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DATE: 11-14-2017

JFK Assassination System  
Identification Form

Date: 6/2/2015

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## Document Information

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TO : HQ

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DATE : 03/13/1959  
PAGES : 10

SUBJECTS :

ERWIN C KARDEN  
JOSEPH RAYMOND MEROLA

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MM 97-255

**SECRET****SECRET**

by WILLIAM LANKFORD, U.S. Customs Agent, Miami, Florida.

INFORMANTSIDENTITYLOCATION OF ORIGINAL INFORMATIONMM T-1 is [Confidential  
Source Abroad](S)

97-255-2

MM T-2 is CLARENCE H.  
HUDDLESTON, Chief of  
Detectives, Miami Beach,  
Fla., Police Department.  
by request

62-4003-226

MM T-3 is JOSEPH MEROLA, 2018 N. Instant report, page 4.  
Bay Road, Miami Beach, Fla.MM T-4 is DANIEL VAZQUEZ,  
727 E. DiLido Drive,  
Di Lido Island, Miami Beach,  
Fla., by request

Instant report, page 5.

MM T-5 is MM 639-S

Instant report, page 7.

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Careful consideration has been given to each source  
concealed in this report and "T" symbols were utilized only  
in those instances where identities must be concealed.

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62-4003-226

FD-204 (Rev. 9-23-58)

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**S E C R E T**

Copy to: 1 - U. S. Customs, Miami (RM)

Report of: SA ROBERT JAMES DWYER Office: MIAMI

Date: MAR 13 1959

File Number: MIAMI - 97-255

Title: ERWIN C. KARDEN

2/18/85  
Classified  
Declassified

Character: **REGISTRATION ACT - CUBA**

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN  
OTHERWISE

### Synopsis:

(S) MM T-1 on 2/16/59, said subject and DON HELLER were supplying arms to rebels in the Caribbean and Central America. MM T-1 said they were helping in conversion of Cuban pesos and trying to assist in the evacuation of families of BATISTA supporters in Cuba. MM T-1 said subject and HELLER predicted overthrow of Dominican Republic; Haiti, and future revolution in Colombia, SA. MM T-2 on 1/22/59, advised subject had acted as banker for FIDEL CASTRO for purchase of arms and had \$28,000,000.00 at his Miami Beach, Fla., residence. Jewel thieves in Miami area were aware of subject's having large sum of money at his residence. Another source on 1/22/59, said a ship's Captain saw a large amount of money in subject's house and was offered opportunity to take this money to Bahamas, BWI for conversion. MM T-3 on 3/2/59, said HELLER had \$49,000,000.00 in Cuban pesos to exchange. Subject reportedly said he had \$54,000,000.00 in Cuban pesos. MM T-4 on 3/9/59 said subject's daughter engaged to son of Colombian Ambassador to Cuba and subject made many trips to Cuba prior to 1/1/59. MM T-4 said subject had millions of Cuban pesos belonging to families of the BATISTA regime and subject interested in changing Cuban pesos into American dollars. MM T-5 stated it was highly unlikely that subject was banker for FIDEL CASTRO for purchase of arms.

3 P 6

**S E C R E T**

*This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of any kind. It is the property of the FBI, and is a loan to your agency; it and/or its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.*

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DETAILS:

This investigation is predicated on information received from MM T-1, a confidential source abroad, who on February 16, 1959, advised that according to a reliable source in Nassau, BWI, DON HELLER, President of Liberty Aviation, 10700 Coral Way, Tamiami Airport, Miami, Florida, had stated some of the planes belonging to Liberty Aviation had been used in flying arms to FIDEL CASTRO, rebel leader in Cuba. (S)

MM T-1 stated he believed HELLER and IRWIN KARDEN, East Delido Drive, Delido Island, Miami Beach, Florida, were possibly engaged in supplying arms to rebel organizations in Central America and the Caribbean. (S)

MM T-1 said HELLER and KARDEN were also reported to be helping in the conversion of a large amount of Cuban pesos which had been brought to Miami by exiles who fled Cuba after the fall of FULGENCIO BATISTA regime. MM T-1 said HELLER and KARDEN were also trying to help evacuate some of the families of BATISTA supporters from Cuba. (S)

MM T-1 advised HELLER and KARDEN stated in about January, 1959, a shipment of small arms left an unidentified European seaport bound for the Dominican Republic. HELLER and KARDEN claimed after things became more settled in Cuba followers of FIDEL CASTRO in Cuba would attempt to overthrow the governments of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and that the attempt to overthrow the Haitian Government would be led by an Argentine Communist with a name something like "CHE GUEVARA" and later a revolt would take place in Colombia, South America. (S)

MM T-2 on January 22, 1959, advised ERWIN C. KARDEN was a financial agent for Cuban rebel leader FIDEL CASTRO and had a huge amount of currency at his residence, 620 E. Di Lido Drive, Di Lido Island, Miami Beach, Florida, and that

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this fact was known to a number of jewel thieves in the Miami metropolitan area.

MM T-2 advised ERWIN C. KARDEN was a wealthy individual and owner of Cobb's Fruit and Preserving Company, Miami, and had been acting as a banker for CASTRO in the purchase of arms for shipment to Cuban rebel forces.

MM T-2 stated a large amount of money had been accumulated by KARDEN, but the money was obtained principally from CASTRO supporters in South America, and the money amounted to about \$28,000,000.00 in Cuban pesos.

MM T-2 stated during the second week in January, 1959, officers of the Miami Beach Police Department ascertained CHESTER ~~ZOCHOWSKI~~, aka., CHESTER ~~GRAY~~, known jewel thief, was seen on the property of the KARDEN residence and appeared to be seeking a way to enter the house. Previously ZOCHOWSKI had been seen at the Bayshore Country Club, Miami Beach, at a meeting with JOSEPH ~~MEROLA~~; ABE ~~KATZ~~ and DAVID ~~XARAS~~, all known jewel thieves in the Miami metropolitan area. FLA

MM T-2 said it was not known how these thieves learned of the money in KARDEN's possession, but MEROLA was known to associate with Cuban rebel exiles in Miami who were engaged in smuggling arms to Cuban rebels.

On January 22, 1959, Captain EDWARD SHAWLEY, in charge of the Bahama, BWI Police, advised SA PAUL A. CAJIGAS he had been contacted by a man known to him as Captain STEWART, a Canadian citizen, who was the Captain of the "Allen's Cay" fishing boat which was capable of traveling between the island of Bimini, BWI, and the United States.

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REVIEWED BY <sup>USCS</sup> ~~USC~~ JFK TASK FORCE  
ON 3/11/98 lat

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☒ RELEASE IN FULL  
☐ RELEASE IN PART  
☐ TOTAL DENIAL

STEWART advised he had been taken to the residence of ERWIN C. KARDEN, 620 E. DiLido Drive, DiLido Island, Miami Beach, within the past few weeks and was shown a bedroom which had boards over the windows and contained Cuban currency stacked up so high that it almost completely filled the room.

STEWART said the Cubans who resided at this residence showed him the money and said it amounted to a total of \$34,000,000.00 in Cuban pesos and contacted him because they wanted him to take sums of this money on his boat to the Bahama Islands where it could be exchanged for other money. The Cubans told STEWART he could have all the money obtained over 75¢ on the dollar for the exchange of the Cuban pesos.

Captain SHAWLEY said he was unable to advise regarding the number of men guarding the money; the denomination of the bills, or why this money was shown to STEWART. He said it was his understanding that the money was from the Cuban treasury and was taken out of the country on behalf of former Cuban President BATISTA.

On January 23, 1959, Mr. WILLIAM LANKFORD, Customs Agent, United States Customs, Miami, Florida, advised he was familiar with CARL STEWART, referred to as Captain STEWART of the "Allen's Cay" fishing boat, and that STEWART was not actually the Captain of the boat. Mr. LANKFORD stated the actual Captain was a man named (FNU) ARCHER, a Negro from the Bahama Islands. Mr. LANKFORD explained STEWART impressed him in the past as being a braggart, but who traveled in such circles that information he furnished could not be ignored.

On March 2, 1959, MM T-3 advised on or about February 4, 1959, JIMMY AZRAK (ph) a Syrian who operates a

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