

Report the CIA Taped Oswald On Soviet Call

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• See Warren Commission Story Below

By Nicholas M. Horrock
New York Times News Service

The Central Intelligence Agency secretly tape recorded two telephone conversations between Lee Harvey Oswald and the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City some eight weeks before President John F. Kennedy was shot to death Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, according to government sources familiar with the events.

The call to the Soviet Embassy, the sources said yesterday, alerted the CIA to the presence of Oswald in Mexico City, and on Oct. 10 the agency warned the FBI. There is no indication that the FBI, which was investigating Oswald for his pro-Castro activities, ever followed up on the information.

The call to the Cuban Embassy, the sources said, was not associated with Oswald until after Kennedy's death. A federal commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren found that Oswald, acting alone, had shot the President.

THE CALLS reportedly were placed by Oswald on a trip to Mexico City in late September and early October 1963. The events of this trip have never been fully made public and have been the subject of speculation for more than a decade.

The reports of the calls are the latest developments in the increasing speculation concerning the Warren Commission's conclusions. Evidence that the CIA and FBI may have been less than candid with the commission have added to the questions surrounding the assassination and have led to more calls for a reopening of the inquiry.

The Mexico City trip was given only scant treatment in the Warren Commission report because publication of information about it might have exposed "sources and methods" of the CIA and impaired national security, intelligence officers and commission staff sources have said.

IN RESPONSE TO inquiries from the New York Times, the CIA issued

an unusual public statement on the matter. It would not confirm that there were any tape recorded conversations, but said:

"On Oct. 9, 1963, CIA headquarters received information that a person named Lee Oswald contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in late September or early October 1963. In transmitting the information on Oct. 10, 1963, CIA headquarters said Lee Oswald was probably identical to Lee Henry (sic) Oswald, a former radar operator in the U.S. Marine Corps; born Oct. 18, 1939, in New Orleans who defected to the Soviet Union in 1959 and who subsequently made arrangements to return to the United States with a Russian wife.

"This biographical data was based upon FBI reports provided to the CIA following Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union.

"THIS INFORMATION was also provided to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Navy, the U.S. ambassador and his staff in Mexico and to the representative of the FBI in Mexico.

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"Following the assassination of President Kennedy, CIA records revealed that a person believed to be Oswald was in contact with the Cuban Embassy on Sept. 27, 1963, for the purpose of receiving a transit visa for use en route to the USSR.

"In addition a number of photographs of individuals believed to be in contact with the Cuban and Soviet Embassies in Mexico City were received from the CIA station in Mexico and were compared with pictures of Oswald by CIA officers in

Mexico City and CIA headquarters and by United States authorities in Dallas, Tex.

"It was determined that none of these photographs was the photograph of Oswald. Their determinations, and the raw data upon which they were based, along with the reports of his visit to the Soviet Embassy, were made to the Warren and Rockefeller commissions as were all other materials relevant to the investigation of President Kennedy's death."

THREE STAFF MEMBERS of the Warren Commission were assigned to investigate the Mexico City trip and other matters involving the CIA. They were William T. Coleman, now secretary of transportation, Howard P. Willens, a former Justice Department official now in private law practice, and W. David Slawson, a law professor in California.

Coleman said in an interview that he was "disturbed" about the possibility that United States security might be harmed by the recent disclosures, but he acknowledged that he and other staffers received information from the CIA on Oswald's activities in Mexico, and they did not run counter to the commission's conclusion that Oswald killed Kennedy and a Dallas police officer.

Coleman said he was sure that Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission chief counsel, was informed of the CIA Mexico data and that "at least two or three commission members" knew.

He could not remember if the commission ever discussed the matter in executive session. Willens and Slawson declined to make public comment.

SOURCES FAMILIAR with the contents of the tapes said that Oswald was seeking a transit visa from Cuban officials and that he was "rebuffed." One source said that the call to the Soviet Embassy was an effort to get help from the Soviets in furthering his application at the Cuban Embassy.

These sources said there was no "conspiratorial" tone to the conversations and one source called them "benign." Moreover, the sources said, the CIA had information that the Cubans were suspicious of Oswald, because he returned to the United States and then asked to go back again to Russia.

Asked if anything said may have "triggered" Oswald, a Cuban supporter, to take "retaliation" against Kennedy, one source denied it, but said that Oswald was "frustrated" by the Cubans.

A SURVEY OF Warren Commission, Rockefeller Commission, intelligence and congressional sources, however, revealed that there are still two areas of suspicion concerning Kennedy's assassination. One is that Oswald received some sort of indirect support or inspiration in his

plot and, two, that the CIA and the FBI may not have been fully candid with the Warren Commission.

These doubts have deepened in the last nine months as the CIA's role in plots to kill foreign leaders came under scrutiny. Members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence have confirmed, for instance, that the CIA did not tell the Warren Commission of its efforts to kill Fidel Castro, premier of Cuba, during the early 1960s.

Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., has called for a re-opening of the commission's inquiry on this and other issues.

ANOTHER AREA of unrest has arisen over the role of the FBI. Earlier this month it was revealed that the bureau did not inform the Warren Commission of a letter Oswald wrote threatening to blow up the Dallas police department.