

## The Mexico City Report;

Revised from an article originally published in VMKRAFT, Inc.

By Edwin Lopez

At long last, the report that I once labored over, has been publicly released. Over these years, great expectations have built up within the researcher community over the report. Because of those expectations, I have faced its public release with great joy but also great trepidation. The great joy is obvious. Something hidden which I had labored over was finally going to be made public. The trepidation was a nagging wariness that its inaccessibility had created an aura around it. So many researchers I talked to had anticipated major revelations. This aura threatened to obscure the real importance of the contents of the report. I frequently told researchers who called to lower their expectations and emphasized that there was no smoking gun in the report.

### Misperceptions

Though there are fascinating and important items that we uncovered in our investigation, I wish to stress to the reader as to my phone callers that the smoking gun is not to be found in this report. We did not unravel the mystery surrounding Oswald in Mexico City. My feeling is that we only began to scratch the surface of this mystery. The report should be seen as a beginning, not a final answer.

The second misperception to dispel is that I was the only person who worked on this report. This mistaken impression has reached the point where the actual title of the report has been overlooked and my name placed upon it. When I was hired by the HSCA, my assigned responsibility was the Cuban area. Dan Hardway's was Mexico City. As time passed, these areas naturally overlapped, and Dan and I found ourselves working as a team. To set the record straight, Dan Hardway and I worked on the Mexico City report equally. He should not have his great efforts overlooked.

A final misperception is that I have had some kind of private copy of the report all

this time. Later, in going into some background on the creation of this report, the reader will see that this was not true.

It felt good reading it once again after such a long time but this feeling is mixed with other emotions. Many readers will now pour over each item it uncovers, perhaps still looking for that smoking gun, but I am afraid they may miss the most important observation. The report serves as a significant historical record of the role an intelligence agency plays in an investigation in which that agency is a potential suspect.

### Writing in a Secure Room

Perhaps what is needed to emphasize this insight is some background on how we got to the HSCA, the creation of a secure room and the conditions under which we wrote the report.

After the original HSCA chief counsel Sprague was forced out of his position, G. Robert Blakey was hired in his place. I was one of a team of Blakey's Cornell law students along with Dan Hardway, Leslie Wizelman and Mark Flannigan. We were brought in by Professor Blakey. I was given the responsibility for the Cuban area and Castro, in particular. Later, I teamed up with Dan Hardway on the Mexico City portion of this investigation. All this happened in June of 1977.

It wasn't until October of 1977, that Blakey had finally forged a deal with the CIA which allowed our access to their files and personnel. These agreements had strong and numerous restrictions placed on our access. In fact, it was the beginning of what I observed as a war of delays and impediments placed on us. After all, as a Select Committee formed under the House of Representatives, we had a fixed budget and a definite period of longevity. The CIA knew this. They only had to wait us out.

The first stipulation was the super secrecy oath all who would have access to CIA files and testimony had to take. I was one

among a few who had to sign this oath. The reader might wonder why an agency under the administrative branch of our government would have such power of restriction over an official investigative arm of legislative branch. Who is working for whom?

The CIA demanded and was accommo-

---

*The report serves as a significant historical record of the role an intelligence agency plays in an investigation in which that agency is a potential suspect.*

---

dated with a secure room at the HSCA offices. This windowless room had the usual table and chairs. It also contained a large safe whose combination was only known by the room's CIA security guard, Regis Blahut. (Who subsequently was involved in a security breach concerning the autopsy photos.) Within this safe was a second safe as another layer of security. This room could never be used without the CIA security guard present. All CIA documents we requested took about a week to appear in this room. No document could be taken from this room by other than the CIA personnel. This is the room in which the Mexico City report was written.

While Dan and I made investigatory trips, took testimony and reviewed documents, we always had to come back to this secure room in which nothing could ever leave. Dan and I could read the documents and take notes but only on paper stamped, numbered, dated and supplied by the CIA. We couldn't even take our notes out of the room! At the end of the day, any notes we wanted to save would go into a large yellow envelope, provided by the CIA of course,

(Cont'd. on page 7)

## The Mexico City Report...

(Cont'd. from page 6)

which would be sealed, numbered and dated. Dan and/or I would then scrawl our names or initials across the seal purportedly to ensure that no other individual was reading what we wrote.

The security room procedure became quite cumbersome when we began to officially write the report. We had to continually request from the CIA our own notes to fill in holes in the developing report. I sometimes had to sit in this room and open up fifteen envelopes, reviewing their contents prior to getting to work. Each time I opened an envelope I had to sign a document listing what I'd opened. Prior to closing up shop for the day, I had to account for every page of our past notes that I had requested to review plus every page that I had written on during the day.

Personally, I came to believe that the procedures imposed by the CIA allowed it to control the tenor of our investigation. I can't stress enough the frustration both Dan and I felt during this stage of our committee work. Our work productivity was slowed.

Looking back 15 years, it's clear that under these pressures not only was the investigation incomplete but our report was incomplete also. Dan and I had just begun to scratch the surface of the Mexico City/CIA aspects of the investigation by the time we finished writing the report. We ran out of time and the HSCA came to its foregone time limit. It is with sadness that I recall how much was lost, how many leads not followed.

It is not only the leads not followed. You can read in this report the details of our specific investigations into specific areas but you cannot experience the actual circumstances that we encountered when down in Mexico interviewing important witnesses or taking off-the-record interrogations of CIA personnel.

You cannot see the scoffing expression on the CIA technician's face when questioned about cameras not working at the times of the alleged visits of Oswald to the embassies. You cannot see the smile that came on his face when he affirmed that he

always had more than one working camera. You cannot see the sureness with which CIA personnel in Mexico told us that they knew the Cuban embassy staff believed that Oswald was not the person who had approached them.

You cannot see the increasing nervousness with which David Atlee Phillips lit up cigarettes as he was grilled on obvious lies told to the committee.

Dan Hardway and I experienced these scenes and can only tell you about them outside the report. Our fellow investigator, Gaeton Fonzi, has chronicled a few of these experiences in his book, *The Last Investigation*. There were many more. Even in its incomplete state, the report was still filled with enough sensitive and revealing information to compel the CIA to bury it from public viewing. Incomplete? Yes. Unimportant? No! In 1978, we reached a certain plateau of investigation. In 1996, the report provides material to all researchers attempting to continue the work that we began.

### Looking Back and Looking Forward

Gladness, trepidation and sadness. I feel all these when looking at our work once again but there is another emotion that comes over me as I look at this report and remember all that happened in that period of my life. It is outrage.

We had taken the oath of secrecy. We were allowed to look at the photographic product of the CIA Cuban embassy surveillance. However, the CIA refused to allow us to see the results of the photographic surveillance of the Soviet embassy in Mexico City during the periods that Oswald allegedly visited the embassy. What were they hiding? They told us at the time "methods and sources." This may have been true but I am doubtful. Can it still be true in 1996 with the end of the Cold War? Most doubtful.

Dan Hardway and I determined that the CIA had some double agents planted in the Cuban embassy. These agents could have told us much. Did they see Oswald at the embassy? Did they hear the discussions among the embassy staff after the assassination? What was said? Would it anger you as

it did myself to learn that the CIA would not permit us to interview these double agents?

Does anyone really believe the CIA's explanation that there are no photos of Oswald entering or exiting the Cuban embassy because of camera failure? Please! After one of the photographers scoffed at that claim, telling me in no uncertain terms that they had many cameras working in that operation, I can only shake my head. What is being hidden here?

When the report was just released in 1993, it was heavily deleted and thousands of our hand written notes remained classified. In 1996, we have a much less deleted version and thousands of pages of notes made by all HSCA staffers have been released. These are available both at the National Archives and the AARC. I urge researchers to study them.

It is hoped that avid researchers will view this report for what it is — a springboard to delve deeper into the mystery of Mexico City and the assassination of John F. Kennedy. It is important for me, for history and for all our collective well being that we can rely on truth in government. I hope that this is important to you too.

I was younger then. Now, as I go from page to page, I only wish that I knew then what I know now. I would have pressed more persistently. I would have been more thorough. I am resigned to asking you to do this now. Demand from our government what they have not provided us for thirty years. It is time. We are entitled to the truth.

*Ed Lopez is now an attorney in Rochester, N.Y.*

Donations to support  
the work of AARC  
are tax-deductible.

Upcoming....The Committee on Political Assassination....National Conference....Oct. 18-20 at Omni Shoreham, Wash., D.C.