

S.F. CHRONICLE - 5/13/92

# House Panel Gets Early Oswald File

## CIA records predate JFK assassination

By John Diamond  
Associated Press

Washington

CIA documents on Lee Harvey Oswald show that government agents tracked the shadowy defector off and on for the three years before President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

The 110-page file, given to a Senate committee yesterday and made available to the Associated Press, holds all the CIA documents collected before the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination in Dallas. CIA Director Robert Gates told the Senate Government Affairs Committee that the file will be available to the public "any day now."

Gates said he wants to clear the CIA of "this corrosive suspicion" that agency operatives were involved in Kennedy's assassination.

"The only thing more horrifying to me than the assassination itself is the insidious, perverse notion that elements of my own government, including this agency, had something to do with it," Gates told the committee during a hearing on legislation to allow the release of thousands of assassination-related documents.

The Oswald file, which Gates brought with him to the hearing, consists of 33 documents, 11 of them originating in the CIA. They concern Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his activities after returning to the United States in 1961.

Attorney James Lesar, who operates the Assassination Archives and Research Center, said that the material seems to include information that has already been available to researchers.

The documents show what appears to be a mild government interest in Oswald beginning with his defection and leading to his mysterious visit to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City a month before the assassination.

Documents from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow describe Oswald as arrogant and demanding, first in renouncing his U.S. citizenship and then in trying to regain it two years later. One embassy document sent to the State Department notes that Oswald was worried that if he returned to the United States, he would be prosecuted and jailed for defecting.

Oswald demanded "full guarantees that I shall not, under any circumstances, be prosecuted for any act pertaining to this case." The State Department gave no guarantees but told Oswald that there appeared to be no prosecution impending.

Several documents mention Oswald's service in the Marines in the late 1950s.

An October 1963 CIA memo discusses the visit to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City. It describes the person who identified himself as "Lee Oswald" as being six feet tall with an athletic build, a description that ran counter to Oswald's slight physique.

The question of whether someone was posing as Oswald in a contact with Soviet officials is a matter of keen interest to assassination scholars.

After Oswald was identified as the assassin, government files expanded rapidly. The CIA has about 33,000 pages relating to Oswald and as many as 300,000 pages of material on the assassination.

Gates and FBI Director William Sessions said they both support the goal of releasing assassination material. But they raised numerous objections to the proposed legislation.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General David Leitch confirmed under questioning that the Bush administration is working on an executive order directing federal agencies to declassify and release Kennedy assassination documents.