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Four and a half years ago, I broke a story that now is belatedly rocking Washington. I reported that the Central Intelligence Agency had recruited two Mafia figures, John Roselli and Sam Giancana, to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

I tracked down Roselli and questioned him about the story. He had nothing to say. He promised me, however, that he would give me his exclusive story if he should ever be free to talk.

Yesterday, John Roselli told his story -- first, to the Senate Intelligence Committee in secret session, then to me as he had promised four and a half years ago.

Roselli is a dapper, hawk-faced man with a thatch of white hair. He has been disciplined all his life to keep his mouth shut. His Mafia partner, Sam Giancana, was slain before Senate investigators could serve him with a subpoena.

So it was obviously painful for Roselli to talk. I promised I would make clear that he revealed no names, except for the CIA contacts whose identities the Senate already knew.

So here is Roselli's own account of a real-life "Mission Impossible" -- the attempt to kill Castro. It is a story of cash payments, poison pellets, high-powered rifles and powerboat dashes to Cuba.

The plot against Castro, Roselli said, began in 1960 -- when Dwight Eisenhower was President, Richard Nixon was Vice President and Allen Dulles was the CIA chief.

Roselli was recruited in Los Angeles, he said, by Robert Maheu, then an aide to billionaire Howard Hughes. Previously, Maheu had operated a CIA front in Washington.

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