

CIA Bugged Soviet Embassy in Mexico City

1960s Operation Disclosed in Declassified Kennedy Assassination Data

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Recently declassified CIA documents pertaining to the 1963 killing of President John F. Kennedy show that the agency blocked the release of records to keep from acknowledging the bugging of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City and other clandestine operations.

The Assassination Records Review Board, in releasing 39 CIA JFK documents yesterday, said some words and phrases would remain secret and in almost every case found that "the redacted information contains no substantive information about the assassination of President Kennedy or about Lee Harvey Oswald," the man accused of killing the president in Dallas.

In one case, the CIA postponed releasing one paragraph of a long document that described the CIA's activities in Mexico City after the assassination because it refers to "the 1 October intercept of Lee Oswald" and the possible existence of another copy of that "intercept" that was discovered after the assassination."

Oswald's trip to Mexico City between Sept. 27 and Oct. 3, 1963, and his visits to the Cuban and Soviet embassies there little more than a month before the Kennedy assassination have been a focal point for many conspiracy theorists.

Although reports have been published that Oswald was overheard talking on the telephone to the Soviet Embassy, the CIA has tried to keep secret its wiretap operation, which was carried out with the cooperation of the Mexican government.

The agency has argued that disclosing such past activities might endanger similar, ongoing operations, in Mexico City or elsewhere.

Congressional investigators, the media and JFK aficionados have tried to locate the telephone tapes in order to compare them with recognized tapes of Oswald's voice, particularly since the theory developed that it was a "false Oswald" who went to Mexico. The CIA in the past has said that some tapes were routinely erased before the assassination and others no longer could be found.

Among the new documents is a CIA "summary of relevant information" on Oswald marked 7 a.m. Nov. 24, 1963, less than 14 hours after he was arrested and identified as the possible assassin. For the first time, the summary contains the declassified paragraphs disclosing that in Mexico City the CIA's "expert monitor" had reviewed wiretap transcripts and tapes and found several between Sept. 27 and Oct. 3, 1963, "identical with the voice of 1 October known to be Oswald's."

The newly released segment represents the first specific acknowledgment by the CIA of the wiretapping although there had been a reference to "telephone coverage" cleared by the review board last July.

Until now, the agency also has not disclosed a Nov. 29, 1963, cable that CIA "double agents [in Mexico City] have not had meetings with Sovs [Soviets] since assassination." In the past, the CIA refused to acknowledge it had double agents meeting with Soviets in 1963. The newly released documents still hide the agents' names and do not disclose when they met their Soviet Embassy contacts.

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JFK

National Archives photo of man outside Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in 1963.