

THE ROLE OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
AGENCY IN THE INVESTIGATION OF THE
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F.
KENNEDY: A STUDY OF THE ABSURD AND
IRRESPONSIBLE

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Dr. Gerald McKnight
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In looking at the role the Central Intelligence Agency played in the investigation of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, through their internal files that they released to Harold Weisberg, what is most striking is their apparent lack of order or independently initiated investigation, and the Agency's irresponsibility. These files were requested from the CIA by Mr. Weisberg under the Freedom of Information Act, and are incomplete because the CIA is still refusing to release a large and sundry number of them for various reasons.

From the files that Weisberg presently has it is possible to gain a good understanding of the way the CIA went about "investigating" the facts of the assassination. It is obvious that if the files the Agency has released are representative of their inquiry into this matter, they did a slipshod job in a devious manner. The only other possible alternative is that they have deliberately confused and covered up the issue.

The CIA had a 201 file on Lee Harvey Oswald prior to November 22, 1963, beginning with his "defection" to the Soviet Union. Thirty such documents were released to Weisberg, but there are at least thirty-seven missing. A student friend of Weisberg's, Mark Allen, is at present attempting to procure these thirty-seven documents from

the CIA under the FOIA. It is informative that he is having the same difficulties that Weisberg encounters in his dealings with this agency. One document, CIA #563-810,¹ February 20, 1964, that was requested by Bernard Fensterwald in 1977, was refused to Fensterwald on the basis of:

...exemption (b)(2) of the Freedom of Information Act which allows the withholding of material if it is "related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency." Now that the document has been released we can see just how misleading the CIA's document and exemption claim was.²

This document became available September 22, 1978, in the daily press release of the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Thus it is possible to view it although the CIA has refused it to others. This memo indicates that there are thirty-seven documents that are supposed to be in Oswald's 201 file but are not. These documents are possibly

¹The numbers given to these files are the FOIA release numbers, rather than the CIA internal numbers, for convenience as they are usually arranged in this order, and Weisberg's are. This is of more use when the documents are released each time with the same numbers, but the FOIA numbers appear to be in the same kind of confusion that the CIA numbers are. Weisberg has received some of the identical files in separate batches with completely different numbers.

²Mark A. Allen, "MEMORANDUM TO: Interested Researchers," March 14, 1979 [this memo is attached to CIA #563-810 in Mr. Weisberg's files].

pre-assassination materials, though this is unclear. Allen's conclusion is:

If this document indicates the disappearance of pre-assassination Oswald material, it strongly suggests that the denial of this document to Bud was part of a continuing coverup. And even if the CIA's innocent explanation is essentially correct, this entire incident suggests that the CIA is withholding material from researchers simply because it might give us the "wrong idea."³

The main reason for Allen's belief that the documents are pre-assassination is predicated on the fact that on February 12, 1964, eight days prior to #563-810, Rankin wrote to McCone requesting the CIA's pre-assassination file.

This incident is indicative of the dealings that people have with the CIA in requesting information under the FOIA. The Agency often uses invalid exemptions, either because they want to withhold something that is possibly damaging to them or if it will be too "informative." In the Martin Luther King, Jr. case the CIA is now withholding from Weisberg's requests the names of foreign hotels and newspapers on the grounds of national security.⁴ The Agency says that this will show that they have dealings with these countries and thus will hurt their relation-

³Ibid.

⁴Civil Action 77-1997, 1977.

ship with the country. In the files already released to Weisberg, there are numerous mentions of not only hotels and newspapers,⁵ but one reference to an agent in Mexico who is under State Department cover.⁶ It is common knowledge that the CIA has agents and informers in both friendly and unfriendly countries; their withholding of place and newspaper names can only be seen as a plan to impede research into the area of these assassinations.

One of the many interesting sidelights to the inner-workings of the CIA is the Oswald 201 file that is presently available and that was available to the Warren Commission (consistent with the CIA dealings, the Commission was never told that thirty-seven documents were missing). These documents, representing what the Agency knew of Oswald prior to the assassination, consist mainly of newspaper clippings of Oswald's "defection" to the Soviet Union and his return, and State Department dealings with Oswald. There is not one document that even suggests that the CIA contemplated an investigation of Oswald. This is incredible in light of the official story, that Oswald was attempting to defect and had declared that he would tell the Russians everything he knew about U.S. Radar techniques. This is especially inconceivable when it is realized that while

⁵CIA # 203-82, November 28, 1963; CIA #277-105, December 3, 1963; etc.

⁶CIA #

Oswald was in the Soviet Union it managed to shoot down Gary Powers. The CIA never attempted to question Oswald when he returned.

If Lee Harvey Oswald had been an agent of the CIA or of one of the other U.S. intelligence agencies, it would then be conceivable that the CIA would not meet his plane upon his return. If Oswald was not an intelligence agent it is completely inexcusable and raises grave doubts about their competency.

Another apparent inconsistency is the almost complete lack of memos filed with these documents. Very little interpretation is present about any phase of their "investigation." It seems ridiculous that any opinions were simply kept in agents' heads for future reference. What appears much more likely is that these documents have been withheld, making the job of understanding this collection even more difficult. Their "facts" are in many cases so contradictory that it is at times difficult to understand either what really happened, or at least what the CIA thought happened.

A good example of this is the files concerned with Oswald's trip to Mexico, September 26-October 3, 1963. The pre-assassination and post-assassination reports on his alleged visits to both the Cuban and Russian Embassies in Mexico City have varying dates. There are included photographs of a man who visited the Soviet Embassy on October

1 and 4, who gave his name as Lee Oswald. The CIA wrote to the Department of the Navy on October 24, 1963,⁷ asking for photos of Lee Harvey Oswald in order to be certain that it was he. They never received an answer, but after the assassination they find out that it is not Oswald when his photograph comes over the AP wires in Mexico and they are able to compare it with the photos that they have. They then consider the possibility that the person entering the Soviet Embassy October 1 and 4 and the Cuban Embassy October 15, 1963, might be Hidell.⁸

There is no indication as to why they conclude that Oswald visited the two embassies. There are other dates given of his possible visits, but though the CIA has photographs of a number of people they think may be Oswald, they do not have any actual photos of him. It is in part due to the confusion at the time, but also to the confusion in the documents themselves, that it is impossible to determine how the Agency came up with their conclusion. If these are all of the documents that they have, it is a wonder that the CIA can get anything done. If they are so used to being devious that this is carried as far as their own internal records, this can only be seen as detrimental to their legit-

⁷CIA # 10-6, October 24, 1963.

⁸CIA # 30, November 24, 1963.

imate intelligence work.

The CIA records on Oswald show that while in November and December of 1963 they were following many leads they had concerning the assassination,⁹ once they realized that the Warren Commission had accepted the FBI's unwarranted conclusions they resort mainly to simply finding answers to specific questions raised by the Commission. Many of these questions were point of information ones, such as the public hours at embassies, etc. There is certainly no attempt to discover who else might have been the assassin, merely an early attempt at showing that Oswald had communist backing.

One of the investigations that is initiated by the CIA is in reference to a book that Thomas Buchanan is putting together. Buchanan had written a series of articles that appeared in Paris in l'Express, giving his theory that the assassination was planned by right-wing forces and that Officer Tippet was involved. The CIA concern is in determining what publishers abroad and in the United States are interested in publishing the Buchanan book, not in finding out if there is any basis for the theory.¹⁰ Out of the many

⁹I presented some of his material to the class orally and will write a separate paper on it at a later date.

¹⁰CIA # 662-834, April 20, 1964.

articles being put out at this time, it is interesting to find that the CIA is inquiring about this particular book. The reason is apparently the fact that Buchanan, discharged from The Washington Star in 1948, had admitted at the time that he was a member of the Communist Party of the United States. The CIA is apparently as interested as the FBI is in showing that anyone who believes that it was a right-wing plot is a Communist, using "proof" such as this.

In line with this, the CIA is extremely interested in Soviet and Cuban reactions to the assassination. One reason was to substantiate their public theory that Oswald was pro-communist and probably had backing from Cuba and/or the Soviet Union. This was certainly a legitimate question, but that this was the only possible angle that the CIA attempted to discover is simply irresponsible.

The Warren Commission's problem of independently investigating any of the Agency materials was in part due to its limitations of staff, budget, and time, but was compounded by their own action, or more correctly, their inaction. In order to see any of the CIA's files the Commission had to agree that they would get permission in writing from the Agency before releasing any of the documents. The Commission also failed to ask "leading questions," they merely asked for specific details. This enabled the CIA to cease initiating investigations and opened the way for their decision

to give the Commission exactly what it asked for and nothing more.

In addition to this leeway, the Commission felt compelled to ask for the same "proof" that Oswald was not a CIA Agent that they allowed the FBI to give that he was not one of their agents. In a letter to John McCone, J. Lee Rankin states that there have been rumors in the press that Oswald was an informant or an agent of a United States intelligence or law enforcement agency.

To deal with this issue, Director Hoover of the FBI has voluntarily furnished the Commission his affidavit that Oswald was never an informant or agent of the FBI. Mr. Hoover's affidavit is supported by the affidavits of other FBI representatives concerned and is in sufficient detail to support its ultimate conclusion.

In view of the desirability of making the record as clear as possible on a matter of this importance, the Commission would greatly appreciate a similar affidavit from you with respect to the CIA and Oswald, with such supporting material as seems appropriate. I understand that Mr. Dulles has discussed this matter with you informally, and this will confirm his request.¹¹

To ask the intelligence agencies themselves to give what they think is adequate proof that Oswald was not one of their

¹¹CIA # 672-286 A, April 30, 1964.

agents is the ultimate in absurdity.

The overall view that is given in these files is that the CIA is not only withholding valuable information, but that its so-called investigation was irresponsible. That they were only investigating Oswald's complicity is indicative of the fact that they were intent on letting the record stand as it is. That they did not investigate Oswald while he was in the Soviet Union or upon his return can only lead one to believe that they were not interested. The only conceivable reason for this disinterest is that they knew why he was there beforehand.

Rotary given perspective of CIA

Frederick Post 1-19/79

While the Central Intelligence Agency is relatively new in an historical perspective to the United States, the idea behind the organization dates back to George Washington and the American Revolution, and even to warlords of the Chinese dynasties. "As long as we are dependent on other countries we need to know who's going to cut us off if we do something that they will disagree with," said Thomas H. White, assistant for Information Directorate of Administration for the CIA.

Guest speaker at the Frederick Rotary Club meeting at the Holiday Inn Wednesday, White states that in order for the nation to be strong politically and economically intelligence is a necessity. "The purpose of intelligence in a free society is to keep us free," he added.

Recently the CIA has begun a public relations campaign to educate the people of the United States concerning actions of the organization. "We're trying to rekindle the faith of the American people in the CIA. By explaining what kind of people we are, what our motives are and what our activities are we hope to set people at ease," said White.

"It's a sign of changing times that I'm here," he said. The CIA was created in the midst of a cold war. The Russian Army was gaining strength and power. Only the name of the director of the CIA was known. "No one wanted to hear about the CIA," said White. "Now after several wars and social revolutions we can no longer remain silent. We must account for what we're doing."

The "intelligence business" concerns approximately three areas including the collection of overt and covert information, analysis and production leading to final reports, and the influencing of events. "The 'James Bond' end of the business is very small," said White.

"We are an independent agency, not a government toy," said White. The CIA has no police functions, it does not investigate crimes and members of the organization do not carry weapons, he added. The CIA is involved in investigation of the extent of another country's military power which enables the United States to build arms and military of equal size and power. They watch political trends in other countries that officials in this country may aid in negotiations in avoiding internal eruptions. The CIA is also involved in guarding the policies established by the SALT Treaty with Russia.

"People are never opposed to intelligence in war time, but there are many objections to the organization in times of peace. We are not the political or economic leaders we once were," said White. "In order to regain this dominance the U.S. must establish clout through knowledge that the Central Intelligence Agency can provide."

Thomas White received his BA degree in accounting in 1960 from Brigham

Young University and his Juris Doctor in 1963 from the University of Southern California. He served with the USAF as a Ground Controlled Approach Tower Control Operator from 1950 to 1954. He is a member of the California State Bar and practiced law in Southern California prior to entering government service, specializing in Municipal Law. During this time he served as District Attorney of Corona, California.

Mr. White entered government service in 1967 serving with the Foreign Service of the Department of State. He

filled overseas assignments in Latin America and Vietnam. In July of 1975 he joined the Central Intelligence Agency as an Associate Legislative Counsel responsible for liaison with members and committees in Congress. He currently serves as the Assistant for Information in the Directorate of Administration and is responsible for compliance with the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts.

White and his wife Kathleen live in Braddock Heights with their four daughters.

Colby to speak at Mount Feb. 8

FP Post 1/18/79

The former director of The Central Intelligence Agency, William E. Colby, will give a lecture, "Intelligence Out of the Shadows," at Mount Saint Mary's College on Thursday, Feb. 8.

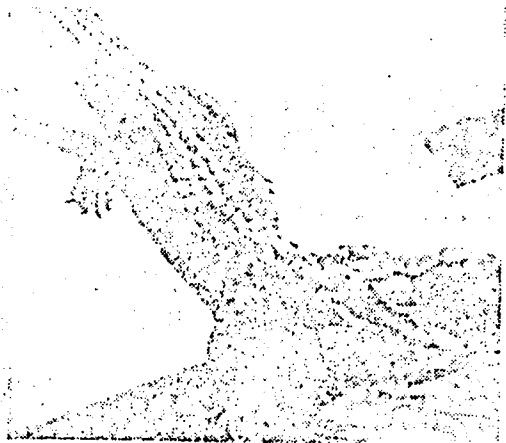
Colby will speak at the Memorial Gymnasium at 8 p.m. Admission is free and the public is cordially invited.

Director of the CIA from 1973 to 1976, Colby served during a time of unprecedented public investigations of the Agency's secret operations.

Colby worked to protect the CIA's clandestine activities.

Colby is the author of a book titled, *Honorable Men - My Life in the CIA*.

For additional information contact George Gelles, Mount Saint Mary's College, Emmitsburg, Md. 21727. Phone (301) 447-6122 Ext. 361.



This crocodile never gave up his gall bladder.

Witch Doctor Stew Got CIA's Attention

United Press International

The CIA once considered capturing an African crocodile and, with the help of a witch doctor's secret recipe, cooking the animal's gall bladder into a special poison, newly released documents revealed yesterday.

The formerly secret documents did not indicate whether the unusual project actually came off.

"Crocodile Gall Bladder" was part of a massive, 23-year CIA project terminated in 1973 that included mind-control, behavior-control and brain-washing experiments and a search for exotic poisons and incapacitating chemicals that could be used in assassinations and clandestine operations.

Many details of the project have come out during Senate and House hearing during the past few years.

THE LATEST 363 pages to be released — some heavily censored — covered various activities from 1951 to 1962. They were obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request made by American Citizens for Honesty in Government, an organization sponsored by the Church of Scientology.

A Feb. 7, 1962, memo from an unidentified CIA officer to the "chief" of an unidentified division said:

"We have approached the problem of picking up a Tanganyika (now Tanzania) crocodile's gall bladder from two points of view. The first is to have one of our (blank) buddies in Tanganyika find, capture and eviscerate a native crocodile on the spot and then try to ship its gall bladder and/or other poisonous viscera to the United States . . . The second alternative would be to acquire a crocodile . . . through a licensed collector and ship the live animal to the United States."

THE MEMO WRITER expressed confidence that two contacts then in Tanzania "can provide us with the details concerning methods and techniques employed by the witch doctor in preparing the poison."

The contacts, he said, also might collect "more data concerning other natural poisons derived from other reptiles and/or vital organs."

There were customs problems, the memo warned, if shipping a live crocodile were ruled out and it was decided to send only the gall bladder.

"One of the main difficulties of getting the gall bladder and/or other vital organs to the United States is that the shipment must proceed . . . through British-controlled Kenya," the memo said. "British colonial law forbids the handling of toxic materials from sick Tanganyikan crocodiles of the Nile variety."

Memos Show Humans Used in CIA Drug Test

1/5/78 By Bill Richards
Washington Post Staff Writer

CIA documents released this week contradict testimony given a Senate committee by intelligence director Stanfield Turner and another intelligence agency official that no human subjects were involved in the final series of the agency's massive drug testing program.

Turner and Edward Gordon, who was described by the Central Intelligence Agency director as an "expert" on Project OFTEN, the last known CIA drug testing program, testified in September 1977 at the Senate subcommittee on health and scientific research that no humans were drugged as part of the project.

OFTEN was the last in a series of drug testing and mind control experiments on which the CIA spent millions of dollars. The experiments, kept secret for a quarter-century after they began in 1949, ultimately involved a range of sites stretching from San Francisco warehouses to prestigious U.S. universities.

According to the latest documents, released under a Freedom of Information Act request filed before Turner's Senate testimony on Project OFTEN, the final program ran from 1967 into 1978. It was finally disbanded after newspaper reports of covert drug and chemical testing on humans by the CIA and the military.

The OFTEN project was originally designed to include drug testing on human subjects. But Turner and Gordon told Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate subcommittee, that there was no evidence in the agency's files to indicate any humans were actually used in experiments before the project was terminated.

The documents state, however, that the CIA allocated \$37,000 in 1971 to test a glycolate class of chemical on humans at the Army's Edgewood Arsenal Research Laboratory.

One report, compiled in 1975 under the heading, "Influencing Human Behavior," notes that 20 persons were tested with the drug—five prisoners from Holmesburg State Prison in Holmesburg, Pa., and 15 Army volunteers.

The report does not say what the test results were except that side effects were evident up to six weeks later. The report notes that the CIA spent money for medical follow-up testing of the research subjects.

A CIA spokesman noted yesterday that while several memos and reports mention the testing, one 1975 memo states that an unnamed doctor at Edgewood told a CIA interviewer that year that no human subjects were used in the tests.

The spokesman noted that the program was set up to include human drug testing. "Maybe it did happen," he said, "but it's all academic now."

CIA mind-control plan to assassinate officials

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The CIA once developed a secret mind-control plan to induce an unwitting foreign official to assassinate one of his country's leaders or, "if necessary," an American official abroad, newly released documents show.

The plan was part of Operation Artichoke, the intelligence agency's 23-year program of experimenting with exotic poisons and drugs for use in mind and behavior control.

The three-page, 25-year-old memorandum detailing the assassination plan was obtained by a citizens group sponsored by the Church of Scientology.

Recent congressional investigations have found that the CIA plotted the assassination of Cuban leader Fidel Castro and some other foreign leaders. The CIA says none of the plans was carried out. And it called the mind control plans purely hypothetical.

The newly released, censored memo shows, "The Artichoke team visited (blank) during period 8 January to 15 January 1954.

"The purpose of the visit was to give an evaluation of a hypothetical problem, namely: Can an individual of (blank) descent be made to

perform an act of attempted assassination involuntarily under the influence of Artichoke?"

"Essential elements" of the problem were outlined in the memo:

"It was proposed that an individual of (blank) descent, approximately 35-years-old, well-educated, proficient in English and well-established socially and politically in the (blank) government be induced under Artichoke to perform an act, involuntarily, of attempted assassination against a prominent (blank) politician or, if necessary, against an American official."

A handwritten footnote indicates the plan was "simulated only."

"Because the subject is a heavy drinker," it continued, "it was proposed that the individual could be surreptitiously drugged through the medium of an alcoholic cocktail at a social party. Artichoke applied and the subject induced to perform the act of attempted assassination at some later date.

"... After the act of attempted assassination was performed, it was assumed that the subject would be taken into custody by the (blank) government and thereby 'disposed of.'"

CIA Mind-Control Project Included Assassin-Making

United Press International

The CIA once developed a secret mind-control plan to induce an unwitting foreign official to assassinate one of his country's leaders or, "if necessary," an American official abroad, newly released documents show.

The plan was part of Operation Artichoke, the intelligence agency's 23-year program of experimenting with exotic poisons and drugs for use in mind and behavior control.

The three-page, 25-year-old memorandum detailing the assassination plan, was obtained by a citizens' group sponsored by the Church of Scientology under a Freedom of Information suit.

The church has been feuding for years with the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service and a number of other federal agencies over its tax-exempt status.

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A 16 THE WASHINGTON POST

Monday, January 22, 1979

Disposal Urged For 3 Men in '50s CIA Files

United Press International

The Central Intelligence Agency confined the head of a foreign political party to a mental hospital at the height of the Cold War and considered disposing of him when he refused to stay put.

The 20-year-old political leader, who had been working clandestinely for the agency, was one of three "disposal problems" described in CIA documents released last week under the Freedom of Information Act.

The heavily censored documents—made public at the request of the Church of Scientology—did not reveal the fate of the three men.

A 1952 memo discussed the disposal of an unidentified "young, ambitious, bright" leader of a small political party "ostensibly working for independence" of an unidentified foreign country.

The memo said the CIA arranged for him to be taken into custody by his country's police after learning he was considering selling out to another intelligence agency.

The document said the young politician was held in prison for six months until he became a "nuisance" and the police "told our people to take him back."

It said the CIA then put him in a mental hospital "as a psychopathic patient" even though "he is not a psychopathic personality."

"He has now been in a hospital for several months and the hospital authorities now want to get him out since he is causing considerable trouble" the document said.

The memo then suggested brain washing the agent into sticking by the CIA. If that fails, it said, "disposal is perfectly O.K."

A 1951 memo asked a "senior representative" of an unidentified department for help in disposing of two other troublesome agents.

"These two men are disposal problems, one because of his lack of ability to carry out a mission and another because he cannot get along with... the chief agent of the project," the memo said.

The memo, in an indication that at least one of the agents was being held in solitary confinement, said he "is a ready somewhat stir crazy and he tried to escape twice."