

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES (MARK ALLEN)

DATE: July 15, 1978

SUBJECT: Telephone conversation with Washington Post reporter
Ron Kessler

On July 12, 1978 at 5:00PM I telephoned Ron Kessler at the Washington Post concerning his 11/26/76 WP story about a purported bid by Oswald to offer information to the Russians in Mexico City in exchange for a trip to the Soviet Union.

I first asked Kessler if the intercepted call in question was the 9/28 phone call from the Cuban to the Russian Embassy. After some hesitating Kessler decided that it was. I then noted that Sylvia Duran put Oswald on the line for this call and asked Kessler if Duran remembered the part about Oswald wanting to make a deal. Kessler stated Duran remembered the call but not that portion of it.

I next asked about Kessler's statement in his article that Warren Commission staff members were shown transcripts of the intercepted conversations. Kessler said that the WC staff had been given the opportunity to look at the transcripts but that they had not been provided a copy. Asked if there was a copy of the transcripts in the National Archives, Kessler replied "definitely not".

Kessler stated that it is the CIA's contention that the tapes were destroyed prior to the assassination and that this was confirmed not only by Phillips but by several other "highly reliable" sources. Kessler said he did not know whether to believe this explanation or not.

I asked him if he were familiar with an 11/23 FBI report mentioning a tape recording that FBI agents in Dallas listened to shortly

after the assassination. Kessler said that he was and in fact had checked into it and concluded that the reference to the tape in the report was simply a mistake (!) Kessler said the reference to the tape in the 11/23 report came from an earlier Shanklin-Hoover cable according to a source of his, and that he called Shanklin who told him that the recording was all a mistake. Kessler then called James Hosty, who had no recollection of the tape. Kessler said he then looked at some available CIA documents and saw many references to the photos but none to a tape. He gave no other reasons for concluding the reference to the tape was a mistake. Kessler said he did not talk to Bookhout.

I mentioned to Kessler that his story caused a big fuss at first but seemed to have died out. He agreed, but stuck by his story and all material elements in it. I read to him a portion of a letter from David Phillips to Brian Bugge where Phillips attempted to distance himself from Kessler's story. Kessler termed Phillips' denials "carefully worded" and claimed it "misrepresented what I attributed to him." Asked if Phillips ever called to claim he was misquoted, Kessler replied, "never."