

Testimony of Santos Trafficante
HSCA Volume V at 345-378
Summary by Laura Denk, ARRB
File No: 4.0.1.3

Summary of Testimony:

Trafficante was the head of La Cosa Nostra in Miami and Tampa. He testified about his activities in Cuba in the 1950s, his role in the CIA/Mafia plot to kill Castro and his knowledge of AMLASH. He testified about his relationship with other major Mafia figures including Sam Giancana, Carlos Marcello, Jimmy Hoffa, and John Roselli. **Trafficante asserts that he never knew Jack Ruby**, despite reports that Ruby may have visited Trafficante at Trescornia, a Cuban detention center, in 1959. Trafficante further denies ever having told Jose Aleman in September of 1963 that JFK was “going to get hit.” Trafficante claims that his conversations with Aleman were in Spanish and that there is no way to translate “going to get hit” into Spanish. Trafficante absolutely denied any prior knowledge of the assassination.

Testimony Highlights

note: abbreviation for Santos Trafficante: “ST”

- 350-352 Pre-Castro years in Cuba. ST went to Cuba in late 1953 or early 1954 where he was involved in gambling, nightclub, and casino businesses, which were then legal in Cuba.
- 352-353 1959 in Cuba. Castro takes over (1/1/59) and closes and then reopens the casinos, requiring the casino owners to pay backpay to employees for the closed months. ST did not know Fidel or Raoul Castro at this time.
- 353-355
369-371 Detained at Immigration Center in Cuba (Trescornia). Castro detains ST and other casino owners and workers. ST describes this as a restful, pleasant experience. While ST was at Trescornia, Raoul Gonzalez, an associate of ST’s, spoke to Raoul Castro (Fidel Castro’s brother) to request that ST be released. ST testified that Raoul Castro assisted in ST’s release from Trescornia. Later, at the Hilton Hotel in Havana, ST met and thanked Raoul Castro for his help. ST testified that Raoul Castro told him that if he stayed out of trouble, he could remain in Cuba.
- 355-356 Interaction with Fidel Castro. ST asserts he never met Fidel Castro. However, ST’s wife did speak to Fidel Castro during ST’s detention at Trescornia. She requested permission for ST to attend his daughter’s wedding on 6/1/59. Castro granted permission for ST to attend the wedding, provided he return to Trescornia immediately afterward. Castro sent guards with ST to the wedding to ensure ST’s return.

356-357 Move back to Miami in 1960. ST left Cuba in 1960. ST claims he was not able to recover his investments and that other casino operators also lost money they invested.

357-364 CIA/Mafia Plot to Kill Castro. The importance of this section is that ST denies everything affirmed in the CIA I.G.'s 1967 report.

ST's version of the plot to kill Castro is as follows: **John Roselli** approached ST and told him that the CIA and the U.S. Govt. wanted him to assist in a plot to kill Castro. ST, a patriotic American citizen who wished to eliminate a communist threat 90 miles from the American mainland, accepted. ST claims he had no financial or other interest in assisting in the plot. Within a few days, Roselli introduced ST to **Robert Maheu**, who represented himself to ST as a CIA agent. **Sam Giancana** then joined the group. ST claims that he acted only as an interpreter. ST introduced Roselli and Maheu to **Macho Gener** and to some anti-Castro Cubans. Gener introduced the group to "Y", a leading figure in the Cuban exile movement., and ST interpreted for "Y" and Gener. The group discussed all possible methods of killing Castro, including poison pills. ST claims his involvement in the plot then ceased, and although he saw Maheu, Roselli, and Giancana on several other occasions at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami, they did not discuss the plot to kill Castro.

Contrary to what the CIA I.G.'s 1967 report (declassified) says, ST claims he did not know "Y" before Gener introduced him to "Y." ST says he never provided money for the plot. ST denies that he had a deal with the anti-Castro Cubans regarding who would run gambling operations in Cuba if Castro were overthrown. With regard to the "poison pills" incident, ST says he did not have a relationship with "X," the Cuban official who was close to Castro and who allegedly agreed to poison Castro (although ST says he may have seen "X" in Havana). ST claims he never received poison pills from Roselli, although the CIA report claims that the CIA gave the pills to Roselli, who gave them to ST, who gave them to "X."

364-366 Roselli's Allegations that ST May Have Been Involved with Castro in a Plot to Kill JFK. ST testified that he has no knowledge of any facts that might have led to Jack Anderson's article regarding Roselli's "hints" that Castro used the same people to kill JFK that the CIA used to attempt to kill Castro; namely, ST and Giancana. ST claims he has no knowledge as to whether Castro learned of the CIA's plots against him before JFK's assassination. ST last saw Roselli 2-3 weeks before Roselli was murdered, cut into pieces, placed in an oil drum and thrown into Dumfoundling Bay in Miami.

368 AMLASH. ST testified that he knows AMLASH/Cubela. ST never saw AMLASH

in Madrid or in Paris. ST does not know whether Castro knew about the AMLASH plot before the assassination of JFK.

369 ST denies any affiliation with Castro's government.

370 John Wilson Hudson (Hutson?). ST asserts he does not know Hudson, a British man who was at Trescornia who asserts that someone named "Mr. Ruby" visited ST in 1959 at Trescornia. ST says he remembers "some guy [in Trescornia] that was kind of a little bit of a screwball" that may have been Hudson.

370 Lewis McWillie. ST knows McWillie. Saw him around Havana. Since leaving Cuba, has only seen McWillie once, in Las Vegas. Does not recall seeing McWillie at Trescornia.

371 Jack Ruby. ST did not know Ruby personally nor did he know of Ruby before the assassination.

371 Oswald and the assassination. ST did not know Oswald personally nor did he know of Oswald before the assassination. ST had no foreknowledge of the assassination.

371 DOJ/FBI/RFK Surveillance. ST said federal agents "lived" with him for about 15 years and conducted all types of physical surveillance.

372-373 Marcello. ST has known Carlos Marcello of New Orleans for about 30 years. Probably discussed RFK-ordered surveillance with Marcello, esp. since RFK had Marcello deported to Guatemala and Marcello was quite upset. ST knows of no threats Marcello made about the Kennedys.

373-374 Jose Aleman. ST knows Aleman. Met with Aleman about possibly arranging a Teamster's Union loan to Aleman. Absolutely denies ever telling Aleman that JFK was "going to be hit," esp. since they conversed in Spanish and "hit" is not translatable into Spanish. May have told Aleman that JFK would not get reelected. ST thought that JFK would not be reelected because of criticism surrounding the Bay of Pigs. Macho Gener and someone named "Coco" (possibly George Nobregas) were present at all of ST's meetings with Aleman. Angelo Bruno was present at one meeting with Aleman.