

ORR1 MAFIA

CIA Colby, William

Who hit the hit man?

Washington, DC

In one sense, Mr Sam "Momo" Giancana was just hitting the big time: his name was becoming a household word throughout America. He had long been well-known in Chicago, where he was the heir to Al Capone's multi-million dollar empire of illegal rackets and where he was invariably under investigation. But only recently, as revelations about the intelligence community blossomed, did a wide public learn about the patriotic phase of Mr Giancana's career—his recruitment by the Central Intelligence Agency, along with other mafia men, in the early 1960s to try to arrange the assassination of Mr Fidel Castro, the Cuban prime minister, by poisoning or some other suitable means. In exchange for his help, it turned out, the CIA had bugged the Las Vegas hotel room of his girlfriend, Miss Phyllis McGuire, the singer, to determine whether she was being faithful.

Mr Giancana was due to be called to Washington any day to tell the tale of his

adventures as a government "hit" man to the Senate select committee investigating the intelligence community. Back from a gall-bladder operation in Houston, he had a festive dinner at his home in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park the other night, even as policemen patrolled the neighbourhood. Later the same night he was fixing up a snack of Italian sausage and spinach in his basement kitchen when he got some of his own treatment—seven bullets in the face and neck.

According to police, the slaying had all the signs of a gangland execution, except that the calibre of the bullets was uncharacteristically small. Mr William Colby, director of the CIA, took the unusual step of declaring that "we had nothing to do with it". But suspicions ran wild, and there was inevitable speculation that Mr Giancana had been done in by someone he was about to expose in connection with the Castro caper. Besides, some ask, would Mr Colby necessarily know?