Rico, Condon, and Barboza: The Patriarca Recording Account

Bill Davidson's reporting, its sources, and the limits of verification

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What the contemporary account says

In a 1967 magazine article, Bill Davidson reported that FBI agents H. Paul Rico and Dennis Condon visited Joseph Barboza in jail, discussed the betrayal and killings of his associates, and eventually played recordings of Raymond Patriarca disparaging him. Davidson presented these encounters as instrumental in persuading Barboza to cooperate. The account names both agents; it does not assign the playback specifically to Rico alone. [1]

The article attributes to Patriarca the words "He's expendable." It describes a recording being played, rather than documents merely being shown. It does not identify a recording date, reel number, monitoring-log entry, or the person who told Davidson about the playback. Nor does it establish that Davidson personally heard it. [1]

Who was Bill Davidson?

Bill Davidson (1918–2001) was a career magazine journalist and author. His biographical entry lists work as associate editor of *Collier's* (1946–1956), contributing editor of *Look* (1956–1961), and editor-at-large of the *Saturday Evening Post* (1961–1969). His later books included *Indict and Convict*, *Spencer Tracy: Tragic Idol*, and a biography of Jane Fonda. These credentials establish his professional background, not independent verification of this particular episode. [2]

How the article reached Congress

Representative Richard H. Poff of Virginia introduced Davidson's "The Mafia: How It Bleeds New England" into the *Congressional Record* on November 7, 1967. Poff's introduction begins on printed page 31469; the article occupies pages 31470–31473. The Barboza discussion appears on pages 31472–31473. This was a reprinted magazine article, not sworn congressional testimony. [1, 3]

What the sourcing permits us to conclude

Davidson's article quotes federal prosecutors Paul Markham and E. F. Harrington and an unnamed senior law-enforcement official. It therefore supplies evidence of the account being circulated publicly in 1967, including the favorable official presentation of Barboza's cooperation. It does not identify the source for every assertion. We cannot determine from the article alone whether the playback narrative came from either agent, a prosecutor, Barboza, or another intermediary. [1]

The distinction is essential: reporting that agents used Patriarca's recorded remarks to influence Barboza is not the same as authenticating the recording. The quoted disparagement also does not, by itself, establish an explicit order to murder him. Likewise, the account does not establish that the agents fabricated or altered what they played. Those possibilities require evidence beyond this article.

Poff's concern about access to FBI information

Poff questioned why magazine writers apparently obtained FBI surveillance information that Congress could not obtain. He criticized DOJ's response to congressional oversight and contrasted it with the material available for publication. His remarks establish that a member of Congress raised this access issue at the time; they do not identify Davidson's confidential sources or prove precisely what materials he received. [3]

What the later committee report contributes

A text search of both volumes of *Everything Secret Degenerates* and the three archived hearing volumes of *Investigation into Allegations of Justice Department Misconduct in New England* found no matches for Davidson, the *Saturday Evening Post*, the distinctive title phrase, or Poff. This is a search result, not proof that no relevant reference exists: OCR errors and materials outside those volumes remain possible.

The committee did document a related access problem. On page 126 of its 2004 report, it explained that Congress requested Patriarca surveillance records on June 5, 2001. DOJ subsequently indicated that all relevant documents had been supplied. At a December 2, 2002 meeting, John Durham disclosed contemporaneous handwritten monitoring logs. Legible copies of the most important pages were not received until March 25, 2003. Those logs contained significant information not previously provided to Congress. [4]

The parallel with Poff's 1967 complaint is an analytical comparison made here. The committee did not, in the material located, connect its findings to Davidson or authenticate his account of the playback.

Suggested wording for the manuscript

According to journalist Bill Davidson's contemporary account, FBI agents Paul Rico and Dennis Condon visited Barboza in jail and played recordings in which Patriarca disparaged him. Davidson presented the recordings as a turning point in Barboza's decision to cooperate. Reprinted in the *Congressional Record* in November 1967, the article documents the public account of his recruitment, but does not identify its source for the playback episode or provide the underlying recording. [1]

References and citation notes

1. Davidson, Bill. "The Mafia: How It Bleeds New England." *Saturday Evening Post*, reprinted in *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 113, November 7, 1967, 31470–31473; especially 31472–31473. Byline and title appear on 31470. This citation uses the verified congressional reprint rather than unverified original magazine pagination.
Read the congressional reprint

2. World Biographical Encyclopedia (Prabook). "Bill Davidson." Biographical entry, career and works sections. Accessed October 7, 2026. This is a secondary biographical directory; it is used only for background.
Read Davidson's biographical entry

3. Poff, Richard H. "The Mafia." Remarks introducing the Davidson article. *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 113, November 7, 1967, 31469–31470.
Read Poff's introduction

4. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Government Reform. *Everything Secret Degenerates: The FBI's Use of Murderers as Informants.* H. Rept. 108-414, 108th Cong., 2d sess., vol. 1. February 3, 2004. Page 126, "The Patriarca Microphone Surveillance Logs."
Read the committee report

Page-number convention: All congressional page references above are printed page numbers. In the linked *Congressional Record* PDF, printed pages 31469–31473 correspond to PDF pages 78–82.