

CIA Discredits Defector's Statements About Oswald

BY JACK NELSON
Times Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON—The CIA has released previously secret documents discrediting some of a Soviet defector's statements that the Warren Commission relied on in concluding that Lee Harvey Oswald had not been acting as a Soviet agent when he assassinated President Kennedy.

The documents raise serious questions about several statements by Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko, former KGB officer, who assured the CIA and the FBI that Oswald had never acted as an agent for the Soviet secret police agency.

A CIA memo says Nosenko's ignorance of Oswald's communications with the Soviet Embassy in Washington "discredits his claim to complete knowledge of all aspects of the KGB relationship with Oswald."

In addition, the memo questions

Nosenko's statements that he did not know whom Oswald had contacted at the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City two months before the assassination. The memo says the CIA learned the contact was "a KGB officer under consular cover."

The documents were made available to The Times Monday after having been declassified and released earlier to David W. Belin, who had been a counsel to the Warren Commission. Belin has called for reopening of the assassination investigation, although he has expressed confidence that a new inquiry would substantiate the Warren Commission's conclusion: that there was no conspiracy and that that Oswald was the lone gunman who killed Kennedy and Dallas police officer J. D. Tippitt.

Please Turn to Page 8, Col. 2

CIA'S DOUBTS ABOUT DEFECTOR

Continued from First Page
on Nov. 22, 1963.

In calling for the new investigation, Belin criticized the CIA and the FBI for withholding from the Warren Commission evidence of CIA plots to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. Some of the CIA documents released to Belin deal with a Cuban defector who told the CIA in 1964 that Oswald might have been in contact with Cuban intelligence agents seven weeks before he killed Kennedy.

One of the theories being investigated by a Senate subcommittee headed by Sen. Richard S. Schweiker (R-Pa.) is whether Kennedy might have been killed as a result of a Communist plot organized in Cuba or the Soviet Union. There have been suggestions that the assassination might have been planned by Cubans who had learned of the plots to assassinate Castro.

The Warren Commission relied on statements to the FBI by Nosenko, who never testified before the commission.

The importance the commission attached to Nosenko's statements about Oswald's relationship with the KGB is reflected in an internal commission memo dated June 24, 1964:

"Most of what Nosenko told the FBI confirms what we already knew from other sources and most of it does not involve important facts, with one extremely significant exception.

"This exception is Nosenko's statement that Lee Harvey Oswald was never trained or used as an agent of the Soviet Union for any purpose and that no contact with him was made, attempted or contemplated after he left the Soviet Union and returned to the United States.

"Nosenko's opinion on these points is especially valuable because, according to his testimony at least, his position with the KGB was such that had there been any subversive relationship between the Soviet Union and Oswald, he would have known about it."

Nosenko defected on Feb. 4, 1964, 10 weeks after the Kennedy assassination, when attending a disarmament conference in Switzerland. He quickly was granted asylum in the United States and was interrogated intensively by the FBI and the CIA.

Although some CIA officials questioned whether Nosenko was a bona fide defector or a double agent, their suspicions were never relayed to the Warren Commission.

Nosenko, who is living in the United States under an assumed name, still is regarded as suspect by some U.S. intelligence sources.

Nosenko said that, when he defected, he had been a lieutenant colonel and deputy chief of the tourist department of a KGB directorate concerned with internal security.

He said he was familiar with Oswald's visit to the Soviet Union, had supervised the handling of his KGB file and had reviewed the file on orders of superiors immediately after the assassination to be sure that Oswald had no connection with the KGB.

Nosenko assured American intelligence agencies that he was completely familiar with KGB surveillance of Oswald when he lived in the Soviet Union from 1959 to June, 1962, and that the KGB considered Oswald to be "abnormal" and never considered using him as an agent.

After Oswald returned to the United States, Nosenko said, KGB headquarters in Moscow received no further word of him until he appeared at the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in September, 1963, and requested a visa to reenter the Soviet Union.

A CIA memo notes that Nosenko said he did not know whom Oswald had contacted at the embassy "and he knew of no contacts between Oswald and Cubans or Representatives of the Cuban government there or elsewhere."

This official CIA comment has included at the bottom of the memo page:

"Independent sources, however, reported on visits by Oswald to the Cuban as well as Soviet embassies in Mexico City between 29 September and 3 October 1963 and on his (apparently overt) contact with a KGB officer under consular cover at the Soviet Embassy.

"Nosenko originally said he knew nothing of any such contact. In October, 1966, he revised this to say that Oswald did not have contact with the

KGB in Mexico City.

"Nosenko explained that he had been sitting in the office of Seventh Department chief, K. N. Dubas, when a cable arrived at Moscow headquarters from the KGB legal residency in Mexico. The cable, which Nosenko said he did not personally see, reported that Oswald had visited the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City requesting permission to return to the U.S.S.R. and that the cable specified that Oswald had dealt with Soviet Foreign Ministry personnel only."

In pointing out inconsistencies in Nosenko's statements about reviewing Oswald's KGB file, the CIA memo notes that at one time he said he had "only skimmed the file" and another time he said he had it in his possession for 20 minutes.

The CIA, which continued to question Nosenko periodically over the next few years, noted that in October, 1966, "He again said that he read the file and that while doing so he saw a picture of Oswald for the first time. Nosenko added that he never met Oswald personally."

An assertion by Nosenko that the KGB's First Chief Directorate first learned of Oswald when he applied for a reentry visit in Mexico City "is probably incorrect," the CIA memo said.

"The consular file turned over to the U.S. Government by the Soviet Embassy in Washington after the assassination indicated that the KGB First Chief Directorate would have known of Oswald as early as February, 1963, if not earlier. That file contained Marina Oswald's (Oswald's Russian-born wife) letter of February, 1963, and a letter of July, 1963, from Oswald, both of which indicated that Oswald had either requested permission to return to the Soviet Union."

Without regard to possible earlier correspondence, the CIA concluded: "Oswald's request for a Soviet visa addressed to the embassy in Washington in July, 1963, would require the Washington residency to report the matter to Moscow, just as Nosenko described the Mexico City residency later did."

Nosenko's ignorance of such communications "discredits his claim to complete knowledge of all aspects of the KGB relationship with Oswald," the CIA memo said.