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File Data Shows CIA Kept Tabs on Lee Oswald

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From Associated Press

WASHINGTON—CIA documents on Lee Harvey Oswald show that government agents used informants and face-to-face interviews to track the shadowy defector off and on for three years before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

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

In a hearing on legislation to allow the release of thousands of assassination-related documents, Gates said he wants to clear the CIA of "this corrosive suspicion" that agency operatives were involved in the assassination.

The file that Gates brought 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 Archive and Research Center, said that based on a quick perusal the material already has been available to researchers. Many of the documents are FBI memos sent to the CIA and may be among those already released by the FBI in response to Freedom of Information Act requests.

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

After Oswald was identified as the assassin, government files expanded rapidly. The CIA has about 33,000 pages relating to Oswald and up to 300,000 pages of material on the assassination. Gates said a CIA historical review panel will gradually work through the other documents and approve the release of most.