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ZRRIFLE/QJWIN

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Summary Chronology

Summary

ZRRIFLE is ostensibly a program to recruit criminals for teams which could break into foreign embassies to steal codes. However, there is evidence in the files that this purpose, though useful to the Agency, was in reality a cover for another operation. From other sources, it appears that the real purpose was at least kidnapping and possibly murder.

ZRRIFLE was run out of the cryptologic counterintelligence shop Division D in the Bureau of Foreign Intelligence. It began sometime in late-1960/early-1961 and lasted until at least mid-1963, although payments to its principal agent QJWIN were continued into 1964.

ZRRIFLE appears to have been part of a larger set of programs of the ZR series - the files indicate ZRAGORN and ZRRAGTIME. The specifics of these programs are unknown. QJWIN was also in a category of agents which included at least one other, QJBANNER, who in fact helped locate QJWIN.

Knowledge of the program in the CIA appears to have been limited to the following people:

- Arnold Silver - "from before"
- Justin O'Donnel
- William Harvey
- Richard Bissell
- Richard Helms
- Daniel M. Presland
- W. Lloyd George
- Sidney Gottlieb

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The principal events in the chronology are set forth below, but the major phases were:

- Oct.-Dec. 1960 - recruitment and visit by QJWIN to the Congo allegedly for a kidnap or assassination of Lumumba.
- 1961-1962 - QJWIN becomes contract employee. Seeks out potential candidates for Embassy break-ins. Possible more permanent assignment to Leopoldville under consideration but finally dropped.
- 1963 - While supposedly establishing cover in Germany and in minimal contact with case officer, QJWIN apparently meets Wm. Harvey in Florida in April and engages in some kind of operation involving a boat.

ZRRIFLE/QJWIN

1. What was your responsibility in regard to **Division D** of the FI Division? Would you describe its functions?
2. What can you tell us of an operation run out of **Division D** in the Congo in late 1960? Wouldn't you have to approve such a project?
3. Have you ever heard of project ZRRIFLE or an agent by the name of QJWIN? Would you describe your recollections?
4. Did you ask **Mr. O'Donnell** in 1960 to recruit an agent in Europe (use real name if necessary) to assassinate Patrice Lumumba? To kidnap him?
5. Did you cause to be delivered to the in the Congo in late 1960 a quantity of poison or a biological agent for the purpose of killing Patrice Lumumba?
6. Could these things have happened without your knowledge?
7. Have you ever heard the term "Executive Action"? If so, explain meaning and circumstances.
8. Do you recall a meeting on January 25 and 26, 1961, where Executive Action was discussed?
9. What do you make of these handwritten notes?
10. What do you make of the handwritten note that says "ZRRIFLE started in 1961 on Bissell's say-so"?
11. Did you ever authorize a program to **break into embassies** abroad? To recruit people for that purpose? How high up would such a project be approved? Be known?
12. Would you know if such a supposed counterintelligence operations were in fact a cover for an assassination capability? If not, why not? If so, explain.
13. Do you recall any discussion of the use of Executive Action, ZRRIFLE, QJWIN, (the agent's real name), in connection with plans to assassinate Trujillo or Castro?

EM
This is apparently based on 1967 CIA Study which states that Harvey said that early in the Kennedy Administration

"Bissell called him in to discuss what Harvey refers to as an Executive Action Capability, i.e., a general stand by capability to carry out assassinations when required. Harvey's notes quote Bissell as saying 'the White House has twice urged me to create such a capability.'"

It should also be noted that ZRRIFLE was not a covert action but was conducted under the aegis of counterintelligence--for which no formal mechanisms of high-level review appear to exist, even today.)

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Jan. 26, 1961. More systematic description of operating methods for projects which imply that ~~code stealing~~ is a cover. Other notes sandwich these notes but in another hand; spellout ~~code-stealing~~ mission for ZRRIFLE. (Comment: These notes must be seen to be appreciated.) (Other handwritten notes, undated but apparently done later, refer to QJWIN/ZRRIFLE with notiations "Done early 1961 on Bissell's say-so.")

March 1961. QJWIN signs contract. Subsequently seeks out potential criminals for unspecified tasks. Discussion goes on about Leopoldville assignment.

Mid-1962. African Division in Hq. finally says "no" to Leopoldville assignment. QJWIN kept on for job of spotting criminals. Station ~~Lupe~~ wants to know what to do with him. (By this time Bissell has left CIA.)

(Note: In ZIRRIFFLE/QJWIN contract/Project file following Helm's contract renewal of March 1963, and Harvey's memo of June 27, 1963, is an envelope addressed to Lloyd which contains a card which says:

John Rosselli

alias

John Ralston

Wm. Walker

end note.)

(Comment: Apart from the handwritten notes and ~~O'Donnel's~~ statements there is nothing to suggest assassination was the purpose of ZRRIFLE. On the other hand, there is also no suggestion that the "candidates" developed by QJWIN ever did any "jobs" for the Agency.

However, the Inspector General's Report of 1973 (First pages of Senators' White Book) contains a two-page summary of ZRRIFLE describing its purpose as an Executive Action operation. It alleges (with no reference as to source) that:

"'The White House' urged Richard Bissell to create an Executive Action capability; i.e., a general stand-by capability to carry out assassinations. The Executive Action program came to be known as ZRRIFLE. Its principal asset was an agent, QJWIN, who had been recruited earlier by _____, for use in a special operation in the Congo (the assassination of Patrice Lumumba)...."

--June 1963 - Harvey proposes QJWIN be terminated or used in other capacity.

--1964 - Last payment to QJWIN

Chronology Relevant to Bissell

October 1960. Message from Station in [redacted] indicates arrangements being made for contact of unknown agent with Corsicans for project briefed orally to [redacted] Station by Silva.

October . Hq. asks COS [redacted] if certain person available and QJBanner reports he is.

October 1960. Following Silver visit O'Donnel meets with individual who is to become QJWIN. O'Donnel claims he asked QJWIN to join in plot to kidnap Lumumba from UN custody and deliver to Mobutu for trial. Report of meeting says that QJWIN not told of actual purpose but told assignment involved great personal risk. O'Donnel claims Bissell personally asked him to assassinate Lumumba but O'Donnel refused.

Nov.-Dec. 1960. QJWIN with cryptonym goes to Congo ostensibly en route Dakar. Activities unclear but reportedly contacts two Frenchmen to "take unspecified job." O'Donnel comes from Washington to direct QJWIN's activities.

WIROTH-1, another CIA agent, tries to recruit QJWIN to join assassination gang. Station says WIROTH "exceeding instructions." WIROTH trained in small arms, demolition and "medical immunizations."

O'Donnel claims that when he got there, COS Leopoldville had vial of virus in safe for use against Lumumba.

Jan. 25, 1961 - Cryptic, handwritten notes in QJWIN/ZRRIFLE project contract file suggest ZRRIFLE created for "Executive Action" capability. QJWIN mentioned by name. Relevance to Trujillo assassination suggested by name "El Benefactor." On page, notes contain phrases:

"Executive Action"

"The Magic Button"

"The last resort beyond the last resort"

"anesthetic"

"never mention(s) assassination"

The initials on the paper include B-WH-AS, which appear to stand for Bissell, Wm. Harvey, and Arnold Silver. Technical Services Division mentioned along with "Sid" -- presumably TSD Director Sidney Gottlieb.