

CALL REPORT: PUBLIC**Document's Author:** Joan Zimmerman/ARRB**Date Created:** 04/01/97**The Players****Who called whom?** Joan Zimmerman called James M. Mastrovito of Witnesses/Consultants**Description of the Call****Date:** 04/01/97**Subject:** USSS Records**Summary of the Call:**

James Mastrovito called Dave Montague in response to information about ARRB that Dave had sent at the beginning of March 1997. I wanted to speak to James Mastrovito because he was in charge of the JFK assassination file at the Secret Service in 1975. Mastrovito said he started working at the Secret Service in 1959 and retired in 1979. From 1960 to 1962, Mastrovito was on the White House Detail. In the summer of 1962, Mastrovito was in the USSS field office in Charleston, West Virginia. After the assassination, he was called to headquarters. He became a Deputy in the Intelligence Division (formerly PRS) for 10 years before becoming the director of the Intelligence Division a few years before he retired. He worked with Walter Young, who replaced Robert Bouck. According to Mastrovito, Bouck moved out of PRS in the reorganization of the Intelligence Division after 1963.

When Mastrovito took charge of the JFK assassination file, it consisted of 5 or 6 file cabinets of material. After Mastrovito finished "culling" irrelevant material, the collection was down to one five-drawer file cabinet. Mastrovito guessed that his purging of extraneous material took place around 1970. He said that the extraneous material consisted of records of 2000-3000 "mental cases" who called the Secret Service after the Kennedy assassination to claim responsibility for the shooting. Mastrovito offered that Robert Blakey questioned him about this destruction of documents and threatened legal action. Mastrovito pointed out that Chief Rowley's August 1965 memo directed him to remove irrelevant material. Blakey had obtained index cards from the Secret Service for what were then called "White House cases" and/or CO2 cases. These cards had been sent to the Warren Commission in a card index file. From these cards, Warren Commission members had requested specific Secret Service reports. Blakey had also sought specific files based on his examination of these index cards. Apparently, Mastrovito had destroyed some files that Blakey had wanted to see. Mastrovito decided which files to keep and which files to destroy.

Mastrovito said no one had access to the assassination file except people in the Secret Service. Some reports were copied for the FBI and the Warren Commission. Mastrovito said protective surveys were not in the assassination file but were kept in the operations division.

Mastrovito said that a "CO2" number referred to Intelligence Division or PRS numbering. He speculated that a "CO-S" would go directly to the Chief's office. CO2 cases did not go to the Chief's office unless there was a particular or special reason for the Chief's attention.

Mastrovito mentioned that Thomas Kelley was an Assistant Director of the Secret Service when Mastrovito knew him. Kelley interviewed Oswald in the DPD jail. Mastrovito used to kid Kelley because he never wrote a final report on the case.

I asked Mastrovito if he had viewed or obtained any artifacts while he was in charge of the assassination file. Mastrovito replied that he had received a piece of President Kennedy's brain. Mastrovito offered that this item was contained in a vial with a label on it identifying its contents. The vial was the size of a prescription bottle. Mastrovito did not remember if it was glass or plastic. The vial was from the Air Force [sic] Institute of Pathology. (Armed Forces Institute of Pathology) Mastrovito said this vial from the AFIP lab came into his possession "about 3 or 4 years later," i.e. after the assassination.

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(Then Mastrovito said it was about "1969 or 1970.") The label said the vial had been sent from the autopsy at Bethesda; there was no other explanation with it. Mastrovito said he could not see what was special about the portion in the vial. I asked Mastrovito who gave him the vial, and he replied that his supervisor, Walter Young (first Chief of the Intelligence Division), gave it to him when he (Young) resigned from the Secret Service. Young had apparently received it from someone at AFIP. Mastrovito offered that Walter Young died last year. Mastrovito said he destroyed the vial and its contents in a machine that destroys food.

Mastrovito offered more information about Secret Service records as follows: He said that after the assassination, the Secret Service changed its policy regarding its records in presidential libraries. Before November 1963, the Service had sent its records to the federal records centers and to presidential libraries. That is, Secret Service criminal files were available to the public, for example, in the FDR library and the Truman library. After the assassination, the Secret Service recalled its criminal files from the Truman library saying that the agency wished to review them in light of the assassination. Instead of returning these files to the Truman library as promised, as Mastrovito put it, "the Secret Service kept the files, and we destroyed them." In those days, according to Mastrovito, the feeling at the Secret Service was that people's criminal files should not be available to the public. The Secret Service also recalled selected files from the FDR library.

Mastrovito was quite agreeable to the suggestion of future contacts from me, and he provided his travel itinerary and telephone numbers for the next several months.

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