

Assassination Records Review Board
Releases Transcripts of BriLab Conversations

It has sometimes been suggested that organized crime figures may have played a role in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. One of the principal suspects in such a scenario has been Carlos Marcello, the long-time head of organized crime in New Orleans. Robert F. Kennedy, during his tenure as Attorney General, had launched deportation hearings against Marcello.

In the late 1970s, the FBI investigated Marcello in an operation code-named “BriLab,” which stood for “bribery organized labor.” As part of the BriLab investigation, the FBI conducted electronic surveillance for approximately eight months on Marcello’s home and on his office at the Town and Country Motel. Some writers have suggested that the BriLab audiotapes might contain conversations in which Carlos Marcello, or his brother Joseph, acknowledged that they were involved in the Kennedy assassination.¹ Several members of the public urged the Review Board to examine BriLab records to determine whether this was true.

Although the FBI Field Office in New Orleans maintains the tapes and transcripts from the BriLab surveillance, the tapes have remained under seal of the Federal District Court in New Orleans because they were made under the authority of 18 U.S.C. § 2501 *et seq.* (“Title III”).² Thus, researchers and historians have been unable to confirm or reject allegations that the tapes or transcripts actually contain information relevant to the assassination.

In order to investigate this issue, the Review Board requested and obtained a court order from Judge Sear of the Eastern District of Louisiana, who granted certain members of the Review Board staff full access to all of the BriLab surveillance materials. With the logistical assistance of the FBI in Washington and New Orleans, the Review

¹*See, e.g.,* G. Robert Blakey and Richard Billings, *Fatal Hour* (1981); Anthony Summers, *Conspiracy* 503-504 (1980); and Gerald Posner, *Case Closed* 459-460 (1993); John H. Davis, *Mafia Kingfish*, 519-524 (1989); Ronald Goldfarb, *Did the Mob Kill JFK?*, Washington Post, Dec. 10, 1995 at C3:1.

²When the FBI believes that electronic surveillance is a necessary component of a criminal investigation, Title III requires it to seek authorization from a Federal court. Title III automatically places *all* materials obtained from the surveillance under court seal. Thereafter, if US Attorneys wish to use the tapes in a prosecution, they must petition the court to lift the seal for the portions of the tapes that will be played at trial. The practical effect of this procedure is that everything that is *not* used at trial remains under seal.

Board staff reviewed all of the transcripts from the FBI's surveillance on Marcello in New Orleans. Although the Review Board staff did not find the type of conversations that had been suggested, it did review all of the materials and identified all of the conversations that it believed to be relevant to the assassination. Of the thirteen relevant conversations identified by the Review Board, most took place during the summer of 1979 at the time that the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) released its report on the assassination of President Kennedy. The recorded conversations primarily involve Marcello's reaction to the HSCA's allegations that he might have been involved in the assassination. After the relevant BriLab transcripts had been identified, the US Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of Louisiana obtained an additional order from Judge Sear to release the transcripts of all of the relevant conversations to the public.

In order to assist the reader, the background for each of the thirteen conversations is provided in summary form, followed by the released transcript. In some instances, newspaper articles are mentioned. Copies of those articles also are attached.

(1) June 21, 1979 conversation # 38 (11:06 a.m.) 4 pages

Irving Davidson, a registered foreign agent of several governments and apparent contact of organized labor officials, calls Carlos Marcello's office at the Town and Country Motel and speaks first to Loretta, Marcello's secretary, and then to Marcello.

Davidson tells Marcello that he has just spoken to Jack Wasserman, an attorney who is representing Marcello in his ongoing immigration proceedings. Davidson reports that Wasserman wrote a letter to the *Washington Post* responding to Jack Anderson's column in which Marcello was identified as a key suspect in the Kennedy assassination investigation.

(2) July 13, 1979 conversation # 13 (8:16 a.m.) 9 pages

Carlos Marcello calls Irving Davidson. Marcello and Davidson discuss the July 12, 1979 column by Jack Anderson in the *Washington Post* article about Carlos Marcello.

[Attached] The two men also discuss Marcello's relationship with his immigration lawyer, Jack Wasserman. Finally, Davidson reports that he talked to "Clint" -- possibly referring to the Texas oil man, Clint Murchison.

(3) July 17, 1979 conversation # 51 (10:43 a.m.) 8 pages

Irving Davidson makes a call to a man named Jim Draykol from Marcello's office at the Town and Country Motel. They discuss the HSCA report that was released in the summer of 1979. Davidson says that he has talked to Walter Sheridan, a former investigator for Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who allegedly told Davidson that he disagrees with reports that Marcello was involved with the assassination.

(4) July 18, 1979 conversation # 1 (7:48 a.m.) 3 pages

Carlos Marcello calls his office at the Town and Country Motel and talks with his secretary, Loretta. He asks Loretta to cut out a newspaper article concerning his alleged involvement with the assassination, to keep the original for him, and to send copies to Jack and to Henry.

(5) July 18, 1979 conversation # 10 (8:30 a.m.) 2 pages

Donald Stone, one of Carlos Marcello's associates in New Orleans, calls the Town and Country Motel and asks to talk to Marcello. Marcello is busy, so Stone speaks with Loretta, Marcello's secretary, about a newspaper article concerning Marcello's alleged involvement with the assassination.

(6) July 18, 1979 conversation # 11 (8:40 a.m.) 1 page

Unknown male calls the Town and Country Motel and speaks to Loretta. Loretta says that she is making copies for Marcello of the newspaper article concerning Marcello's alleged involvement with the assassination. (Article from New Orleans newspaper attached.)

(7) July 18, 1979 conversation # 15 (9:00 a.m.) 9 pages

Joe Campisi of Dallas calls Carlos Marcello at the Town and Country Motel. Campisi tells Marcello that the story about Marcello's alleged involvement had been reported in the Dallas Morning News. (Articles attached.) Marcello and Campisi discuss details of the articles. Marcello asks Campisi to clip the article and leave it with him when Campisi comes to New Orleans.

(8) July 18, 1979 conversation # 18 (9:22 a.m.) 15 pages

Unknown male calls Carlos Marcello at the Town and Country Motel. The unknown man and Marcello discuss the Kennedys and Marcello's opinions about John and Robert Kennedy. Marcello discusses his testimony to Congress regarding the assassination and explains that he told Congress that he "used to love John Kennedy President," that Kennedy "woulda made the best President if he'd a lived," and that he "didn't hate" Bobby Kennedy. Marcello also explains that he "ain't never hate nobody" although he could have "argument" with them and doesn't hate them but he "make[s] up, maybe tomorrow, next week or next month. . . . But ain't hatin' ya to kill ya, I'm a kill somebody?" Marcello proceeds to explain his grievances against the Kennedys relating to his deportation.

(9) July 19, 1979 conversation # 72 (4:31 p.m.) 2 pages

Irving Davidson calls Marcello's office at the Town and Country Motel and speaks with Loretta, Marcello's secretary. Davidson explains to Loretta that he mailed to Marcello a copy of the HSCA's report. (Article from New Orleans newspaper from July 19, 1979 attached.)

(10) July 22, 1979 conversation # 10 (4:25 p.m.) 3 pages

Pascal Marcello, Carlos' brother, calls a man named Peter from the Town and Country Motel. Pascal says that another article appeared in the paper that morning concerning Carlos Marcello and the allegations about his involvement in the assassination. (New Orleans newspaper article attached.) Pascal explains that the Warren Commission had already investigated the assassination and that any new allegations were a "hoax."

(11) July 27, 1979 conversation # 57 (1:18 p.m.) 6 pages

Carlos Marcello calls a man named Clarence Greco at Broussard's, a New Orleans restaurant. Greco tells Marcello that Judge Jim Garrison had been at Broussard's. Garrison told Greco his version of the events surrounding the assassination, which involved the CIA. Marcello remarks, "[h]e knows more about the case than all of 'em He knows more -- he knows it, he's tellin' ya the truth."

(12) August 1, 1979 conversation # 39 (11:32 a.m.) 8 pages

Unknown man calls Marcello's office at the Town and Country Motel. Man speaks to Loretta and reports that he read a "vicious" article about Carlos Marcello by Jack Anderson in the newspaper a couple of weeks ago. Man explains his opinions about the article to Loretta.

(13) September 21, 1979 conversation # 42 (2:16 p.m.) 4 pages

Irving Davidson calls Carlos Marcello at his office at the Town and Country Motel. The two men discuss the possibility of getting a letter from the "assassinations committee" that would state that the Committee did not find anything "definite." Marcello apparently wanted the letter to assist in his ongoing immigration case.