

Soviet Agent Denies Oswald

Role in Plot

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WASHINGTON (AP) — A Soviet KGB agent who defected to the United States in the months immediately after the November 1963 slaying of President John F. Kennedy sought to assure U.S. investigators that Lee Harvey Oswald was not a KGB agent, newly released

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CIA documents show.

The Russian, Yuri Nosenko, was one of two defectors from hostile intelligence agencies who played a key role in the U.S. investigation into whether Kennedy's assassination was the work of a foreign conspiracy, according to CIA documents.

The other defector, a Cuban linked to Fidel Castro's intelligence service, also arrived in the United States in the months immediately after the assassination. The Cuban told his interrogators that Oswald may have
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been in contact with Cuban intelligence agents just seven weeks before he killed Kennedy, according to the documents.

Because both defections came so soon after Kennedy was killed, former U.S. intelligence officials say they doubted the authenticity of the information provided by the two men, particularly Nosenko, since his testimony seemed to eliminate any possibility of Soviet involvement.

The Warren Commission concluded there was no evidence of a conspiracy, but a CIA memo written in May 1975 said that the Warren report "should have left a wider 'window' for this contingency. That, indeed, was the opinion at the working level ... in 1964."

That memo is among some 1,500 pages of documents just released by the CIA in response to a Freedom of Information request. HW?

A March 1964 CIA memo to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover says Nosenko "reported that his own department was involved directly with Oswald because Oswald came to the USSR in 1959" but "there had not ever been thought given to recruiting either of them (Oswald or his Russian-born wife, Marina) as agents."

The memo warned, however, "this agency has no information which would specifically corroborate or disprove Nosenko's statement."

Nosenko, who according to the documents was questioned about Oswald as recently as 1967, insisted that "Oswald was of no interest to the KGB" because of his emotional instability as evidenced by an unsuccessful 1959 suicide attempt in Moscow.

Nosenko told the CIA that he next heard of Oswald in September 1963 when Oswald appeared at the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City and requested

a visa to return to the Soviet Union.

On Nov. 22, after Oswald had been identified publicly as the prime suspect in the Kennedy slaying, Oswald's KGB file was immediately flown by military plane from the city of Minsk, where he had lived during his years in the Soviet Union, to Moscow, Nosenko told the CIA.

A two-page summary of Oswald's activities was then prepared and forwarded to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, according to Nosenko.

Oswald's file showed that "the KGB had no personal contact with him and had not attempted to utilize him in any manner," Nosenko told the CIA.

The Cuban defector is described by the CIA documents as "a well-placed individual who has been in contact with ... officers of the Cuban Directorate General of Intelligence."

In addition to telling the CIA about the possibility of a contact between Oswald and Cuban agents, the Cuban defector testified that the Cuban intelligence agency took extraordinary security precautions

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Newly released documents show that a Cuban defector told the CIA in 1964 that Lee Harvey Oswald, above, may have been in contact with Cuban intelligence agents seven weeks before he killed President Kennedy.

immediately following the Kennedy slaying.

This information was relayed to the Warren Commission, which "saw no need to pursue this angle any further," according to a June 1964 memo.

The CIA documents quote the Cuban defector as saying, "I have no personal knowledge of Lee Harvey Oswald or his activities and I do not know that Oswald was an agent ... of the Cuban government."

However, the same memos offer differing accounts of what the unnamed defector said about the possibility of a contact between Oswald and Cuban intelligence agents.

The first mention of the defector appears in a May 5, 1964, internal CIA memo in which he is quoted as saying that Oswald "was in contact" with three Cuban agents "before, during and after" his visits to the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City in late September and early October 1963. A subsequent May 8 memo quotes the defector as saying "I believe" Oswald was in contact with the Cuban agents.