

## 'Nightline' to review KGB's file on Oswald

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top-ranking KGB officials believe Lee Harvey Oswald was incapable of carrying out the Kennedy assassination alone, ABC News reports in an upcoming program.

The KGB officials based their informal opinion on a wealth of information about Oswald the Soviets had gathered during his years in the Soviet Union, ABC News executive producer Tom Bettag said in an interview Thursday.

ABC interviewed the KGB officials as part of a story on Oswald's KGB file that will be broadcast on "Nightline" tonight, the 28th anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination.

ABC does not name the officials who offered the view that Oswald wasn't sophisticated enough to have carried out the assassination by himself.

But the officials were totally familiar with the contents of Oswald's 10-inch-thick KGB file, Bettag added.

ABC spent a day reviewing Oswald's KGB file with assistance from a Soviet translator and a KGB case officer.

It shows that the Soviets suspected Oswald was an American agent when he defected, conducted surveillance of him and bugged his residence, says Bettag.

"This is the most detailed profile you could possibly have and it could

only be gathered in a police state," said Bettag. The file contains no conclusion about Oswald and the assassination of Kennedy.

But it shows that the KGB inserted informants to work with Oswald at his factory job and that there was electronic eavesdropping of his conversations with his future wife, Marina, said Bettag.

"They were trying to figure out what he was all about," said Bettag.

The KGB file shows that the Soviets even allowed Oswald to buy a rifle and monitored his target practice.

The file contains news clippings about Oswald after the Kennedy assassination.

Oswald was an ex-Marine who went to the Soviet Union in September 1959. While there, he married and returned to the United States in June 1962 after obtaining permission from the Soviets and the U.S. State Department.

ABC spent two months in the Soviet Union after the attempted August coup, talking with the new head of the KGB, Vadim Bakatin, and with the KGB case officer in charge of the files. ABC also went to Minsk, where Oswald lived after defecting from the United States.

The network wasn't allowed to make copies of Oswald's KGB file and the Soviets eventually withdrew their cooperation and refused to allow further access to it.

*Fred Paed 11/22/91*

## The TV

By John Carmody  
Washington Post Staff Writer

**A**BC News's "Nightline" will air a special one-hour report tomorrow night revealing for the first time the KGB's top-secret files on Lee Harvey Oswald . . .

Ted Koppel will anchor the program, which includes a report from correspondent Forrest Sawyer, who led a team that spent some two months this year in the Soviet Union looking into the story . . .

The limited conclusions revealed tomorrow are that the Soviets suspected that former Marine Oswald was an American agent; that they conducted surveillance on him and bugged his home in Minsk; and that the KGB eventually concluded privately that Oswald was incapable of acting alone to kill President Kennedy . . .

Tomorrow's broadcast falls on the 28th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination in Dallas . . .

According to executive producer Tom Bettag, ABC News president Boone Arledge got the ball rolling in late August when he was in Moscow to arrange the "town meeting" featuring Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian president Boris Yeltsin that eventually aired Sept. 5 . . .

According to Bettag, Arledge and Vadim Bakatin, the new head of the KGB, talked of the "new spirit of openness between the two countries and Boone asked if there was any chance whatsoever of getting at some facts buried in history that wouldn't jeopardize people but could be of great service . . .

"Bakatin was very encouraging," he said. "We left Forrest behind for the best part of two months. He had long sessions with Bakatin from the end of August until the beginning of October. A relationship of trust was established with several KGB people and eventually, after a long period of time, they agreed to release material exclusively to ABC" . . .

Once it was decided that the Oswald file would be a good place to start, the ground rules were set. Sawyer and his team would be allowed to see the 10-inch-thick file, but they couldn't copy it, couldn't carry any of it out . . .

Bettag said that ABC News "did not pay a cent" for the KGB files. "This is a very sensitive area, especially since the agreement eventually broke down to some degree. But no, absolutely not" . . .

Bettag said that eventually, "the whole thing started to fall apart. Questions were being raised by the Soviet bureaucracy—was it proper to have an American looking at KGB files in a KGB office in Moscow when the CIA would never let a Soviet journalist do the reverse . . .

"Some said it violated Soviet law because they were top secret files. When someone suggested the Soviets declassify the files, they discovered there were no laws for doing so . . .

"Eventually, the Soviets said, 'We need time to work this out; we'll call you.' We've since gotten communications from Bakatin's office that it will take a couple more months to do so. So given the uncertainty it was decided we'd do one broadcast with the material we have; if they ever release it, we'll do more. We felt we had an obligation to share what knowledge we have with the American public" . . .

Bettag said ABC has also interviewed KGB people, gone to Minsk to film in Oswald's old apartment and talked to people in the factory where he worked. "The conclusion seems to have been he could not possibly have been an American agent," Bettag said; "He was not capable of sophisticated action. But they don't draw official conclusions in the file" . . .