

"The CIA's JFK Secret, Post 9/27/92, by James Johnston

9/28/92

Johnston is identified as counsel to the Church committee's JFK investigation. (1976)

Perhaps he was but the Penna. Senator whose name escapes me at the moment had on his office staff working on it Dave Marsden, later Phila. DA. Schweiker.

I am not in a position to dispute Johnston's belief that the CIA believed Oswald was the agent of a foreign country and that may be what the records he saw reflects but on the basis of the evidence, real rather than imagined, there was no basis for this suspicion. It probably originated with Angleton and his nutty <sup>staff and</sup> KGB defectors. There was no real basis for suspecting Oswald was either a Russian or a Cuban agent and the CIA had reason to believe that the USSR believed he was a CIA agent, from Nosenko, whose treatment changed radically as soon as the CIA got the FBI's interview report quoting Nosenko as saying that. The CIA, as Johnston does not report, then undertook, successfully, to persuade the Commission not to take secret testimony from Nosenko while it had him in subhuman, illegal captivity and abused him terribly. *For three years!*

I don't know what Johnston is talking about when he says that on this liaison with the FBI was "awkward." Sam Papich seemed from the records I've seen to have had no trouble with the CIA in JFK matters.

The CIA may have asked the Mexican police to delay questioning <sup>54/114/</sup> Duran but it was not reasonable because it feared she would disclose <sup>what</sup> that would reveal a Cuban conspiracy. The CIA did all it could to promote that itself over the palpably impossible story invented by Gilberto Alvarado Ugarte, who had worked for or with Sapoza's intelligence. There was little if any delay in questioning Duran and the CIA was concerned that when she was picked up by the Mexican police a second time that they would beat her up, abuse her, and HQ instructed the station to intercede. *This strikes me as abnormal and possibly indicating that Duran was a CIA spy inside the Cuban consulate. That the CIA had penetrated it was confirmed by David Atlee Philips in a deposition in a lawsuit he'd filed against Don Freed.*

There is no reason to believe that the CIA did not control the JFK investigation because LBJ did not want it to. It was natural for that to go to the FBI.

Hoover did discipline those 17 agents but that was not because of their alleged failures. It was trumped up to cover his own and the FBI's ass.

The bases given for Angleton's suspicions are silly. He was silly on such political matters and the reasons given are not reasons at all.

If Oswald fitted the psychological profile for an assassin, god help those who depend on such profiles! It is false that "Oswald seemed to lack conscience" and the rest is both meaningless and <sup>obvious</sup> ~~opposite~~ his character.

Johnston thinks that if and when disclosed the CIA's files will raise "disturbing questions." *likely because it has those baseless suspicion and has destroyed all else.*  
?: How good was Church Com. about what was not obvious about the CIA? It was ignorant re: jfk.

# The CIA's JFK Secret

The Classified Files Will Show the Agency Believed in a Conspiracy

Part 1/27/92

By James Johnston

Congress at long last is poised to open the so-called "secret" files on the Kennedy assassination from various investigations, beginning in 1963. It wants to satisfy academics and the curious, but the files are likely to set off new controversy.

The files will show that while government officials and the Warren Commission launched a campaign to persuade the public that Lee Harvey Oswald alone plotted to kill John Kennedy, CIA analysts took the opposite position in secret. They believed that even if Oswald was the lone assassin, he may have been the agent of a foreign conspiracy.

The gap between the government's public and the CIA's positions was widest in the days immediately after the president's death. On Nov. 23, 1963, CIA analysts prepared a memorandum covering the facts they knew at the time. They knew that Oswald had once defected to the Soviet Union. They knew that he made a trip to Mexico City two months before the assassination and talked to Soviet Vice Consul Kostikov about a visa. And they believed that Kostikov was a KGB assassination and sabotage expert.

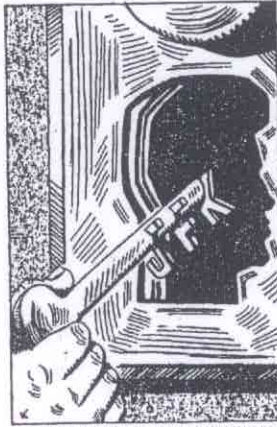
From this, their memorandum argued, there was reason enough to believe that Oswald was part of a foreign plot. If this were true, CIA analysts predicted, then Oswald himself might be killed before he could talk.

The gist of this memorandum was to be passed through CIA liaison to the FBI—with the warning that Oswald could be in danger. Unfortunately, relations between the two agencies were strained and liaison was awkward; Oswald, while in police custody, was killed before the FBI received the message. The fact that Oswald was murdered, as CIA analysts had warned, fueled their suspicions.

Also on Nov. 23, the CIA asked Mexican authorities to delay questioning Sylvia Duran, an employee at the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City who had talked with Oswald when he went there for a Cuban visa. The CIA, fearing that Duran would reveal a Cuban conspiracy, wanted the questioning delayed until the United States decided how to react.

President Johnson was briefed by CIA Director John McCone during this critical period. McCone's cryptic memoranda omit important details, but may be the only record of what Johnson was told. JFK's sophisticated taping system was removed from the White House on the afternoon of Nov. 22 and, for reasons unknown, there are no tapes from the last two weeks of his administration. Johnson recorded telephone calls on a Dictabelt system he had used as vice president, but no one has yet had access to any presidential tapes from this period.

McCone's memorandum of his first briefing simply indicates that the subject was the assassination. It does not say whether McCone knew (or told LBJ about) CIA concern



MARTIN KOZLOWSKI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

over Oswald's safety. McCone's second briefing was at 10 a.m. on Nov. 24. A Cuban conspiracy was certainly a possibility; indeed, the CIA was involved at the time in a plot to kill Fidel Castro. Thus, it is significant that the subject of this briefing was not JFK but rather CIA operational plans against Cuba.

Allegations of a Cuban conspiracy inundated the CIA. On Nov. 25, a man told U.S. Embassy officials in Mexico City that he was at the Cuban Consulate on Sept. 17, 1963. He claimed that Oswald was there and talked about assassination and that the Cubans gave Oswald \$6,500. The CIA later dismissed the story as untrue, but McCone's memoranda reveal that Johnson's concern was such that McCone would brief him for another week.

The story was consistent with other reports the CIA received on Nov. 25. For example, the Mexico City station cabled a reminder that Castro had issued a threat against U.S. leaders in September.

Thus, as of Nov. 25 1963, the CIA had ample reason to suspect that Cubans or Soviets—or both—were involved. Despite this, and just four days after the assassination, the Justice Department advised the White House to declare publicly that Oswald acted alone. Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach wrote presidential assistant Bill Moyers on Nov. 26:

"It is important that all of the facts surrounding President Kennedy's assassination be made public in a way which will satisfy people in the United States and abroad that all the facts have been told and that a statement to this effect be made now.

"1. The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such he would have been convicted at trial.

"2. Speculation about Oswald's motivation ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting thought that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists."

Johnson wanted to accept this advice. On Nov. 26, he told McCone that the FBI had responsibility for the investigation; the CIA was only to assist. Since the FBI did not share the CIA's suspicions, Johnson's decision seemed to signal that

and fiddle because it wanted its own efforts to be as independent as possible. CIA analysts felt that the FBI had been derelict in its handling of Oswald before Kennedy's assassination—and they were right. In fact, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover would secretly discipline 17 agents for mistakes in handling Oswald.

To allay public concern, Johnson, on Nov. 29, created the Warren Commission. Ten days later, the FBI wrapped up its investigation and submitted a five-volume report to the White House and the commission; the FBI report found no evidence of conspiracy. Katzenbach immediately urged the commission to make public the FBI's finding.

At the CIA, however, the situation was different. Responsibility for the continued investigation was given to James Angleton's counterintelligence division, which was targeted against the KGB. There was a world of suspicion—and, not surprisingly, they were suspicious of the FBI's finding.

To Angleton's counterintelligence specialists, aspects of Oswald's odd character, which the FBI and the Warren Commission casually dismissed, seemed perfectly explicable. To them, Oswald acted like an agent of foreign intelligence: He used aliases and post office boxes. Less than two months before Kennedy was shot, he moved his family from New Orleans to Dallas, but lived apart and under an assumed name.

Oswald was in communication with organizations such as the Fair Play for Cuba Committee that may have had foreign ties. Agents often used such innocent-appearing contacts as means of relaying messages. Also suspicious was Oswald's counterfeiting of identity documents. The counterfeits were inferior by CIA standards, but how and why had Oswald learned this?

Then there was Oswald's trip to Mexico City. Agents periodically leave their home country in order to meet their intelligence "handlers" in safehouses. Oswald's six days in Mexico City got him out of the FBI's reach. He went to the Soviet and Cuban consulates to get visas, but the rest of his time was unaccounted for.

If there were a psychological profile for an assassin, Oswald fit it. He was disaffected with the United States and thought life would be better "on the other side." He seemed to lack conscience and could be violent. He had tried suicide once. Assassins and saboteurs with suicidal tendencies were thought willing to undertake recklessly dangerous missions.

These were only suspicions, however. When the Warren Commission's final report was issued in September 1964, the CIA publicly accepted its findings. But, Angleton's secret investigation continued for years, and he was not alone in harboring doubts. LBJ was to say privately that he thought Castro had a hand in the assassination.

The secret files will not reveal a conspiracy to shoot JFK but, as Johnson's remarks suggest, they raise disturbing questions. Did the government believe, and tell the president, that there may have been a conspiracy to assassinate his

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