

MEMORANDUM

August, 1996

To: Tim Wray

From: Brian E. Rosen

Subject: John Thomas Masen, George Charles Nonte Jr., Edward J. Coyle and Gunrunning in Dallas

Following is a summary of what we know about John Thomas Mason and George Charles Nonte Jr. and their gunrunning activities and the subsequent investigations of those activities in Dallas around the time of the assassination. I have also included a list of outstanding questions and issues relevant to a potential upcoming interview with Coyle.

Major Players

- John Thomas Masen -- A Dallas gun dealer and likely member of the Minutemen, a right-wing paramilitary organization. He was one of two gun dealers in Dallas that sold the type of Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 millimeter ammunition allegedly used in the assassination.
- George Charles Nonte Jr. -- The chief ordnance officer at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, the site of several arms thefts in 1963. He was a leading firearms expert and authored many books on guns.
- Edward J. Coyle -- The warrant officer for the Dallas regional office of the 112th Intelligence Corps Group. He was head of the group's security section and also worked at maintaining liaison relationships other investigative agencies in the area.
- James Hosty -- The F.B.I. Agent in charge of the bureau's file on Lee Harvey Oswald before the assassination. He was also assigned to work on the bureau's investigation of John Thomas Mason.
- Frank Ellsworth -- The A.T.F. agent assigned to investigate John Thomas Mason for possible violation of federal firearms laws.
- John Elrod -- The "fourth tramp" arrested in Dallas on November 22, 1963. He claims to have spoken with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas City Jail on the afternoon of his arrest.

- Donnell Darius Whitter -- Arrested by the F.B.I. and the Dallas Police Department on November 18, 1963 for driving a car that was transporting stolen weapons. He was also a local mechanic and had previously worked on cars for Jack Ruby.
- Lawrence Reginald Miller -- Arrested with Whitter on November 18, 1963. He was still being held in Dallas City Jail on November 22, 1963.

The Story

Ellsworth was actively investigating Mason for the A.T.F. in the fall of 1963 for violations of federal firearms laws. In the course of his undercover contacts with Mason, Ellsworth learned that Nonte was Mason's weapons source inside Fort Hood. Ellsworth shared this information with Army and F.B.I. criminal investigators at Fort Hood and continued to prepare a case against Mason.

However, the F.B.I. was interested in using the Mason/Nonte relationship for a different purpose. The Bureau viewed Mason as a valuable source on anti-communist exile operations in Cuba and requested that Nonte