

Pardon Abraham Bolden

Anyone following the issue of Presidential pardons is aware that conservatives are pleading with George W. Bush to pardon Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean. Ramos and Compean were Texas border agents who were convicted for shooting (in the derriere) a fleeing drug suspect as he attempted to cross the border into Mexico. He had been trying to smuggle more than a million dollars worth of drugs. They certainly deserve to be pardoned, if most of the news reports describing their actions have been correct. Most Americans would consider Ramos and Compean good Americans, if not heroes, for risking their lives every day while trying to keep their country safe.

Of course, pretty much everyone currently in prison believes he shouldn't be there, and Obama will more than likely do what he can to accommodate them by appointing federal judges who would rather blame "society" for crimes than the criminals who commit them. But time is running short on a man who has been fighting to clear his name for more than 40 years. That man deserves a pardon from President Bush. He also deserves an apology from the CIA, the FBI, the Secret Service, and the Kennedy family.

After working his way through college and graduating cum laude from Lincoln University, Abraham S. Bolden spent a year working for Pinkerton. He then became an Illinois State Trooper, a job he held for four years. His performance and record was exemplary, and President Eisenhower appointed Bolden to the Secret Service in 1959. He was assigned to Chicago, where he successfully investigated and stopped counterfeiting rings. For that work Bolden received two commendations.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy offered Bolden a job in the White House security detail. He accepted, and became the first black Secret Service agent with the job of protecting the President of the United States. After three months at the White House, Bolden became disillusioned, partly because of racial slurs from the white agents, and because of the need for him to be housed separately when the agents traveled through southern states. He complained to his supervisor about those issues, as well as the unprofessional attitude of other agents (who often drank heavily, despite strict rules against such behavior). Bolden was transferred back to Chicago, where he returned to counterfeiting cases.

President Kennedy was scheduled to make an appearance in Chicago on Saturday, November 2, 1963. Secret Service agents were in place. Crowds of people had already gathered to watch the President's motorcade travel down the Northwest Expressway (later re-named the Kennedy Expressway). His arrival in the city was expected at 11:00 A.M. At the last minute, the trip was called off. The publicized reason was that Kennedy "had a cold."

The real reason was that an assassination plot, involving a four-man team, had been uncovered.

A few weeks later, Kennedy visited Tampa. A second plot was in place there. The assassins called it off at the last minute.

The Chicago and Tampa plots to kill Kennedy were kept secret for decades. Until some government documents were unclassified in the 1990s, virtually no one knew of the events, aside from Secret Service agents, some FBI and CIA agents – and the people who had planned to kill Kennedy.

All the agents, including Bolden, were ordered not to discuss any aspect of the assassination attempt or their investigation with anyone – then or at any time in the future.

On November 22, 1963, the third plot to kill Kennedy succeeded. The plans for the “hits” in Chicago, Tampa, and Dallas all originated with the mob. The mob steered investigators—and an unsuspecting media—to its equally unsuspecting patsy, Lee Harvey Oswald. Oswald, who had both CIA and mob connections, was then eliminated by Jack Ruby (who also had CIA and mob connections), to stop him from leading investigators back to the mob.

Robert F. Kennedy immediately knew the mob, the CIA, and others within the government had killed his brother. He also knew that he and his brother had been working with the CIA on a secret plan to have Fidel Castro (and his brother, Raul) assassinated on December 1, 1963. The killings would be the job of a high-ranking official in the Cuban military, and would signal the start of a coup. Cuban exiles, being trained by the CIA in Central American countries, would then land in Cuba and take control of its government. The interim government would then request military assistance from the United States. The Kennedys would be rid of Castro, without being accused of direct involvement—if all went well.

What RFK didn’t know (at least until JFK was assassinated) was that the mob had infiltrated the coup organization. Robert Kennedy then had no choice but to allow Oswald to be blamed for the assassination of his brother. A full investigation would have shown that the mob, not Oswald, was responsible for the murder of the President. But it would also have made public the December 1 Cuban coup plot. To allow that plan to be known was unthinkable. At the very least, public knowledge of the plans would tarnish his brother’s image, as well as destroy his own political career. At the very worst, it could lead to a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. Robert Kennedy had to say nothing. The plans for December 1 were cancelled.

The December 1 plans were known to almost no one in the government outside the Kennedys and the CIA and those directly responsible for its implementation. Even Secretary of Defense McNamara was kept out of the loop. Unfortunately for the Kennedys, more people in the mob knew of the plans than did members of the President’s own cabinet.

The Warren Commission was denied information relating to the Cuban coup. It was also not told about the Chicago and Tampa assassination plans; to do otherwise would have made it impossible for the Warren Commission, and the general public, to accept the “Oswald acted alone” theory that the mob needed to cover its tracks, and which RFK and the CIA needed to keep its Cuban plans secret. The mob had successfully infiltrated the Kennedy coup, using that as a cover for its assassination of the President. The mob, which RFK had been hounding for years, had outwitted him—and he knew it.

But how does Abraham S. Bolden fit in? Bolden was scheduled to testify before the Warren Commission. He planned on telling what he knew about the lax security of the Secret Service and, more importantly, about the Chicago and Tampa plots that were uncovered. But Bolden could not be allowed to talk, or the truth could come out. (Bolden was also aware of witnesses at Parkland Hospital in Dallas who saw a bullet hole in the windshield of JFK’s limousine, a bullet hole that shouldn’t be there if Oswald was to be made the lone assassin.)

The day before Bolden was scheduled to testify before the Warren Commission he was arrested—on charges of counterfeiting. He never testified before the Warren Commission, but was instead sent to prison on the testimony of only two men. Both were known criminals. One was an associate of Sam DeStefano, who Bolden had arrested in the past. (The other later admitted he had lied under oath to convict Bolden of the bogus counterfeiting charges.) Bolden was sent to prison for six years; some of his time was spent in solitary.

Sam Destefano was murdered in 1973. His killer was likely Richard Cain. Cain was a CIA asset, who had also been with the Chicago Police Department, and who was, in 1963, the chief investigator for the Cook County Sheriff’s Office. Cain’s real name was Ricardo Scalzetti, and he had been on mobster Sam Giancana’s payroll while with the Chicago Police Department. Cain was also connected to Johnny Rosselli, and had been part of CIA-Mafia plots to assassinate Castro, along with Santo Trafficante and Tony Varona. Cain also knew Cuba’s ex-president, Carlos Prio, who had infiltrated the December 1 Cuban coup scheme.

Cain had all the contacts he needed to know what was going on. In fact, he knew so much that he was also murdered, shortly after he had taken care of Sam DeStefano.

Robert Kennedy was aware that Bolden had been framed and sent to prison, but he felt powerless to intervene. In addition to feeling responsible for his own brother’s death, RFK also knew he could not act to free an innocent man from prison. He may have thought ahead to pardoning Bolden had he become President, but that was not to be.

Ironically, black Americans looked to the Kennedys to protect their rights as citizens, not knowing that actions by the Kennedys had caused the first black Secret Service agent to serve in the White House to be imprisoned for a crime he didn’t commit.

George W. Bush can overturn the grave injustice done to Abraham Bolden by issuing a pardon.

Don Fredrick

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On a more personal level, Ultimate Sacrifice also solves the tragedy of Abraham Bolden, the first black Presidential Secret Service agent, who was framed by the Mafia and sent to prison when he tried to tell the Warren Commission about the Chicago and Tampa assassination attempts against JFK. His career and life ruined, Bolden has spent the last forty years seeking a pardon. Now, new information from the CIA and other sources shows that the man behind Bolden's framing was an associate of Rosselli and Trafficante, a Mafioso linked to JFK's assassination who had penetrated C-Day.

Much of what is known about the Chicago assassination attempt is due to the efforts of Bolden, who "was prevented from testifying for the Warren Commission that the Secret Service knew of a plot to assassinate Kennedy in Chicago by members of a dissident Cuban group." This 1967 CIA memo says that "an unsavory character known as Richard S. Cain... who was in touch with the CIA's contact office in Chicago in 1963 passed information of a similar import to the CIA's Chicago office."

Bolden was framed by a Chicago mobster on the day of his attempt to tell the Warren Commission about the Chicago and Tampa assassination attempts. The mobster who framed Bolden was a close associate of Richard Cain.

Bolden worked his way through college, graduating cum laude from Lincoln University. He worked for Pinkerton for one year, then spent four years as an Illinois State Trooper where his record was so outstanding that he became an Eisenhower appointee to the U.S. Secret Service in 1959. Bolden worked counterfeiting cases in Chicago, eventually winning two commendations for cracking counterfeiting rings. In the summer of 1961, JFK appointed Bolden the first black agent to work presidential protection as part of the Secret Service White House detail.

Bolden says his appointment came after he met JFK at a 1961 fundraiser in Chicago. After a brief conversation, JFK asked Bolden if he would be interested in joining the White House detail. Once there, Bolden writes that oftentimes during my assignment at the White House, JFK would approach me and ask, How are they treating you? Or How do you like the detail? He introduced me every member of his cabinet saying, This is Mr. Bolden I brought him here to make history and to open the door for his people.

According to Congressional investigators, Bolden spent only three months in the White House detail and was evidently shocked at what he saw. Bolden resented the slurs against blacks he occasionally heard from, some of the white agents, as well as the separate housing facilities for black agents on southern trips. Bolden complained to his supervisor... and to James Rowley, then head of the Secret Service, about the general laxity and the heavy drinking among the agents who were assigned to protect the President. But Bolden's warning went unheeded, and the straitlaced agent was transferred back to Chicago. In Chicago, Agent Bolden resumed his focus on counterfeiting cases. But two of the cases would come back to haunt him several months after JFK's death, and would help to keep both the Chicago and Tampa assassination attempts secret for years.

According to Bolden's testimony, "surveillance was undertaken by the" Chicago Secret Service "agents on two of the four subjects identified with the threat. Bolden" and another black agent in the Chicago office "were excluded from the north side Chicago surveillance because it was a predominantly white neighborhood." Bolden was still able to keep track of the around the clock surveillance on the rooming house where the two men were staying, "partly from monitoring the Secret Service radio channels in his car" and "partly from office" talk by other agents.

Except for Bolden and Chicago's Secret Service chief Martineau, the other Chicago agents have been reluctant to admit the existence of the four man threat.

But, as Bolden later told Congressional investigators, "through a series of blunders, the surveillance " of the two assassins "was blown."

JFK was set to arrive in Chicago around 11:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, November 2, 1963.

In the case of Abraham Bolden, the Chicago mob had to take a more active role to keep information away from the Warren Commission. Bolden sacrificed his career and his freedom trying to tell the Warren Commission about the Chicago and Tampa assassination attempts. As Bolden revealed to us for the first time, a criminal he once arrested “did odd jibs for Sam DeStefano.” DeStefano was one of the Chicago Mafia’s most ruthless killers – close to Sam Giancana, Charles Nicoletti, and Richard Cain as well as part of the French Connection heroine network. Richard Cain apparently used DeStefano to help from Abraham Bolden to keep Bolden from telling the Warren Commission about the Chicago and Tampa assassination attempts.

Congressional investigators even found a Secret Service agent from the Chicago office who told them “he believes Bolden was set up” on the charges that eventually sent him to prison.

On the very day Bolden was sent to Washington hoping to talk to Warren Commission staff, he was arrested on a bogus counterfeiting charge. Bolden had a sterling reputation, and the only evidence against him was the word of two Mafia henchmen, one of whom was the DeStefano thug whom Bolden had arrested before. One of his accusers later admitted that he had lied under oath when he implicated Bolden. But Bolden was convicted by a Chicago judge and sent to prison for six years, where he did hard time, sometimes in solitary. Sam DeStefano was murdered in 1973, probably by Richard Cain, and Cain himself was murdered soon after. Bolden has spent the last forty years trying to clear his name.

Bolden says the Chicago agents’ notes about the four-man threat were typed up and the memo were then taken to O’Hare airport, where they were flown to Washington. All the Chicago agents were ordered by Washington, in writing, to discuss no aspect of the assassination and investigation with anyone from any federal agency now or any time in the future and each agent was made to initial the memo.

Shortly after the JFK assassination, Martineau told Bolden and other agents that there were to be no written reports, any information was to be given to him orally. The chief would report only by phone to the head of the Secret Service, James Rowley, personally. Bolden testified that any written information was put into a COS file which stands for Central Office and Secret. Bolden said COS files were kept separate from all others and that the Secret Service could then say they had nothing in their files on a subject when, in fact, a COS file existed.

Chicago Secret Service agent told us he had been briefed about the Tampa threat.

Cain had forty deputies working for him in Chicago in 1963, and with his connections to the FBI, the CIA, and the mafia, he could keep tabs on any development that could implicate the Mafia in JFK’s death.

Richard Cain’s CIA file includes references to Abraham W. Bolden,.

It took two trials, but Bolden was finally convicted on counterfeiting charges based on the testimony of two criminals: one whom Bolden had previously arrested, and one who later admitted committing perjury against Bolden.

The criminal who admitted to perjury worked for a very close associate of Richard Cain named Sam DeStefano, one of Sam Giancana's most ruthless gangsters. Giancana had once tried to get DeStefano involved in the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro, with himself and Cain.

The Mafia knew that Bolden had to be prevented from testifying for the Warren commission about the plot to assassinate JFK in Chicago. If the Warren Commission and the public learned what Bolden knew about the attempts to assassinate JFK in Chicago and in Tampa, no one would buy the "Oswald as lone assassin" theory any more. A truly thorough investigation, including the Tampa and Chicago attempts, could eventually uncover the Mafia's role in JFK's death.

Richard Cain was likely behind Bolden's framing, according to Cain's half-brother, Mike Cain.

A Kennedy aide who worked on C-Day confirmed that RFK was aware of Bolden's plight, but that Bobby felt that he couldn't do anything to help Bolden. Any attempt by RFK to intervene could have led to the exposure of the Chicago and Tampa attempts and why they had to be covered up, which would have exposed C-Day, which in turn could have created a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets.

In April 1973 the man Cain used to frame Bolden, Sam DeStefano, was murdered in Chicago. Cain was the prime suspect, but had constructed a strong alibi to avoid prosecution. Someone close to Cain confirmed that Cain was responsible for DeStefano's killing. Later that same year, Cain was slain in gangland fashion in a Chicago restaurant.

Richard Cain was a CIA asset, who had a reputation for experience in sabotage, polygraphs, and electronic surveillance, and was fluent in Spanish and Italian and traveled extensively in Latin America. Cain began working for the CIA in 1960. Cain had been a key member of the Chicago Police Department and in 1963, while working for the CIA, Cain was Chief Investigator for the Cook County Sheriff's Office, with a staff of forty. HE was also an informant for the Chicago FBI.

Cain was also a "made member" of the Chicago Mafia named Ricardo Scalzetti, and the House Select Committee on Assassinations found that Cain admitted that he had worked covertly for Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana and had been on his payroll while he was a member of the Chicago Police Department. Cain's Mafia family included Johnny Rosselli, and Cain had been part of the CIA-Mafia Castro assassination plots with Rosselli, Santo Trafficante, and Tony Varona. Cain had also worked for Carlos Prio, the ex-Cuban President and Trafficante associate who had penetrated C-Day.

Bolden was aware that the JFK limousine had a bullet hole in the windshield. The windshield was changed. Also reported by Dr. Evalea Glanges, who saw the windshield at Parkland Hospital.