

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Donovan Gay
MEMORANDUM FROM: Mark A. Allen
SUBJECT: Mexico City Memorandum #4
DATE: July 22, 1977

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U.S. HOUSE SELECT
COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Attached is my Mexico City Memorandum #4 concerning a tape recording provided by the CIA in Mexico which FBI agents in Dallas listened to shortly after the assassination. The existence of this tape was recently revealed in a November 23, 1963 FBI report which apparently is the same one sent to President Johnson and mentioned on page 32 of the Schweiker Report (The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: Performance of Intelligence Agencies).

A question which the Select Committee might pursue is whether members of the Warren Commission staff ever saw this FBI report or were told about the tape recording. In my extensive study of the Warren Commission records at the National Archives, I have never seen this report or any mention of the recording. Reference to the tape might be found in the CIA documents still withheld from research, particularly Commission Documents 347 and 384.

The memo mentions two conversations intercepted by the CIA in Mexico City which apparently involved Oswald himself or an impersonator. Since writing it I have found indication of a third. Commission Document 1084d, pages 4-6 appear to be a summary of information gathered from the CIA's telephone intercept of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City. All of this section was known to be relevant to the Oswald investigation except for the first sentence:

"On September 27 an unidentified man was in touch with the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City and made inquiries concerning visas to Odessa."

I have just come across a November 28, 1963 telegram from American Ambassador to Mexico Thomas Mann to Secretary of State Rusk which makes reference to this issue. In paragraph 2 Ambassador Mann speculates as to why Oswald would want to go to Odessa. This reference, coupled with the fact that Commission Document 1084d information appears to be gathered exclusively from telephone taps, indicates that the CIA had yet another recording of the "Lee Oswald" who visited the Soviet Embassy on October 1.

The Committee might also be interested in contacting a woman who worked in the Mexico City station at the time of the Oswald investigation and who is the subject of CIA item # 435. According to the document, in which her name is deleted, this woman was "thoroughly familiar with the Mexican aspects of the (Oswald) case." In October 1972 she apparently lived in the Washington metropolitan area. She may well be the woman referred to as "Annie Goodpasture" in Phillip Agee's book Inside the Company (pages 539, 630).

I would be pleased to answer any questions you or your staff might have concerning my work.

A November 23, 1963 FBI memorandum may cast new light on Lee Harvey Oswald's alleged trip to Mexico City seven weeks before the assassination and his contacts with the Soviet and Cuban Embassies there. Specifically the memo indicates the existence of a tape recording, not previously known to Warren Commission researchers, which could be important in the Select Committee's investigation. On page four and five of this report, the following paragraph appears:

"The Central Intelligence Agency advised that on Oct 1, 1963 an extremely sensitive source had reported that an individual identified himself as Lee Oswald, who contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City inquiring as to any messages. Special Agents of this Bureau, who have conversed with Oswald in Dallas, Texas, have observed photographs of the individual referred to above and have listened to a recording of his voice. (emphasis added) These Special Agents are of the opinion that the above-referred-to individual was not Lee Harvey Oswald."

The Warren Commission concluded however, that the accused assassin did visit the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City, ostensibly to obtain a visa there with a stopover in Cuba, in the late Septemeber to early October, 1963 period.¹ To assess the significance of this information, it is necessary to review what is presently known about the CIA's surveillance of the Russian and Cuban Embassies in Mexico City in relation to the Oswald investigation.

It is fairly well documented that at the time of Oswald's alleged trip to Mexico, the CIA photographed individuals going in and out of these two emassies and had their telephones tapped.² Available documents indicate it was from these sources that the CIA learned that a "Lee Oswald," on Oct. 1, had contacted the Soviet Embassy.³ On Oct. 10, the Agency sent out a telegram to the FBI, Dept. of State and the Dept. of Navy transmitting this information, but the cable included a puzzling anomalie, Paragraph 1 of the message stated " The American was described as approximately 35 years old, with an athletic build, about six feet tall, with a receding hair-line." In October, 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald was 24 years old, of slender build, and 5'9" in heighth.

While the description does not fit Oswald, it does fit that of a still unidentified man who did visit the Soviet Embassy on October 1, and whose picture appears in VOL.16 pg.638 of the Warren Commission's Hearings and Exhibits. Presumably the Agency obtained this picture from its photographic surveillance of the Embassy and for some reason believed this man to be Oswald.

The 10/10 telegram has led some researchers to theorize that an impersonator, posing as Lee Harvey Oswald, actually visited the two Embassies. They point out that the CIA has yet to produce a photo

of Oswald in Mexico City, even though the accused assassin is alleged to have visited these diplomatic establishments several times during his stay there.³

Available documents indicate that on the afternoon of the assassination, after learning that a "Lee Oswald" had been arrested in Dallas, the CIA station in Mexico City forwarded to the FBI at least one photograph of the man depicted in the Hearings and Exhibits.⁴ Whether the CIA still believed the man to be Oswald at this time is not known. What is completely new is that the FBI agents who saw this photograph also listened to a tape recording of a man's voice (presumably also provided by the CIA in Mexico City) which the Agency thought either was or might be Oswald.

The recording the Special Agents listened to could have been of Oswald or of an impersonator representing himself as Oswald. Previously released documents indicate that the Agency did intercept two conversations involving Oswald himself (or an impostor) in Mexico City, the first on September 28 and the second on October 1, 1963.¹⁰ The first conversation was a telephone call from the Cuban Embassy to the Russian Embassy, the contents of which are very much in dispute.¹¹ (see notes) Presently available documents, however, do not indicate that the caller actually identified himself by name.¹² However in the October 1 conversation, a man contacted the guard outside the Soviet Embassy and gave his name as "Lee Oswald".¹³ This intercept was presumably the source for the 10/10 telegram mentioned earlier.¹⁴

Apparently David Phillips, a former CIA employee who was working at the Mexico City station at the time of Oswald's alleged visit, has told the Select Committee that these two tapes of Oswald were "routinely destroyed" about a week after their use.¹⁵ However, this is hardly the final word on the subject. Phillips' account of the Oswald trip to Mexico City in his book, The Night Watch, contains so many minor inaccuracies that his testimony should not be considered completely reliable.¹⁶ It should also be noted that since Phillips no longer works for the CIA, the Agency is not accountable for anything he says. There is little doubt that the CIA would be extremely reluctant to admit the continued existence of the Oswald tapes, which would bring unwanted public exposure of an operation it would prefer to remain secret.

The FBI report states that Special Agents of the Bureau who conversed with Oswald in Dallas concluded from examining the photo and the tape that the "Lee Oswald" who contacted the Soviet Embassy on October 1 was not the suspect Lee Harvey Oswald. The Warren Report mentions 3 Dallas agents who interrogated Oswald: James Bookhout, James Hosty, and Manning C. Clements.¹⁷ Since it is known that the photograph the Agents were shown was not of Oswald, not much about the tape can be reliably assumed. There are several possibilities:

- 1) The tape is of Oswald and the Agents did not recognize his voice. Since the Agents had a picture that was obviously not Oswald, they may not have given the tape proper attention. The quality of the tape may also have impeded successful voice identification.
- 2) The recording is of a man identifying himself as "Lee Oswald" who is not in fact the accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. This would indicate that someone was impersonating Oswald at the Soviet Embassy, a possibility which would raise many serious questions.
- 3) The tape is of the man in the photograph (Commission Exhibit 237) who was first mistakenly to be Oswald. It is possible that the CIA matched up the voice and the photograph, still erroneously believing they were of "Lee Oswald".
- 4) The CIA simply guessed that the tape might be of Oswald (perhaps it was of another American visitor to the Russian and Cuban Embassies) and turned out to be wrong. In that case the tape could be irrelevant to the Mexico City investigation.

Whatever its status, this tape recording merits the close attention of the Committee. Whether it involves a recording of Oswald or not, it could well be important in answering some of the many questions that have come out of the Mexico City investigation.

1. Warren Report, pg. 299-309, 730-6.
2. New York Times, 9/21/75, pg. 1; Washington Post, 11/26/76, pg. 1; Inside the Company, by Phillip Agee, pg. 543; Jack Anderson's syndicated column "Odd CIA Activity in Dallas in 1963" (Washington Post, 5/6/77); Commission Document 1084d (paraphrases of the intercepted Oswald conversations); Commission Document 674, Attachments A,C.
3. Commission Document 631, New York Times, 9/21/75, pg. 1;
4. Commission Document 631
5. Warren Report, pg. 144.
6. CIA item #7, CIA item #948-927T
7. CIA item #948-927T
8. Commission Document 1084d, pgs. 5-6 indicates at least two visits by Oswald to the Cuban Embassy on 9/27 and one on 9/28. Also at least one visit to the Soviet Embassy on 9/27, 9/28, and 10/1/63.
9. CIA item 948-927T; Hearings and Exhibits, Vol. XI, pg. 469.
10. Commission Document 1084d, pgs. 5-6;
11. Ibid; Washington Post, 11/26/76, pg. 1; The Post article claims that in this phone call Oswald tried to make a deal with the Russians where he would provide the Soviets with unspecified information in return for a paid passage to the USSR.
12. Commission Document 1084d, pgs 5-6; The CIA claims it did not learn of Oswald's contact with the Cuban Embassy until after the assassination (Warren Report, pg. 777) Presumably this is because Oswald's name was not mentioned in this conversation. Please see Mexico City Memorandum #3 submitted to the Committee by the author on 1/24/77.
13. Ibid., CD 631
14. See CIA item 774-866, the 7/20/64 memorandum for the record.
15. "Odd CIA activity in Dallas in 1963" Jack Anderson, "Washington Post" 5/6/77 pg C11, "Washington Post, 11/27/76.
16. The Night Watch, pg 139-42.
17. WR; pg 200 (Bookhout), pg 612 (Hosty) pg 614 (Clements)