

# CIA claims labeled false by instructor

By DAN WATSON

A local Russian language instructor, tied to the probe of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and local intelligence sources have labeled claims by a Soviet newspaper that the instructor is a Central Intelligence Agency spy as "ridiculous."

A Soviet newspaper, Nedelya, claimed Saturday Southern Methodist University instructor Ilya Mamantov attempted to obtain "far from harmless" information while working in Russia with American and Russian space scientists.

The newspaper's full-page article noted, "There is no doubt about Mamantov's association with the CIA."

The article also alleged Mamantov, 63, had worked with the White Guard, the anti-Communist government overthrown there in 1917.

"I was only years old then," Mamantov said.

"The whole thing is ridiculous. It's stupid," from said during a telephone interview his Richardson home Saturday night. "I was never a CIA (agent). I don't know who is CIA, and I'm not now a CIA."

Mamantov said he was hired by the U.S. Department of State as an interpreter in the joint Soviet-American space program and visited the Soviet Union three times in 1975. He was present in Moscow's control center acting as an interpreter when the Soviet and American astronauts met in space in July, 1975.

Ha has also taken SMU study groups to Russia 11 times, returning from the last trip June 20.

A consulting geologist, Mamantov was scheduled to return to the Soviet Union in October to assist in an oil exhibition.

Mamantov said someone, presumably a KGB (Russian counterpart to the CIA) agent had followed him constantly and photographed him during his visits in January, 1976, and January, 1977.

He said he did not know why.

"Everywhere I went, I was followed and photographed by a woman," Mamantov said.

"I don't know anything about computers. I've never had high math, and I'm way behind in modern technology."

A local source familiar with counter intelligence work and Mamantov said Saturday that accusing Mamantov of

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working for the CIA was "ridiculous and unbelievable" for several reasons.

"I don't think that any intelligence organization, with the climate that's going on, is going to be utilizing educational ventures," the source said.

The source noted the CIA and other intelligence-gathering agencies had been under specific orders to separate their activities from educational institutions since 1971.

Another source familiar with general CIA procedures said Mamantov had never been spoken to, approached or even considered "for anything of an operative nature by the CIA."

The source noted the possibility did exist Mamantov could have been queried about "realities" — general after-the-fact information, possibly without Mamantov's knowledge.

Mamantov said he had never talked to anyone connected with the CIA to his knowledge.

The source added the Soviet's apparent attempt to embarrass Mamantov was probably a reaction to President Carter's stand on human rights — a stand that has sometimes inflamed Soviet leaders.

The source called the Soviet newspaper article "a form of retaliation against Mamantov" because of Carter's policy.

"That's correct," Mamantov remarked about the source's view. "It seems to be the whole thing is fabricated, and that's the only purpose I can see."

Although Mamantov apparently never met Lee Harvey Oswald, he acted as Marina Oswald's personal Kennedy's death.

On Nov. 23, 1963, Mamantov told two FBI agents he believed Oswald "must be an underground Communist agent", according to Warren Commission documents.

But he retracted the statement three weeks later, telling FBI agents any

statements he had made about Oswald were based on his own conclusions — partially from information Mamantov said he had received from his mother-in-law, a friend of one of Marina Oswald's closest friends.

As a member of the Dallas Russian-speaking community, Mamantov also associated infrequently with George Demohrenschildt, who claimed he knew Oswald and knew of the assassination before Kennedy was shot.

Demohrenschildt was found dead at a friend's home in Florida March 29. He died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound as he was being sought for questioning by the House Assassinations Committee.

A former professor at Bishop College, Demohrenschildt named deceased Dallas billionaire H.L. Hunt and other conservatives in an alleged assassination plot manuscript handed to a Dutch journalist before Demohrenschildt's death.

Demohrenschildt was a mental patient in the months before his death.

Demohrenschildt had been interviewed by Dallas-based CIA several times between 1957 and 1961, according to government-related sources.

According to Warren Commission documents, after the assassination, Demohrenschildt told FBI agents he occasionally wrote cards and letters to a Dallas CIA official.

A government source said Demohrenschildt was known to the CIA but said there was no contact with Demohrenschildt during the time he knew Oswald.

The contacts that were made with Demohrenschildt were deemed "interviews" following Demohrenschildt's trips aboard.

The CIA and CIA-connected figures play large roles in several unproved assassination theories. However, the Warren Commission ruled Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy.

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