

Report the CIA Taped Oswald On Soviet Call

John F. Kennedy

- Dep. AD Adm.
- Dep. AD Inv.
- Asst. Dir.:
- Admin. _____
- Comp. Syst. *AK*
- Ext. Affairs *AK*
- Files & Com. *AK*
- Gen. Inv. *AK*
- Ident. _____
- Inspection _____
- Intell. _____
- Laboratory _____
- Legal Coun.
- Plan. & Eval. _____
- Spec. Inv. _____
- Training _____
- Telephone Rm. _____
- Director Sec'y _____

By Nicholas M. Horrocks
New York Times News Service

The Central Intelligence Agency secretly tape recorded two telephone conversations between Lee Harvey Oswald and the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City some eight weeks before President John F. Kennedy was shot to death Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, according to government sources familiar with the events.

The call to the Soviet Embassy, the sources said yesterday, alerted the CIA to the presence of Oswald in Mexico City, and on Oct. 10 the agency warned the FBI. There is no indication that the FBI, which was investigating Oswald for his pro-Castro activities, ever followed up on the information.

The call to the Cuban Embassy, the sources said, was not associated with Oswald until after Kennedy's death. A federal commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren found that Oswald, acting alone, had shot the President.

THE CALLS reportedly were placed by Oswald on a trip to Mexico City in late September and early October 1963. The events of this trip have never been fully made public and have been the subject of speculation for more than a decade.

The reports of the calls are the latest developments in the increasing speculation concerning the Warren Commission's conclusions. Evidence that the CIA and FBI may have been less than candid with the commission have added to the questions surrounding the assassination and have led to more calls for a reopening of the inquiry.

The Mexico City trip was given only scant treatment in the Warren Commission report because publication of information about it might have exposed "sources and methods" of the CIA and impaired national security, intelligence officers and commission staff sources have said.

IN RESPONSE TO inquiries from the New York Times, the CIA issued an unusual public statement on the matter. It would not confirm that there were any tape recorded conversations, but said:

"On Oct. 9, 1963, CIA headquarters received information that a person named Lee Oswald contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in late September or early October 1963. In transmitting the information on Oct. 10, 1963, CIA headquarters said Lee Oswald was probably identical to Lee Henry (sic) Oswald."

- The Washington Post _____
- Washington Star-News *A-1*
- Daily News (New York) _____
- The New York Times _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The National Observer _____
- The Los Angeles Times _____

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arrangements to return to the States with a Russian wife.

ographical data was based on reports provided to the CIA on Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union.

"THIS INFORMATION was also provided to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Navy, the U.S. ambassador and his staff in Mexico and to the representative of the FBI in Mexico.

Following the assassination of President Kennedy, CIA records revealed that a person believed to be Oswald was in contact with the Cuban Embassy on Sept. 27, 1963, for the purpose of receiving a transit visa for use en route to the USSR.

"In addition a number of photographs of individuals believed to be in contact with the Cuban and Soviet Embassies in Mexico City were received from the CIA station in Mexico and were compared with pictures of Oswald by CIA officers in Mexico City and CIA headquarters and by United States authorities in Dallas, Tex.

"It was determined that none of these photographs was the photograph of Oswald. Their determinations, and the raw data upon which they were based, along with the reports of his visit to the Soviet Embassy, were made to the Warren and Rockefeller commissions as were all other materials relevant to the investigation of President Kennedy's death."

THREE STAFF MEMBERS of the Warren Commission were assigned to investigate the Mexico City trip and other matters involving the CIA. They were William T. Coleman, now secretary of transportation, Howard P. Willens, a former Justice Department official now in private law practice, and W. David Slawson, a law professor in California.

Coleman said in an interview that he was "disturbed" about the possibility that United States security might be harmed by the recent disclosures, but he acknowledged that he and other staffers received information from the CIA on Oswald's activities in Mexico, and they did not run counter to the commission's conclusion that Oswald killed Kennedy and a Dallas police officer.

Coleman said he was sure that Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission chief counsel, was informed of the CIA Mexico data and that "at least two or three commission members" knew. He could not remember if the commission ever discussed the matter in executive session. Willens and Slawson declined to make public comment.

SOURCES FAMILIAR with the contents of the tapes said that Oswald was seeking a transit visa from Cuban officials and that he was "rebuffed." One source said that the call to the Soviet Embassy was an effort to get help from the Soviets in furthering his application at the Cuban Embassy.

These sources said there was no "conspiratorial" tone to the conversations and one source called them "benign." Moreover, the sources said, the CIA had information that the Cubans were suspicious of Oswald, because he returned to the United States and then asked to go back again to Russia.

Asked if anything said may have "triggered" Oswald, a Cuban supporter, to take "retaliation" against Kennedy, one source denied it, but said that Oswald was "frustrated" by the Cubans.

A SURVEY OF Warren Commission, Rockefeller Commission, intelligence and congressional sources, however, revealed that there are still two areas of suspicion concerning Kennedy's assassination. One is that Oswald received some sort of indirect support or inspiration in his

plot and, two, that the CIA and the FBI may not have been fully candid with the Warren Commission.

These doubts have deepened in the last nine months as the CIA's role in plots to kill foreign leaders came under scrutiny. Members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence have confirmed, for instance, that the CIA did not tell the Warren Commission of its efforts to kill Fidel Castro, premier of Cuba, during the early 1960s.

Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., has called for a reopening of the commission's inquiry on this and other issues.

ANOTHER AREA of unrest has arisen over the role of the FBI. Earlier this month it was revealed that the bureau did not inform the Warren Commission of a letter Oswald wrote threatening to blow up the Dallas police department.

Dr. Rothstein: He might very well have done something like that or the same thing at another time in the future.

Cameron: At another time. Of course, he also had one chance in a lifetime actually of making this kind of contact with the president. Otherwise if he was really after the president, he would have to go to another city. His chances of

coming back — that is why I think the prominent person was all he really was after, and perhaps this was "My God, how about that? I can get the president" . . . I think it is extremely significant that with this situation now, and being confronted in a very probable way by his impotence, that he leaves his wedding ring. He gives as much money as he is able to give to her, and then he takes up the only evidence of masculinity that he has ever been able to demonstrate, his rifle, with him, and now he is going to demonstrate that he really is a man under these circumstances. I think that we have today been able to build up to this point very definitely the kind of psychological background that would make then the subsequent behavior extremely consistent in a psychological sense.

Rothstein: I am not saying that he wasn't going to kill the president until after this argument, but I think this was a big factor in it.

At this point the doctors made virtually explicit the theory that Marina's rejection may have been the causal factor in Oswald's decision to assassinate Kennedy. They had been building their case in that direction all along.

Cameron: I think if Marina had accepted him, if she had been a loving wife that night, he might have slept late the next morning and he might not have got the president, but eventually it would have had to have been some way. It would have been a temporary reprieve.

Rothstein: I think his discomfort might have been relieved to the point he wouldn't have taken action on it.

Cameron: He would have done it later to somebody else.

Some members of the commission's staff indicated their opinion that the psychiatric analysis as to Oswald's possible motives was inadequate and unconvincing. This may have been one reason why, in the end, the commission refused to speculate on the motive.

Meeting of Sept. 18, 1964

This was the commission's final session. The report would be issued on Sept. 27, 1964 — nearly 10 months

after the Warren Commission was constituted.

No actual transcript of the Sept. 18 session is known to exist. According to the National Archives, only the minutes of the meeting are available. However, the minutes did throw additional light on the commission's last-minute concerns. For example, the general counsel was instructed "to use care that the proposed conclusions" concerning Chapter III ("The Shots from the Texas School Book Depository") and Chapter IV ("The Assassin") do not contain any conflict with the conclusions set forth in Chapter I ("Summary and Conclusions").

The seven commissioners labored to find the truth, evaluate the evidence, establish their conclusions, and write the final report. So many doubts apparently were not resolved that the impression emerges from these private discussions among the commissioners that, in the end, the report was the only possible compromise they could produce — in terms of their knowledge and their conscience.

They have played their roles in history. It is now for history to judge them.

Meeting of June 23, 1964

The commission held an executive session on June 22. However, the National Archives has refused to release the transcript on the grounds that the CIA requested continuing secrecy. The meeting apparently dealt with CIA information concerning the period between 1959 and 1962 when Oswald lived in the Soviet Union, and the agency's efforts to obtain material on Oswald during his stay in Russia as well as his visit to Mexico City late in September and early in October 1963.

Meeting of July 9, 1964

Two members of the Warren commission — McCloy and Dulles — and commission staff members Wesley Liebler, Albert E. Jennem Jr., David Slawson and Howard Willens held a seven-hour meeting with three psychiatrists to develop a psychological profile of Lee Harvey Oswald. The purpose of this meeting was to search for Oswald's possible motive in assassinating Kennedy, through a study of his personality.

Three doctors had studied most of the biographical material available on Oswald — based on a multiplicity of earlier interviews with witnesses by the commission, its staff and the FBI — but they cau-

tioned the commissioners that hard conclusions were impossible given the fact that Oswald could not be interviewed psychiatrically.

The commission appeared to have used this material in a highly selective manner, incorporating some of the views of the doctors in the final report while rejecting others. For example, it ignored the hypothesis that Oswald's rejection by Marina, his wife, on the eve of the assassination may have triggered in an immediate sense his decision to try to kill the president.

The transcript from which the text below is excerpted fills 245 pages and is not part of the published hearings accompanying the report. It was classified for seven years following the publication of the report.

The doctors were Dr. Dale C. Cameron, then superintendent of St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington; Dr. Howard P. Rome, then professor of psychiatry in the Mayo Foundation (connected with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.) and president-elect of the American Psychiatric Association; and Dr. David A. Rothstein, then staff psychiatrist at the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Mo.

Rothstein: . . . I am wondering whether he really wanted to have this hidden (the rifle Oswald was seen carrying on his way to the Texas Book Depository) and not be caught, because one outstanding thing about almost every one of these people who threatens the president was for one thing they have made some suicidal attempt in the past, and in at least a lot of them was an identification of this with suicide. . . .

Dulles: . . . You can assume. . . he was not a fool. I think the evidence before the commission pretty clearly brings that out. I think they looked him over, but rejected him. . . . This is not the kind of man any intelligence service would want to pick up.

This was the first time that a commission member stated flatly that available evidence indicated that Oswald was not a Soviet agent. The commission had apparently accepted earlier the assurances by FBI Director Hoover and CIA

Director McCone that Oswald had not been an undercover agent in their employ. In this fashion, the commission was gradually ruling out conspiracy theories.

Increasingly the doctors felt that Marina was the key to Oswald's personality at the crucial juncture, a point the commission did not bring out adequately in the report.

The panel went over material showing that Oswald came to see Marina the evening before the assassination and asked her to come live with him in Dallas. Nothing was settled and Oswald went to bed two hours before Marina did. The next morning, Nov. 22, he got up before Marina did, left his wedding ring on a dresser along with \$170, took the rifle from the garage, and had a friend drive him to Dallas.

Dr. Rome: . . . Here is a man who in a variety of

Cameron: He would have done it later to someone else.

ways has been made a cuckold, and had his nose rubbed in his impotence, literally and figuratively. He comes back. She is angry. He is rebuffed. . . .

Dr. Cameron: I would look at this last episode as simply a final fillup, if you will. . . . and the fact that for him. . . . to release his hostility in some way that would be noteworthy, and the assassination of a prominent person would satisfy this need. Now he, I think, must have thought about it if he did kill the president. . . . so I think what Marina had a chance to do unconsciously that night was to veto his plan without ever knowing of its existence, but she didn't. She really stamped it down hard. But that one incident would never, never have been enough.

busy at the Senate, and Cooper could spend only 30 minutes with the commission because of pressing Senate business.

Although the commission had been working for nearly five months and its staff had already conducted 300 interrogatories of witnesses, the commissioners were still highly disturbed by the gaps and contradictions in the material they had been studying. The question of whether Lee Harvey Oswald might have been an FBI or CIA undercover agent remained unresolved.

More than three months had elapsed since this allegation was first brought before the commission — on Jan. 22 — but FBI Director Hoover and CIA Director John A. McCone had not yet testified under oath on this point.

The commissioners had not yet set foot in Dallas.

Meeting of June 4, 1964

The commission held a 40-minute meeting specifically devoted to Ford's angry denunciation of news reports that the commissioners had already concluded that President Kennedy's assassination was the act of a lone individual and that there was no evidence that he was working as an agent of a foreign government. Such statements, Ford said, are "obviously false" because the commission had not yet reached any conclusions.

Another outburst was another example of the feeling in the commission that outside forces were applying pressure to it to conclude that Oswald had acted alone, and that, therefore, the case should be closed.

The commission held a meeting on May 19, but the National Archives have kept the transcript secret because it related to "personal and medical files and similar files" that under the provisions of the law, that disclosure would "constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy."

On May 14, the commission had taken sworn testimony by Hoover and McCone, dealing largely with allegations that Oswald had been a government undercover agent. Nearly four months had elapsed between the time the commission first heard these allegations and Hoover's and McCone's testimony under oath before the commission.

There is nothing in Hoover's testimony concerning an alleged request by the FBI to the Dallas police to retract a public statement made on assassination day by a police lieutenant that the bureau had known beforehand that Oswald could be a threat to the president.

According to information released in September 1975 by the former Dallas police chief, J. E. Curry, an FBI agent identified as James Hosty had told police lieutenant Jack Revill that the bureau knew that Oswald was a threat to Kennedy.

REVILL REPORTEDLY transmitted this information to Chief Curry who, in turn, relayed it to newsmen on Nov. 22. In May 1964 Curry sent Warren a regis-

tered letter advising him that after he made his statement to reporters, "I received a telephone call from Mr. Gordon Shanklin, special agent in charge of the Dallas office of the FBI, in which Mr. Shanklin stated that the bureau was extremely desirous that I retract my statement to the press. I then appeared before the press and retracted my statement."

Revill, who headed the Dallas police intelligence section, testified before the Warren Commission on May 13, 1964, that Hosty, the FBI agent, had told him that "Lee Oswald killed President Kennedy. . . He is in our Communist file. . . We knew he was here in Dallas. . . We had information that this man was capable of committing this assassination."

The commission's report mentions this episode, but says that Hosty denied in sworn testimony that he

Dulles: This is not the kind of man any intelligence service would want to pick up.

had ever made such comments to Revill. However, the report ignores Curry's statement in his letter to Warren that the FBI had asked him to retract the statement to the press. This, then, looms as another mystery concerning the commission's work. The subject was not discussed in the commissions executive sessions for which transcripts are available. However, the transcript of the May 19 session — six days after Revill's testimony — is among the two still withheld by the National Archives.

... What I was ...
ting at, I think under any
circumstances. . . Mr.
Hoover would say certainly
he didn't have anything to
do with this fellow.

The commission, having
rejected at its first meeting
and on Warren's sugges-
tion, the idea of engaging
its own investigators, was
now totally at the mercy of
the FBI, an agency it
wholly distrusted. It was,
increasingly, the question
of disproving the negative,
but this, of course, was
impossible. Thus the com-
mission was being inexora-
bly pushed by the FBI to ac-
cept the bureau's conclu-
sions.

Russell: They have tried
the case and reached a ver-
dict on every aspect. . .

Finally, the commission
voted unanimously to let
General Counsel J. Lee
Rankin approach Hoover as
he thought would be best.
After hours of discussion —
and all the expressions of
concern about upsetting
Hoover — the commission
was, in effect, turning the
responsibility to its general
counsel.

Rankin: Mr. Waggoner
Carr . . . called me at 11:10
this morning and
said . . . that Oswald was
acting as an FBI undercov-
er agent, and that they had
the information of his badge
which was given as number
179, and that he was being
paid two hundred a month
from September of 1962 up
through the time of the
assassination. . . Carr did-
n't know exactly where
Wade had gotten the infor-
mation but he (Wade) was a
former FBI agent. . . (and)
had said that he had suffi-
cient (evidence) so that he
was willing to make the
statement . . .

Rep. Hale Boggs: There
is a denial of this in one of
these FBI records, as you
know.

Rankin: . . . I did talk to
Jaworski (Leon Jaworski,
counsel for the Texas court
of inquiry, who 10 years
later would be Watergate
special prosecutor) and he
said he didn't think Wade
would say anything like this
unless he had some substan-
tial information back of it,
and (Jaworski) thought he
(Wade) could prove it, be-
cause he thought it would
ruin many in politics, in
Texas, to be making such a
claim, and then have it
shown that there was noth-
ing to it. . .

The allegation that Os-
wald might have been an
FBI informer became im-
mensely troubling to the
commission in the light of
the bureau's insistence

from the very outset that he
was the assassin and that
there was no conspiracy. As
Rankin said, the FBI want-
ed the commission to "fold
up and quit."

Suspensions were develop-
ing that the FBI could be so
convinced of Oswald's guilt
as the lone gunman because
it had him under control. It
was a devastating thought.
The disposition of the com-
mission seemed to be to
conceal evidence, if it actu-
ally developed into evi-
dence, to spare the nation
an intolerable truth.

Boggs: We are all . . . in
the realm of speculation. I
don't even like to see this
being taken down.

Dulles: Yes. I think this
record ought to be destroy-
ed. Do you think we need a
record of this?

Boggs: I would hope that
none of these records are
circulated to anybody. . .

**Boggs: (We are all
. . . in a realm of
speculation). I
don't even like this
to be taken down.**

Meeting of Feb. 24, 1964

This was a 10-minute ses-
sion with only Chief Justice
Warren, Sen. John Sherman
Cooper, Gerald Ford,
Dulles, and Rankin in at-
tendance. The commission
was meeting for the first
time in four weeks. It had
taken in the meantime
Marina Oswald's testimony
but it was still unable to
clear up the allegations that
Oswald had been an FBI
undercover agent. Rankin
informed the commission
that affidavits had been ob-
tained from Hoover and
individual bureau agents as
well as interviews with
Dallas officials and news-
paper reporters. But, Ran-
kin said, all the reports
"show negative."

Meeting of Mar. 16, 1964

The commission held a
three-minute meeting to ap-
prove a resolution govern-
ing the questioning of wit-
nesses by staff members.
The commission had been in
existence for three and a
half months before taking
this action. The session, at-
tended by Warren, Cooper,
Ford, McCloy and Rankin
was the first once since
Feb. 24. . .

Meeting of April 30, 1964

This executive meeting of
the commission was more
than five weeks after the
previous session. Warren,
McCloy and Dulles met with
the general counsel, Ran-
kin, for two hours and 15
minutes. Ford was away in
Michigan, Boggs was in
Louisiana, Russell was