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David Phillips: CIA veteran Phillips has died at age 65. I am still not going to say that he had anything to do with Oswald or the assassination (although I can't think of anything positive to say about his career). (#1988.67: Fort Worth Star-Telegram obituary, 9 Jul 88)

If they could discuss the matter, I am sure that Phillips and Maurice Bishop would argue convincingly that if a CIA man under commercial cover used the name of George Bush when dealing with the FBI, that was not his real name. (#68: McBride, Nation, 16 Jul 88, 3 pp.; #69: the FBI memo [AIB #782], 29 Nov 63, 2 pp.; #70: AP, 11 Jul; #71: CIA information on the non-VP George Bush, AP in NYT, 21 Jul) There may be more on this non-story in a later EOC.

Book news: "Mafia Kingfish" has a new subtitle: "Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy." John Davis says that after the HSCA Report singled out Marcello as a leading suspect, he decided to find out all he could about him, and to assemble the circumstantial evidence of complicity in the murder. He believes he has strengthened the HSCA's guarded case.

More for this fall: "A Time to Remember," by Stanley Shapiro, is another "what if" novel. Oswald is the protagonist of "Libra," by Don DeLillo. In nonfiction, "JFK for Beginners" will probably not be blindly positive. (Pub. Wkly, 1 Jul 88, 2 pp., #72)

And that's the way it is, Walter: "CBS... has rejected [Cronkite's] proposal to be the anchor for a prime-time special report... on the 25th anniversary of the assassination...." (NYT in SFC, 8 Jun 88, #73)

Credits: Thanks to J. Davis (#72), L. Haapanen (69), G. Hollingsworth (70), G. Mack (67), R. Ranftel (71), and G. Shaw (67).

Preliminary draft notes on work in progress:

Irregularities relating to Naval Intelligence files on Oswald:

I probably will not do much more work on this before November, but I would like to encourage other people to pursue these ideas and share their opinions and information. Please do not cite any of my allegations without checking with me so I can discuss them and verify the details.

[Drama in the Pentagon]

Every intelligence agency in Washington must have gone right to its files upon hearing of Oswald's arrest. The Office of Naval Intelligence had its special concerns, since Oswald was an ex-Marine and a returned defector to the USSR. Whatever ONI found, it was not eager to pass the file around.

When John McNaughton, the General Counsel of the Defense Department, saw one file during the night after the assassination, "he expressed a strong desire to review" three Navy documents which were referred to but "not held in the file." Although those documents now look unimportant, an unfulfilled pre-assassination CIA request for Oswald's photo was missing from the ONI file sent to the Warren Commission. Notes in the ONI file logging the early response to the assassination refer provocatively to a "supplemental file" in one instance, and to "3 files" in another. Navy personnel were even reluctant to give the records to the General heading the Defense Intelligence Agency.

[What the HSCA published]

The most striking positive result of the HSCA inquiry relating to Oswald and military intelligence was the Report's account of the destruction of an Army Intelligence file in 1973. (See my article in "The Third Decade," which includes the memo I sent to the HSCA after finding an FBI document about the actions of certain Army Intelligence agents right after the assassination.)

Less obvious was a staff report relegated to Vol. 11, not mentioned in the Report or explicitly linked to other questions about the withholding of information by military intelligence, about an apparent post-assassination

investigation by the Marine Corps.

Another intriguing aspect of the HSCA's work in this area was an omission. Peter Scott, Russ Stetler, Tink Thompson and I focused on it in Ch. 7 of our unpublished 1980 book, "Beyond Conspiracy." The HSCA Report included a "finding exculpating the Secret Service, FBI, and CIA of any involvement in the assassination. Despite the long digression on military intelligence, there is not a word to admonish the reader to presume innocence when contemplating the curious behavior of the Defense agencies. Questions and suspicions seem to be left deliberately in the reader's mind. And, off the record, at least three Committee sources have cryptically confirmed their lingering doubts in the area of military intelligence." I have received no support for our suggestion that the language deliberately failed to exculpate the military from involvement in a plot; such involvement would indeed not be the logical consequence of what the authors of the Report specifically said could not be ruled out, Oswald's affiliation with military intelligence.

The Report stated that "The Committee found this 'routine' destruction of the [Army's] Oswald file extremely troublesome, especially when viewed in light of the Department of Defense's failure to make this file available to the Warren Commission." But the HSCA Report failed to clarify that more was involved: as detailed below, the DoD responded to a direct WC request by falsely stating that all DoD records had been provided.

The Report also appeared to be seriously confused about the ONI file on Oswald. The Army file was referred to as "Oswald's military intelligence file," as if it were the only one. This led to a bizarre footnote in the following section, which provided a rather obvious explanation for one aspect of the handling of Oswald's photo within ONI - certain notations (e.g., "CIA 77978") which are hardly the most interesting points in the ONI file. The footnote said that "As noted, the military file on Oswald, presumably including the ONI photograph, was destroyed by the Department of Defense." The Report failed to explain how the HSCA then knew of the notations on the photo.

The obvious answer is that the ONI file was of course not the destroyed Army file, and had been provided to the WC. (It has long been a special interest of mine. In 1967, the National Archives sent me 325 pages from the ONI file; some pages were still withheld in full.)

In essence, because of the interesting HSCA material about the Army file, and the apparently low level of sophistication and care applied to Navy-related matters in the Report, I failed to refocus critically on the ONI file.

Recent discussions with another researcher forced me to do so, and to consider another answer. Why was I sure, he challenged me, that HSCA did not really mean to say that the Defense Department had destroyed records other than the one Army file discussed in detail?

I was well aware of several minor errors in the Report, and years ago, a staff member had cautioned me against over-analyzing some footnotes which I found misleading. On the other hand, the HSCA had not published everything it found, for various reasons. What I had heard about DoD-HSCA relations gave me no confidence that the DoD would have cooperated if there was something more to hide. So the idea of a frustrated author of the Report deliberately making the strongest possible case against the DoD had a certain appeal.

There seemed to be another logical jump in the Report which I had not taken seriously. The brief section on the Oswald photo in the ONI file was predicated on the apparently trivial suggestion that the markings "raised the possibility that Oswald had been in some way associated with the CIA." However, that section concluded with the apparently unrelated assertion that the "destruction of the military file on Oswald prevented the Committee from resolving the question of Oswald's possible affiliation with military intelligence." Similarly, the section on the Army file reached the same conclusion, although this "possible affiliation" was hardly the main point raised by the actions of Army intelligence, and was not analyzed elsewhere in

that section. Could someone have really meant that "the question of Oswald's possible affiliation with military intelligence" could not be resolved for various significant reasons, beyond the ones cited?

One HSCA staff source firmly disabused me of some of these notions. The language was just careless, he suggested. If they had found something significant along those lines, he felt it would have been leaked.

The HSCA's unpublished work will stay locked up for years, unless Congress unexpectedly takes action, or the knowledgeable staffers decide to talk. But some relevant DoD documents are available, and others are in principle subject to FOIA actions.

The issues raised by the ONI file are significant, whether or not the HSCA looked at them. The Army file, while intriguing and unsatisfactorily explained, might turn out to be peripheral to Oswald's career and to the investigation of the assassination. However, the Navy file is certainly central to the questions of who Oswald was, and how material relevant to the assassination investigation was not freely shared, even within the government.

[Were the files given to the Warren Commission sanitized?]

The HSCA Report's discussion of the photo in the ONI file omitted some provocative information. It noted that "Because of the absence of documentation, no explanation could be given for how or when the [ONI] received this particular photo of Oswald" from the Marine Corps. More than just such documentation was absent.

The HSCA said that its "review of CIA cable traffic confirmed that cable No. 77978, dated October 24, 1963, was in fact a request for two copies" of the Navy's most recent Oswald photo. The reference to a "review" is peculiar. First, the text of the CIA cable was released in 1972, and readily available. Also, this language seems to hint at the fact, known to the HSCA, that this cable to the Department of the Navy was not in this ONI file.

I first learned that it was not there in 1975, from a FOIA request for all DoD copies of the cable. I was told that none was in the ONI file, and that the Marines also found none. (The Archives told me earlier that it was not in the withheld portion of the WC's version of the ONI file.)

In a 1978 memo for the Navy's Office of General Counsel, the Naval Investigative Service (NIS, basically the successor to ONI) said that "it is not known why a copy of [that cable] was not contained" in the ONI file on Oswald. (NIS got a copy from the CIA and noted that it explained the notation of interest to the HSCA on the photo.)

The HSCA failed to make an issue of the absence of this document. As far as I know, they did not press the DoD on the absence of any related documents.

In 1975, I dismissed the problem as probably routine misfiling, but I had no good reason to do so. Now we can justifiably wonder whether the document was deliberately removed from the file.

At first glance, there is no obvious reason to suppress this cable. The more sensitive CIA message of October 10, reporting a misdescribed Oswald's visit to the Soviet Embassy, was in the file (and released in 1973). But the slow ONI response - the photo was not provided before the assassination - could have been considered embarrassing. Could the cable have been removed at the request of the CIA? Might it have originally been forwarded to some unit within ONI which had a special Oswald file? More likely, were there problematic notations which could not immediately be deleted?

In HSCA-like language, I can not at this point exclude the possibility that the CIA request generated paperwork which was deemed unreleaseable. Would someone at ONI have called the CIA? Might they have shared information about either agency's interest in Oswald which the WC did not need to know? Did someone simply point out that the newspaper photos of Oswald at the time of his defection, which both agencies in fact had, were more recent, and presumably more useful, than the Marine Corps induction photo?

If such documents were removed, it could have been shortly before the

file was given to the WC in March 1964. From what we know, however, there was no clear reason to take that risk. The CIA message was presumably available to the WC from the CIA, and could have prompted a WC inquiry. But perhaps material was removed right after the assassination, when the context was quite different - Oswald was a live suspect who might start talking about his Marine career. He might try to bring it up at his trial, to argue (honestly or not) that he was not a Communist traitor because, as he wrote from Russia to John Connally in 1962, "I have and always had the full sanction of the U.S. Embassy... and hence the U.S. government."

We can turn with a suspicious eye to what we know of the handling of the file right after the assassination. (Ironically, this comes from documents in the file given to the WC, which suggests a non-sinister interpretation.) Making the file available outside ONI was evidently a touchy problem.

[The sensitivity of ONI records, November 22-23, 1963]

Lt. JG Patrick D. Molinari recorded for the file what he knew of events at USNAVCINTSUPPCEN (Naval Intelligence Support Center?) on the evening of November 22. The (Marine?) service record and the "jacket" were not immediately available, and were to be provided. At 5 p.m., "Mr. Pascal delivered supplemental file to Intelligence Plot." At 7 p.m., "ONI investigative file received at Center and reviewed by Capt Johnson. Capt Jackson and Adm. Taylor informed."

Donald R. Paschal was a civilian assigned to OP-921E2, the Programs Section of the Counterintelligence branch, which had "primary responsibility for monitoring the file within ONI" before the assassination. Robert Jackson was then the Assistant DNI (Director of Naval Intelligence), and Jack Johnson was his Executive Officer. Vice Admiral Rufus Taylor was DNI at the time.

Are the "investigative file" and the "supplemental file" the same thing? If not, have both been released? Oswald's "case history file" was still charged out to RADM Taylor in July 1964. Most provocatively, an undated and unsigned note says "O900 - briefed Taylor on 3 files."

Within hours, interest in the ONI records spread. In some regards, ONI seems to have been candid: Johnson called the FBI in Dallas with the gist of a letter from Oswald to Connally, and Molinari was authorized to "prepare copies of the files" for possible use by the FBI and the Secret Service. On the 23rd, a copy of the file went to the Secret Service, to be restricted to those requiring official access, and returned on DNI "upon completion of Secret Service review."

On the other hand, ONI may have been unwilling to circulate the entire file, even within the Defense Department: "Meanwhile, ONI duty officer had been informed of a request being prepared from General Carroll of DIA to see the file on Oswald. Admiral Taylor and Capt Jackson advised of this request by Capt Johnson at approximately 2000. Admiral Taylor's instructions were to prepare a file for him to be passed to General Carroll. This file is to be carried to Admiral Taylor's office by special agent [M. Sherman] Bliss who will then carry the file to General Carroll who will peruse the file and return it to the special agent."

In other words, the General who headed DIA could look at but not keep the file. DIA was a new unit in the Pentagon, set up in 1961 by Robert McNamara to produce strategic intelligence and, to some degree, coordinate and oversee the individual service intelligence agencies. So, General Carroll could have been considered an outsider who would cause trouble if he discovered something irregular in the ONI file on Oswald.

Taylor's instructions were to "prepare a file" - not, it seems, to "prepare copies" or "make a copy." Is this just another odd choice of words, as when Cmdr. Humes was "instructed" that a piece of bone brought into the autopsy room had been "removed" from JFK's head (rather than being told it had been blown off)?

Another memo (unsigned and handwritten) noted discussions about Carroll's

request. "6. Called IDO. Stated Gen Carroll DIA wants to borrow file. 7. Called Op-92 [ONI]. Cited ltr 1-30-61 [Oswald to Connally]. He was cautious about passing file to DIA.... 8. Called 921 [Security Division, including Counterintelligence]. He wants... b. Prepare a copy of entire file. 9. IDO called. 92 told him to prepare file for review by him & for agent to take file for DIA to read & for agent to return. 10. 921 above agreed that a copy of file can go to DIA, via agents delivery first to 92 & then DIA." Should this make us wonder whether there was funny business afoot?

"At approximately 2200 I [Molinari] received a call from the Intelligence Duty Officer [unnamed here] that I was to release no files to anyone except by his order" - except possibly the SS, FBI, and other "authorized activities."

All this may have delayed Gen. Carroll's access to the file. SA Bliss hand-carried the file to Carroll's office at 8:30 on the morning of the 23rd, where it was reviewed for about an hour "by the Director, and only by the Director," in Bliss' presence.

By then, the file had circulated a bit: "In response to specific query,... Carroll was advised that Mr. McNaughton of the Office of General Counsel (OGC) had previously had access to subject file." (It was OGC which initially failed to deliver the ONI file to the WC.)

There had been action at another Naval office ("Intelligence Plot") late into the night of the 22nd. Capt. Elmo Zumwalt reviewed the file there and "transported" it to the office of Fred Dutton of the State Department. It was reviewed there "for prosecutive purposes" by several people from State, the Deputy Undersecretary for Defense (Adam Yarmolinsky), and McNaughton. This group seems to have included several Kennedy-loyalist civilians. (Yarmolinsky was seen by some as JFK's man in the DoD, and was considered left-leaning in certain circles; five years later Dutton was an aide to RFK.)

"Mr. McNaughton expressed a strong desire to review the following [three] documents [referred to but] not held in the file." Two were from DIO-9ND, the Navy's Ninth Naval District Intelligence Office in Chicago. McNaughton was not satisfied by a general statement that the DIO-9ND file contained only letters of transmittal. (I wouldn't have been, either. I got these documents under FOIA; they look innocent enough, but I would miss any subtleties.) Did McNaughton suspect that something of substance was being kept from him?

[Warren Commission requests for military records]

In 1980, I wrote incorrectly that the ONI file was not forwarded in response to the WC's first request, for all DoD records on Oswald. In fact, that first request was not general (like the one made to many minor agencies), but carefully limited (like the request to the FBI). In a letter drafted by Howard Willens of the Justice Department, Warren asked for "the military records" of Oswald and Ruby, "as well as any other information relating to these principals which you believe may be relevant to our investigation." I now suspect that Willens knew that there were intelligence files which would not be routinely provided, so it would be best not to ask for them routinely. The military service record was provided on January 10; Sam Stern soon noticed references to the Navy Discharge Review Board's proceedings relating to Oswald, and asked for them. In February, noting information about an ONI investigation, the Commission asked for anything on Oswald in ONI files. The WC staff had apparently tired of the game, and included a comprehensive request - "any additional information on Mr. Oswald in the files of any other department, agency, office, or organization, under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense."

The reaction to this letter indicates that the OGC did not have the ONI file at that time. On February 25, OGC told DNI about the WC's request. McNaughton's assistant, Frank Bartimo, noted that "Oswald's Marine Corps personnel file, which is presently in the custody of this office, contains two references to documents that appear to be covered by Mr. Rankin's request" - two of the three cites noted earlier by McNaughton. Nothing in this memo

indicates that Bartimo knew there was a substantial ONI file on Oswald. Bartimo's office got it and sent it to the WC with the dismissive description, provided by ONI, that it consisted mostly of reports from other agencies.

On March 9, four days after this file was received, Stern drafted a letter (sent two days later) noting that the ONI file contained documents from the Air Force's Office of Special Investigations "and from intelligence activities of the Department of the Army. The Commission wishes to be certain that it has reviewed all materials concerning... Oswald in any files under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense."

This request should have produced quite a reaction - among people throughout DoD, and on paper. The HSCA had nothing to say. All I have is a terse response dated March 16 from Bartimo, asserting that "all known materials concerning... Oswald under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense have been furnished to the Commission." (This letter could not be found for me in the Archives; I got a copy from the DoD in 1970. Some information below the signature may have been deleted - perhaps a note.)

The WC got Oswald's pay records months later, which put them on notice that the DoD letter was untrue - but they evidently never learned of Col. Jones' Army Intelligence file. Is there any way that the Army file could be missed innocently after that kind of request from the WC?

[How many military files were there?]

What other files might not have been provided? As with the FBI, the WC failed to deal with the issue of Navy field office files. The FBI's implausible and (in this context) misleading assertion that everything of substance in the field office files was sent to Headquarters was not challenged.

In fact, based on a phone request from FBI HQ on November 26, New Orleans sent 17 serials from its Oswald file which were apparently not in HQ's possession. The earliest concerned a review by SA John Quigley of records held by ONI's 8th Naval District office in Algiers, Louisiana, on April 18, 1961. The Oswald file there included some State Department telegrams, four newspaper clippings, records relating to his discharge, and more. Quigley noted that much of it had come from the 9th Naval District (Chicago).

The 1961 FBI investigation of Oswald was in fact prompted by a note from ONI-8ND (N.O.) to the FBI in Dallas, advising that Oswald had received a undesirable discharge. This ONI-8ND to FBI-field-office channel (bypassing both HQ's) looks like a routine quirk in the communications chain, but possibly more was said in the field (or at HQ) either to encourage or discourage the investigation.

The file Quigley examined looks routine, but it might not have stayed that way, especially after Oswald's return to New Orleans. For example, did Oswald's leaflet distribution at the USS Wasp really escape the attention of Naval Intelligence? After the Harbor Police told Oswald to go away, would the local ONI office have had no reason to be interested?

After Oswald's defection, the Naval Attache (ALUSNA) in Moscow sent a cable to ONI. Copies of early cables from ONI went to the Attaches in Bonn and Helsinki, and to apparent ONI components identified as 06, 60, 61, 63 and 09. Two October CIA memos on Oswald in Mexico City went to the Naval Attache there. Should we just assume that his office played no active role?

The 10/10/63 CIA message in the ONI file bears a handwritten notation which appears to be "passed to G2 - USMC." (G2 generally refers to an intelligence branch.) How much intelligence work did the Marines do, independent of ONI? In 1975, NIS followed up this notation when looking for the missing message of 10/23/63, "but their search results were also negative."

In any event, the ONI field office files as such never went to the WC - or to the HSCA, as far as I know.

[Oswald's clearance and the reaction to his defection]

The question of field office files becomes particularly relevant in connection with the clearance issue. The WC pursued testimony that Oswald had

at least Secret clearance. In conjunction with the unpublished WC inquiry, the USMC response can fairly be read as more than the simple denial the WC chose to make of it. Essentially, the Marines said that if Oswald was really doing secret work, he probably had a secret clearance.

The HSCA found only Confidential clearances for four fellow Marines. But the Report does not mention what these Marines said about their clearances. A footnote pointed out that Oswald's superior, John Donovan, had a Secret clearance, but not whether or in which file his claim was confirmed. The WC, at least, seems not to have asked where records of a Secret clearance should be. Possibly "Confidential" was treated differently, administratively, from a higher clearance - with different requirements for investigation, approval, and record-keeping.

Back in 1959, ONI (through CNO) falsely told the Moscow attache that there was "no record of clearance at HQ, Marine Corps but possibility exists he may have had access to confidential info." One possibility is that Oswald had a higher clearance which could not be mentioned, and someone used a simple false version, rather than admitting the Confidential clearance.

In passing, the HSCA mentioned a name in connection with the clearance issue which was unfamiliar to me - Lt. Col. Bill Brewer of the Intelligence Division of Marine Corps Headquarters. According to an unpublished "outside contact report" - which could be a staffer's imperfect notes on a phone call - "Brewer had been in charge of compiling the Oswald military file [sic, again] for the use of the Warren Commission." The first half of the next sentence is at best debatable, and the provocative second half is too cryptic to decipher: "Brewer stated that the Warren Commission had been interested primarily in records concerning Oswald's security classification in the military and that his records check had only included local records within the individual commands where Oswald had served and did not include records that were classified secret or top secret." Notes

The clearance question came to the attention of the FBI within a week. On November 26, 1963, the Los Angeles office interviewed Col. W. L. Abblett, the Commanding Officer of MACS, Santa Ana. He said that the roster of Marines there at the same time as Oswald would be at USMC HQ, and "he additionally advised file reflecting security clearance investigation concerning Oswald maintained at Headquarters Eleventh Naval District, San Diego." (Did Abblett mean "is" or "would be" maintained?) On the 28th, FBI HQ instructed the San Diego office to "review security clearance file for Oswald and report."

San Diego's response is presumably in the released FBI files, but I know of no easy way to find it. (Could someone check the indices for Abblett?) There is no mention of this review or its results in the synopses of the five reports from San Diego which went to the WC as CD's over the next three weeks.

Critics raised questions about the apparent absence - judging from the Warren Report - of a post-defection investigation of Oswald. This question was also raised seriously inside the FBI, by T. N. Goble. In a memo of April 2, 1964, Goble noted that three fellow Marines had said that they had been interviewed about Oswald. Goble noted that no such statements or interview reports had been located in USMC or ONI files, and instructed the St. Louis office to look in the personnel files.

In a postscript for the HQ file, Goble did not suggest any doubt that such interviews had taken place. Their absence from USMC and ONI files "indicates that perhaps they have been destroyed." This is strong language, implying (intentionally or not) post-assassination destruction. He did not say "perhaps they were routinely destroyed before the assassination." Goble presumably understood that anything about an intelligence matter as sensitive as a defection by an ex-Marine would not be routinely destroyed within five years, if at all. Again, there should be more on this in released FBI files.

[Possible revelations in the suppressed material]

Irregularities relating to the clearance and the damage assessment, if

significant, must make sense as part of some larger scenario. At this point, I have no favorite among a wide range of possibilities.

Why, hypothetically, might something be removed from the Oswald files right after the assassination? In a trial, Oswald's lawyer could be expected to muddy the waters by dredging up irrelevant but embarrassing information. Within a few days, Oswald was dead and his files could be considered ancient history, not too important to clean up. The Warren Commission's investigation did not come along until later.

Why should we assume that apparently irrelevant secrets would be given to the WC upon request? Inter-agency deception was not unheard of - the CIA apparently misled the FBI on November 22 by saying that their Oswald file contained only material from FBI and State. (FBI and CIA records should be checked for accounts of post-assassination liaison with ONI.)

Since I am speculating, I will simply touch on some possible reasons for sanitizing the files. This section deserves much more detail, but even putting together the published analyses would take much time. Donovan, for example, is mentioned in at least ten books, from Anson's to Weisberg's.

ONI people may have suspected that Oswald had ties with someone else, such as the CIA. (The HSCA Report mentioned the possibility of a CIA affiliation in connection with the photo in the ONI file.) But it seems less unlikely that there were ties with ONI itself.

It has often been suggested that Oswald's connection with the military, before and through his defection, was not what it seemed to be. Questions have been raised about the possibility of intelligence assignments in Japan (including contacts with Japanese nationals). Perhaps Oswald was initially approached by the KGB there, and turned around by ONI.

One incident caught the eye of Ray Rocca, Angleton's CIA associate, and was emphasized in his analysis. Fellow Marine Nelson Delgado testified about a mysterious visitor who came to see Oswald in California after Oswald had been in correspondence with the Cuban Consulate in Los Angeles. Rocca seemed to think this probably was a Cuban DGI contact. Is it not more likely that the man - who presumably passed base scrutiny - was from U.S. intelligence?

Some foreign intelligence responsibilities were apparently shifted from the military to the CIA in the late 1950's. Harry Rositzke of the CIA wrote that "For almost fifteen years after World War II the CIA's intelligence targets were dictated almost exclusively by the Department of Defense." This has led to the suggestion that Oswald was the last fake Navy defector to the USSR. In this case, the files could have been cooked up even before the assassination, to keep the CIA (or DIA, or Otto Otepka) from getting upset.

Richard Helms testified to the HSCA, more than once, that the CIA presumably didn't debrief Oswald on his return from Russia because that was thought to be a Navy responsibility. Was he trying to suggest (accurately or not) that Oswald had been planted in Russia by the Navy?

The NIS told the HSCA that "It has been standard operating procedures [sic] for this Service to interview returning defectors when of interest to and under the jurisdiction [whatever that means] of this Service."

J. Lee Rankin's early reference to Oswald studying Russian at the Monterey Language School remains unexplained. If he had any basis for it, it could be related to the incompleteness of the initial routine WC request.

The HSCA's "defector study" concluded that the failure to debrief a returnee was not unique, but said nothing publicly about fake defectors or the normal role of the military in debriefings, as suggested by Helms' testimony.

Very hypothetically, the file could have been sanitized innocently if it contained anything from the CIA's HT/LINGUAL mail intercept program. That was extremely sensitive in 1963, and surely the CIA would have insisted that any such letters be deleted before the ONI file went to the Warren Commission.

Ed Epstein claimed that the CIA intercepted a letter from Oswald (contrary to what the CIA told the Abzug Committee, that only one innocuous



letter, to Oswald, was copied). Can we dismiss Epstein's account as a typical combination of spookiness and sloppiness on his part (or perhaps Angleton's)? It is hard to see why either one would have invented such a detail. Is it possible that someone intercepted this letter, shared it with Angleton, and then removed it from the file in 1963?

Oswald's first paragraph certainly would have raised a red flag to intelligence agencies, since Oswald flatly said that he wanted the U.S. government "overthrown." Although I would not call the letter threatening, he said "in the event of war I would kill any American who put on a uniform in defense of the American government."

A second category of "unreleaseable" records might relate to post-return surveillance of Oswald. This sounds unlikely, in the absence of evidence of ONI domestic surveillance as early as 1963. I am not familiar enough with the record on the allegedly improper DoD domestic activities whose exposure led to the purging of DoD files on non-DoD people in the 1970's.

Would ONI simply have let the FBI keep an eye on a returned defector? Presumably, if Oswald had been sent back by the Russians, it could have been to dig up more information related to the Marine Corps.

An article on "Spies in Dallas?" in a Dallas paper in summer 1963 lends support to speculation about active ONI interest, as it does to many ideas about a nexus of DPD, federal, and private intelligence outfits in Oswald's Dallas milieu. Capt. Pat Gannaway of the DPD (and Army Intelligence Reserve) described the work against subversion and espionage of his Special Services Bureau, requiring "the closest cooperation" with other agencies, including the FBI, "military intelligence teams from the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and other federal agencies.... Dallas police have been highly successful in recent years in penetrating so-called subversive or radical groups...."

Certainly there was some interest by military intelligence in anti-Castro groups - for example, the Army had an "operational interest" in Antonio Veciana of Alpha 66. Congressional committees were very concerned about the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and the CIA planned a counter-propaganda operation against it in 1963. Apparently the HSCA asked the Navy about its coverage of anti-Castro groups, especially in Miami and New Orleans.

A "knowledgeable individual" said that "any necessary contacts or utilization of anti-Castro Cubans" in those two cities had to be "coordinated through" the FBI or CIA. That does not establish that ONI was inactive in Cuban matters.

A third major concern for any intelligence agency would be a failure to respond to Oswald's actions after his return. The most natural reaction would be, should we have paid more attention to Oswald, knowing what we knew? Such questions certainly concerned the Secret Service, FBI, and Dallas Police.

One letter in the ONI file did get some attention as evidence of Oswald's state of mind. Even the FBI Summary Report referred to Oswald's letter to Connally dated January 30, 1961 (1962 intended), and given to the FBI by the Navy on November 22. The strongest language is Oswald's statement that he will "employ all means to right this gross mistake or injustice," which seems threatening only with hindsight. ONI seems to have circulated this letter to the FBI and Secret Service immediately after the assassination, which hardly suggests a coverup of knowledge of Oswald's potential for violence.

Could there have been another letter from Oswald? Andy Kerr, special counsel to Navy Secretaries Connally and Korth, wrote about forwarding a letter from Oswald to the USMC before Connally resigned (although his account otherwise fits the 1962 letter). He says he studied the file, wrote a memo, and talked with Connally about Oswald "for half an hour or so." Related material - a subsequent letter, or an evaluation of Oswald as dangerous which was not passed to the FBI - could have been purged as evidence of not enough alertness, as the FBI got rid of the note to Hosty.

[Post-assassination military investigation]

One account of a Marine investigation in Japan and Dallas more or less

fell into the HSCA's lap. The staff confirmed the existence of some allegedly relevant flights, but did not uncover the results of the investigation. Either something was very special about Oswald's stay in Japan, or - more likely - this was part of a bigger investigation. Blakey himself was the first co-author of the staff report, indicating more than routine interest.

The surviving ONI file shows some interest in allegations with clear Navy angles. For example, on November 22, ONI interviewed a patient at a Naval Hospital who had a typical story of "bar talk" in New Orleans about JFK's impending death. ONI in Dallas received, and passed on to the FBI, a story about Ruby and Oswald visiting an electronics shop. This "Oswald" turned out to be Larry Crafard, but on November 27 the story was considered important enough to be passed on by Adm. Taylor's office to an Adm. McDonald. Cross-reference sheets dated 1964 refer to clippings on Mark Lane, FBI reports on the Paines and others, and so on.

Would ONI have left the investigation of Oswald's military service to the CIA, FBI, and WC, especially if there were serious uncertainties? Was ONI completely uninterested in what happened at Bethesda Naval Hospital?

The WC staff talked with ONI agents who were looking into the shooting death of fellow Marine Martin Schrand; there might have been more liaison.

An unlikely possibility is that the CIA used military contacts to investigate domestic aspects of the case, being unwilling to rely on the FBI. (The National Photographic Interpretation Center did study the Zapruder film; was that done just for the CIA?)

[The scope of the HSCA's inquiry]

In 1981, the NIS (for itself, not for all of DoD) provided Mark Allen with 50 HSCA-related pages; no pages were withheld in full. These mostly relate to name checks requested by the HSCA; the names are almost all deleted. The HSCA was told a bit about ONI's overall organization, but - it seems - not about what information would have been dealt with in which offices.

It is not clear how the HSCA came across Bill Brewer. Did they check post-assassination G2-USMC records as carefully as they should have?

The HSCA did get a negative record check from NIS on Carlos Marcello's Town & Country Motel.

[Getting the rest of the story]

Without backup from a news organization, a FOIA request is not likely to be very productive. NIS told the HSCA they had provided everything, so if there is any more, they are certainly not going to just give it to me. Any documents pulled from the files in 1963 are probably long gone.

The HSCA did get some names, and people might still remember things. (The staff report on the military investigation in Japan mentioned the towns in which a couple of witnesses lived - practically an invitation to follow up?) The officers responsible for the Oswald file at various times were Lt. JG George M. Frederickson, Lt. JG Peter C. LeSourd, and Ensign John A. Hazelton. Also, NIS provided the names and latest addresses of eight ONI people (three civilians, a commander, three captains, and a vice admiral) who "would have become connected with and knowledgeable about the file" because of their positions at the time of the assassination or earlier. The addresses are withheld, but getting them should not be a big problem.

Adm. Rufus Taylor, the head of ONI, died in 1978. William Abbott, the top civilian in ONI counterintelligence, was (like Taylor) involved in the Shadrin case, but would not talk with Henry Hurt about it.

The HSCA really should have talked to most of these ONI people. Were they perhaps under specific orders not to talk about the JFK case, as Naval personnel at the autopsy were until the HSCA pressed the issue?

The ONI file includes the names of some lower-ranking people who were at or near centers of activity right after the assassination. Judging from the productivity of some interviews with "minor" witnesses - e.g., at Bethesda - there may be a substantial chance of digging up a newsworthy story.