

Nixon Death Threat Raises Old Question

NEW YORK (UPI)—“I want to report a plot to kill Nixon,” said the accented voice on the line to the Police Communications Bureau.

The result of that telephone call was the swift arrest Nov. 9 of a Yemeni immigrant and his two sons and the emergence of a skimpy but sinister silhouette of conspiracy that has shocked a nation already revolted by three major political assassinations in five years.

If the dark plot to shoot and kill President-elect Richard M. Nixon can be proved—and law enforcement officials believe it can—then the American public must again face a question never solved in the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy:

Was the conspiracy directed from outside the United States in an effort to divide and weaken the nation or from within by dissident elements with the same aim—or was it only the concoction of a lonely frustrated individual, or individuals, with a sick mind?

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The arrest of Ahmed Namer, 43, and his sons, Hussein, 20, and Abdo, 18, in an obscure flat in Brooklyn's East New York area underscored for most Americans the frightful responsibility of the Secret Service and other federal and local police in protecting Nixon now and after his inauguration.

Four presidents — Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy—were assassinated in office and attempts were made against the lives of Jackson and Truman. Attempts also were made against Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Kennedy during the periods they were president-elect.

Perhaps not until the trial of the impassive, faintly surly Namers will much be known of who they really are and what they really plotted. To date we know what a friend or acquaintance of theirs, about 36 years of age and bearing an Arab name, reported to police that they approached him to join a conspiracy to kill Nixon, apparently as the marksman because the informant is known as an excellent shot.

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In the words of the indictment, the trio did “solicit, request, command, importune and otherwise attempt” to cause the mystery witness to take part in the assassination of which the Namers “did arm themselves with two rifles and a quantity of ammunition.”

It is obvious that this man was not motivated as the Namers must have been if they did indeed conspire to murder Nixon. That he did not keep knowledge of the plot to himself out of fear may also indicate that he did not feel there was anyone who would avenge the Namer's arrest—that is, any powerful masterminds behind the plot.

However, the police are continuing to provide the informant with utmost protection in the belief that there are some persons of Arabic origin in Brooklyn who know who he is. If the Namers were motivated by Nixon's pro-Israeli statements during his campaign, there may be other Yemenis who might avenge them out of deep tribal feeling that persists in their primitive homeland and wherever they live abroad.

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Speculation has been rife that because the Namers are Arabic there might be some connection between them and Sirhan B. Sirhan, a disappointed would-be jockey who is accused of the Los Angeles assassination of Robert Kennedy last June. This is not yet under investigation, according to Los Angeles officials, but it probably will be. The rumors persist that one of the Namers visited Los Angeles earlier this year.

According to some accounts, the senior Namer was just a simple cultivator of qat, a nar-

cotic plant, back in his village of Thou Einimer. According to others he was a member of the Aden (now South Yemen) secret police before he emigrated 13 years ago to the United States where he has become a naturalized citizen. One law enforcement officer has admitted there is reason to believe Namer was “perhaps a spy before or after he came to this country.”

Acting Brooklyn Dist. Atty. Elliott Golden, who has given out little hard information, said the accused—all low paid garment district workers—offered the mystery informant “a large sum of money” and that he hopes to find out where it came from. He said many letters from “foreign contacts” were found in the Namer apartment, an indication that Namer was not just getting letters from his wife and three daughters he left behind in Yemen.

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Assistant Dist. Atty. Harold Rosenbaum fleshed out the picture a little more by disclosing that the defendants had “strong ties abroad” that gave the case a “very serious” aspect. He said law enforcement officials including the Secret Service and the U.S. Attorney General's office were interested in “many, many” facets of the Namers' activities.

So far federal authorities have stayed in the background although assassination legislation enacted by Congress after President Kennedy's slaying in 1963 protects the president-elect as well as the incumbent and provides for a sentence of life imprisonment on conviction of conspiracy. If the Namers are convicted on all four counts each of the indictments returned by a Brooklyn grand jury Wednesday, the maximum penalty under New York state law would be 24 years.

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In fact, the U.S. attorney's office appears to be moving very cautiously even though Golden rallied enough evidence to convince a grand jury to indict the Namers. Since touchy Arab-Israeli relations are involved, federal intervention now might blow the case out of proportion.

Nixon's name was pointedly left out of the indictment, an omission which Rosenbaum laid to not wanting to “soup up

the case so the defendants can get a fair trial.”

Yemeni U.N. Ambassador Mohsin Alaini has counseled caution on the grounds that the charge leveled at the Namers might have restyled from bad blood between them and the informant. Alaini said it was not unusual for guns to have been found in the Namers' apartment because “in Yemen, everyone has arms.”

At the same time Sheikh AlHaj Daoud Ahmed Faisal, spiritual leader of the 5,000 Middle Eastern Moslems living in Brooklyn, said that even if the Namers did plot to kill Nixon “they should be released and sent back to Yemen.

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“All they were trying to do was protect their homeland,” he said referring to Nixon's campaign pledge to seek peace in the Middle East by seeing that Israel gets a “technological military margin to more than offset her hostile neighbors' numerical superiority.”

G.T. Mehdi, secretary general of the 20,000-member Action Committee on American-Arab Relations, said the indictments were “utterly preposterous” and demanded that all law enforcement officials, judges and jurors with Zionist leanings be disqualified from the case and the trial be moved from New York, home of 1.7 million Jews.

“There was no conspiracy to assassinate Nixon, rather it seems that there is a conspiracy to assassinate the Arab character in America,” Mehdi said.

Still in custody pending a hearing on charges of illegal possession of a dangerous weapon was a 30-year-old Egyptian, Edward Hotter, who was arrested five blocks from the Nixon apartment shortly after the election. He was carrying a loaded rifle and a switchblade knife.