

# Mystery of Bush's secret CIA past

The Washington Post \_\_\_\_\_  
 The New York Times \_\_\_\_\_  
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 The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Christian Science Monitor \_\_\_\_\_  
 New York Daily News \_\_\_\_\_  
 USA Today \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Chicago Tribune \_\_\_\_\_  
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THIS week President Bush is motorboating in the waters off Kennebunkport, Maine. But 30 years ago, a former Pentagon official suggests, Bush may have secretly helped skipper a riskier amphibious mission — the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Officially, Bush has denied that he had any contact with the CIA until 1976, when Gerald Ford named him the agency's director. Then, five years ago, there came to light a memo, dated Nov. 29, 1969, in which J. Edgar Hoover reported that the FBI had briefed "Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency."

Now Ret. Col. L. Fletcher Prouty, who served as Chief of Special Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff until 1964, has shared some curious recollections about the failed Bay of Pigs operation, in which Cuban exiles tried to overthrow Fidel Castro.

Prouty, who coordinated supplies for the 1961 fiasco, tells PAGE SIX that the invasion was code-named "Zapata," and that the two

boats used by the invaders were named "Barbara" and "Houston."

It happens that, at the time of the invasion, Bush ran an offshore oil company called *Zapata*. The company, which did much of its business in the Caribbean, was based in *Houston*, where Bush lived with his wife *Barbara*.

Prouty says: "At the time I had no idea why they picked those names... Later I realized — 'Zapata,' 'Barbara,' 'Houston' — a triple coincidence is pretty rare."

Prouty, who in 1975 charged that Richard Nixon aide Alexander Butterfield served as CIA contact in the White House, added: "The Bay of Pigs program was approved in March, 1960, during the Eisenhower Administration. The chances are that it might have been pulled together by bright young Republicans. I can't prove it, but it wouldn't surprise me that Bush was another one of the fellas recruited by the CIA out of Yale. Much of the support — the guns, shoes, vehicles — came from Texas."

The 1963 Hoover memo reported that the Bureau had briefed "Mr. George Bush" on the reaction of Cuban exiles in Miami to the assassination of John Kennedy. Back in 1988, when Bush was asked about it, a spokesman said it must have referred to "another George Bush."

Later, the Washington-based Assassinations Archives did locate another George Bush who worked for the CIA. But *that* Bush has signed an affidavit saying he was never briefed on any Cubans in Miami, according to Steven Hager, whose article in September's *High Times* magazine untangles competing theories about the JFK assassination.

Other intelligence sources, who say Ford would not have appointed an inexperienced man to be CIA director, have claimed that Bush's oil business was a front for clandestine activities.

Asked again whether Bush worked for the CIA in 1961, a White House spokesman told us: "No, as far as the information I have."