

ko.yan.nis.qatsi (from the Hopi Language) n. 1. crazy life. 2. life in turmoil. 3. life out of balance. 4. life disintegrating. 5. a state of life that calls for another way of living.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON __, D.C.

1:39 p.m. November 29, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. TOLSON
MR. BELMONT
MR. MOHR
MR. CONRAD
MR. DE LOACH
MR. EVANS
MR. ROSEN
MR. SULLIVAN

The President called and asked if I am familiar with the proposed group they are trying to get to study my report - two from the House, two from the Senate, two from the courts, and a couple of outsiders. I replied that I had not heard of that but had seen reports from the Senate Investigating Committee.

The President stated he wanted to get by just with my file and my report. I told him I thought it would be very bad to have a rash of investigations. He then indicated the only way to stop it is to appoint a high-level committee to evaluate my report and tell the House and Senate not to go ahead with the investigation. I stated that would be a three-ring circus.

The President then asked what I think about Allen Dulles, and I replied that he is a good man. He then asked about John McCloy, and I stated I am not as enthusiastic about McCloy, that he is a good man but I am not so certain as to the matter of publicity he might want. The President then mentioned General (Lauris) Norstad, and I said he is a good man. He said in the House he might try (Hale) Boggs and (Gerald R.) Ford and in the Senate (Richard B.) Russell and (John Sherman) Cooper. I asked him about Cooper and he indicated Cooper of Kentucky whom he described as a judicial man, stating he would not want (Jacob K.) Javits. I agreed on this point. He then reiterated Ford of Michigan, and I indicated I know of him but do not know him and had never seen him except on television the other day and that he handled himself well on television. I indicated that I do know Boggs.

Johnson, President Lyndon B.
Assassination of President John F. Kennedy
Presidential Commission on Assassination
of President John F. Kennedy
Security - Presidential
Presidential Conferences
Presidential Travel Security

The President then mentioned that (Walter) Jenkins had told him that I have designated Mr. DeLoach to work with them as he had on the Hill. He indicated they appreciated that and just wanted to tell me they consider Mr. DeLoach as high class as I do, and that they salute me for knowing how to pick good men.

I advised the President that we hope to have the investigation wrapped up today but probably won't have it before the first of the week as an angle in Mexico is giving trouble - the matter of Oswald's getting $6500 from the Cuban Embassy and coming back to this country with it; that we are not able to prove that fact; that we have information he was there on September 18 and we are able to prove he was in New Orleans on that date; that a story came in changing the date to September 28 and he was in Mexico on the 28th. I related that the police have again arrested Duran, a member of the Cuban Embassy; that they will hold her two or three days; will confront her with the original informant; and will also try a lie detector test on her.

The President then inquired if I pay any attention to the lie detector test. I answered that I would not pay 100% attention to them; that it was only a psychological asset in investigation; that I would not want to be a part of sending a man to the chair on a lie detector test. I explained that we have used them in bank investigations and a person will confess before the lie detector test is finished, more or less fearful it will show him guilty. I said the lie detector test has this psychological advantage. I further stated that it is a misnomer to call it a lie detector since the evaluation of the chart made by the machine is made by a human being and any human being is apt to make the wrong interpretation.

I stated, if Oswald had lived and had take a lie detector test, this with the evidence we have would have added that much strength to the case; that these is no question he is the man.

I also told him that Rubenstein down there has offered to take a lie detector test but his lawyer must be consulted first; that I doubt the lawyer will allow him to do so; that he has a West Coast lawyer somewhat like the Edward Bennett Williams type and almost as much of a shyster.

The President asked if we have any relationship between the two (Oswald and Rubenstein) as yet. I replied that at the present time we have not; that there was a story that the fellow had been in Rubenstein's nightclub but it has not been confirmed. I told the President that Rubenstein is a very seedy character, had a bad record - street brawls, fights, etc.; that in Dallas, if a fellow came into his nightclub and could not pay his bill completely, Rubenstein would beat him up and throw him out; that he did not drink or smoke; that he was an egomaniac; that he likes to be in the limelight; knew all of the police officers in the white light district; let them come in and get food and liquor, etc.; and that is how I think he got into police headquarters. I said if they ever made any move, the pictures did not show it even when they saw him approach and he got right up to Oswald and pressed the pistol against Oswald's stomach; that neither officer on either side made any effort to grab Rubenstein - not until after the pistol was fired. I said, secondly, the chief of police admits he moved Oswald in the morning as a convenience and at the request of motion picture people who wanted daylight. I said insofar as tying Rubenstein and Oswald together, we have not yet done so; that there are a number of stories which tied Oswald to the Civil Liberties Union in New York in which he applied for membership and to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee which is pro-Castro, directed by communists, and financed to some extent by the Castro Government.

The President asked how many shots were fired, and I told him three. He then asked if any were fired at him. I said no, that three shots were fired at the President and we have them. I stated that our ballistic experts were able to prove the shots were fired by this gun; that the President was hit by the first and third bullets and the second hit the Governor; that there were three shots; that one complete bullet rolled out of the President's head; that it tore a large part of the President's head off; that in trying to massage his heart on the way into the hospital they loosened the bullet which fell on the stretcher and we have that.

He then asked were they aimed at the President. I replied they were aimed at the President, no question about that.

I further advised him that we have also tested the fact you could fire those three shots in three seconds. I explained that there is a story out that there must have been more than one man to fire several shots but we have proven it could be done by one man.

The President then asked how it happened that Connally was hit. I explained that Connally turned to the President when the first shot was fired and in that turning he got hit. The President then asked, if Connally had not been in his seat, would the President have been hit by the second shot. I said yes.

I related that on the fifth floor of the building where we found the gun and the wrapping paper we found three empty shells that had been fired and one that had not been fired. that he had four but didn't fire the fourth; then threw the gun aside; went down the steps; was seen by a police officer; the manager told the officer that Oswald was all right, worked there; they let him go; he got on a bus; went to his home and got a jacket; then came back downtown, walking; the police officer who was killed stopped him, not knowing who he was; and he fired and killed the police officer.

The President asked if we can prove that and I answered yes.

I further related that Oswald then walked another two blocks; went to the theater; the woman selling tickets was so suspicious - said he was carrying a gun when he went into the theater - that she notified the police; the police and our man went in and located Oswald. I told him they had quite a struggle with Oswald but that he was subdued and shown out and taken to police headquarters.

I advised the President that apparently Oswald had come down the steps from the fifth floor; that apparently the elevator was not used.

The President then indicated our conclusions are: (1) he is the one who did it; (2) after the President was hit, Governor Connally was hit; (3) the President would have been hit three times except for the fact that Governor Connally turned after the first shot and was hit by the second; (4) whether he was connected with the Cuban operation with money we are trying to nail down. I told him that is what we are trying to nail down; that we have copies of the correspondence; that none of the letters dealt with any indication of violence or assassination; that they were dealing with a visa to go back to Russia.

I advised the President that his wife had been very hostile, would not cooperate and speaks only Russian; that yesterday she said , if we could give assurance she would be allowed to remain in the country, she would cooperate; and that I told our agents to give that assurance and sent a Russian-speaking agent to Dallas last night to interview her. I said I do not know whether or not she has any information but we would learn what we could.

The President asked how Oswald had access to the fifth floor of the building. I replied that he had access to all floors. The President asked where was his office and I stated he did not have any particular place; that he was not situated in any particular place; that he was just a general packer of requisitions that came in for books from Dallas schools; that he would have had proper access to the fifth and sixth floors whereas usually the employees were down on lower floors. The President then inquired if anybody saw him on the fifth floor, and I stated he was seen by one of the workmen before the assassination.

The President then asked if we got a picture taken of him shooting the gun and I said no. He asked what was the picture sold for $25,000, and I advised him this was a picture of the parade showing Mrs. Kennedy crawling out of the back seat; that there was no Secret Service Agent on the back of the car; that in the past they have added steps on the back of the car and usually had an agent on either side standing on the bumper; that I did not know why this was not done - that the President may have requested it; that the bubble top was not up but I understand the bubble top was not worth anything because it was made entirely of plastic; that I had learned much to my surprise that the Secret Service does not have any armored cars.

The President asked if I have a bulletproof car and I told him I most certainly have. I told him we use it here for my own use and, whenever we have any raids, we make use of the bulletproof car on them. I explained that it is a limousine which has been armorplated and that it looks exactly like any other car. I stated I think the President ought to have a bulletproof car; that from all I understand the Secret Service has had two cars with metal plates underneath the car to take care of hand grenades or bombs thrown out on the street. I said this is European; that there have been several such attempts on DeGaulle's life; but they do not do that in this country; that all assassinations have been with guns; and for that reason I think very definitely the President ought to always ride in a bulletproof car; that it certainly would prevent anything like this ever happening again; but that I do not mean a sniper could not snipe him from a window if he were exposed.

The President asked if I meant on his ranch he should be in a bulletproof car. I said I would think so; that the little car we rode around in when I was at the ranch should be bulletproofed; that it ought to be done very quietly. I told him we have four bulletproof cars in the Bureau: one on the West Coast, one in New York and two here. I said this could be done quietly without publicity and without pictures taken of it if handled properly and I think he should have one on his ranch.

The President then asked if I think all the entrances should be guarded. I replied by all means, that he had almost to be in the capacity of a so-called prisoner because without that security anything could be done. I told him lots of phone calls had been received over the last four or five days about threats on his life; that I talked to the Attorney General about the funeral procession from the White House to the Cathedral; that I was opposed to it. The President remarked that the Secret Service told them not to but the family wanted to do it. I stated that was what the Attorney General told me but I was very much opposed to it. I further related that I saw the procession from the Capitol to the White House on Pennsylvania and, while they had police standing on the curbs, when the parade came, the police turned around and looked at the parade.

The President then stated he is going to take every precaution he can; that he wants to talk to me; and asked if I would put down my thoughts. He stated I was more than head of the FBI - I was his brother and personal friend; that he knew I did not want anything to happen to his family; that he has more confidence in me than anybody in town; that he would not embroil me in a jurisdictional dispute; but that he did want to have my thoughts on the matter to advocate as his own opinion.

I stated I would be glad to do this for him and that I would do anything I can. The President expressed his appreciation.

Very truly yours,

[signed J. E. H.]

John Edgar Hoover
Director