

Paper

Documents detail CIA's probes of JFK

By Timothy Clifford

WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington — No matter how wacky the leads or sensitive the sources, the Central Intelligence Agency tried to track down a multitude of hints of a foreign conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy.

Among the 90,000 pages of previously classified CIA material released yesterday through the National Archives, for example, is one May, 1964, CIA memo that details the exhaustive agency investigation of a letter to the U.S. Embassy in Sweden that alleged the "Red Chinese" orchestrated Lee Harvey Oswald's attack on Kennedy.

"The Red Chinese expected that the U.S. would attack Cuba when it learned that the assassin was a Cuban sympathizer," the two-page report says, paraphrasing the Nov. 25, 1963, letter. "The Soviets would then attack the U.S.A., the Red Chinese would ask [the] Soviets for atomic weapons, the Communist Bloc would win the war, [and] the Chinese Reds would then assassinate Khrushchev and take over control."

But CIA experts rejected the possibility that the letter's author was a Chinese government official, concluding that it "was probably written by a Swede, using a Swedish keyboard typewriter and Swedish stationery."

Halfway around the world in Australia, according to another newly unclassified document, other CIA agents were fervently pumping yet another dry well. On Nov. 24, 1963, CIA operatives were trying to trace an anonymous caller — claiming to be a "Polish chauffeur" for the Soviet Embassy — who telephoned the

Chases

assassination

American Embassy to say that the Soviets had put a \$100,000 bounty on Kennedy's life.

The caller claimed that two Soviet agents sent an Australian assassin to the United States in early November, 1963, and then celebrated Kennedy's death with shots of vodka with the toast, "We have achieved what we want."

According to the four-page CIA memo, the agency was concerned because the same man, a little more than a year earlier, had called the U.S. Embassy in Australia to warn that there was a Soviet plot against the president's life. The CIA didn't find the Polish chauffeur, but it continued its investigation, according to the 1964 report.

The concern that the Soviet Union could have been behind the assassination led one CIA informant to file in May, 1964, a full account of a meeting between Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, the then-prime minister of Canada, Lester Pearson, and their wives, six months after Kennedy's death.

Quoting Pearson's wife, the CIA contact said both Khrush-

chev and his wife expressed sorrow over the assassination and asked about the widowed Jacqueline Kennedy. And then Khrushchev asked Pearson, "What really happened?"

When the prime minister put forward the thesis that Oswald was "mad" and a lone assassin, Khrushchev and his wife reacted with "flat disbelief," with the Soviet leader being "completely convinced that the true story of the Kennedy assassination has not come out."

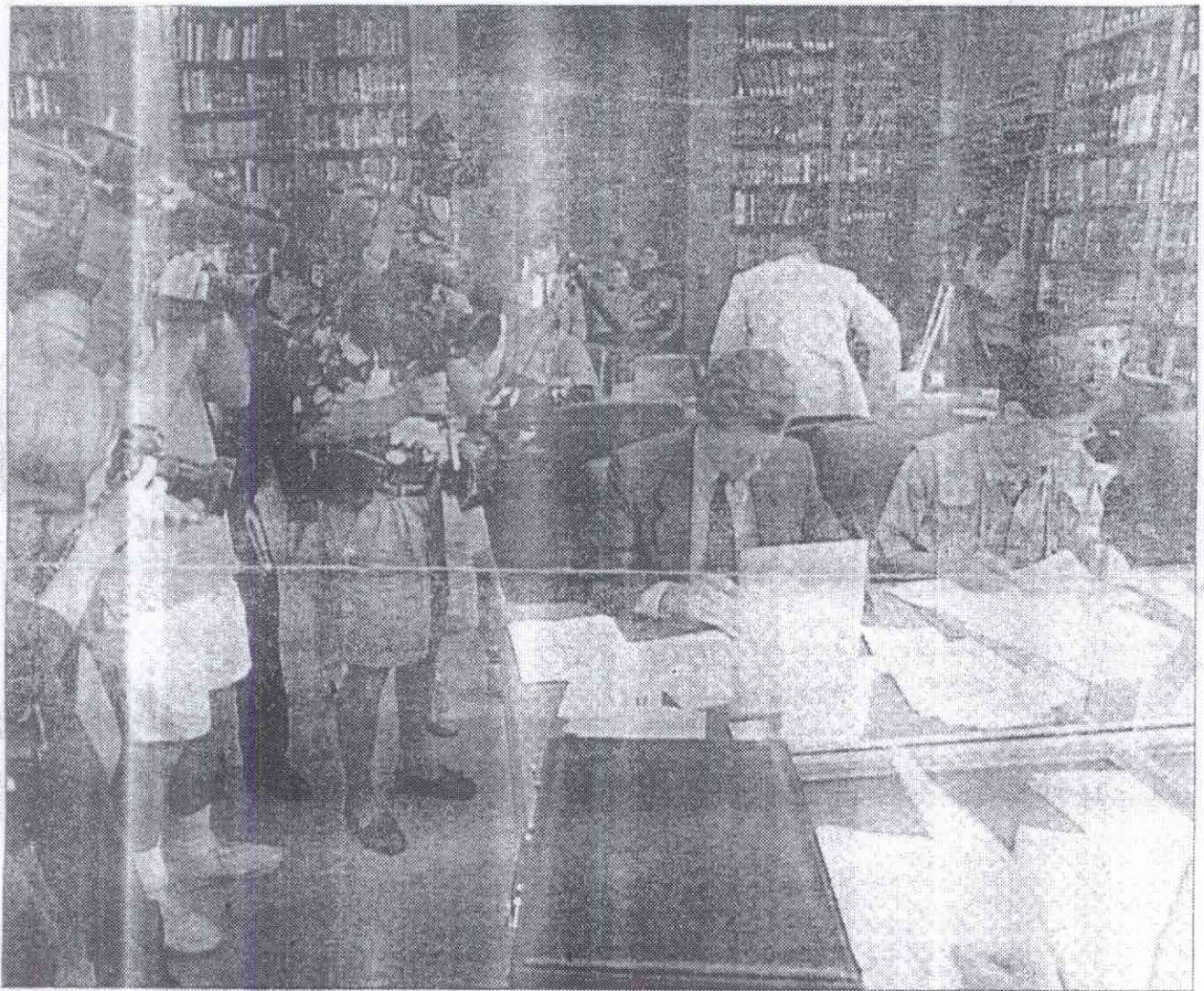
With the source's name blotted out, the three-page report gives no indication of how the CIA informant was on such familiar terms with the Pearsons.

Nowhere near the expected number of assassination investigators came to the archives yesterday to view the CIA documents that were part of the 800,000-page JFK assassination collection mandated for release by Congress last year. Packs of television cameras focused on nearly every one of the two dozen or so people actually reading through the files. By the afternoon, the special research room was all but deserted.

"There was much more media and many fewer researchers than we expected," archivist David Paynter said.

But there were a number of veteran

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AP Photo

Members of the media outnumber researchers going over the Kennedy assassination documents released yesterday

reporters, such as Bob Clark of ABC News, who witnessed Jack Ruby shooting Oswald to death in Dallas two days after the Kennedy assassination, greeting one another like it was class reunion in between sorting through documents.

The CIA, which already has released 35,000 pages from its so-called Oswald Files with another 20,000 pages in the archives pipeline, has held back about 10,000 pages and 73 reels of microfilm of documents waiting for a Review Board, yet to be appointed by President

Bill Clinton, to decide whether they should be made public.

Notations on cover sheets of several documents, however, reveal that the agency was tempted to release them years ago to batter critics of the Warren report, which concluded that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy.

In a June 6, 1967, internal CIA memo,

one agent writes that then New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's conspiracy case on the assassination was a sham. "Without exception, his allegations are false," the memo reads. "They are the grossest we've seen from any responsible American official."

Angry over a 1964 book titled "Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy?" by Jo-

achim Joesten, the CIA located a 1937 Nazi Gestapo report that alleges that Joesten was a member of the German Communist Party.

Eventually being overruled, one official, according to an October, 1964, memo, advocated releasing the Gestapo's information — saying that it would be "a good chance to give him the shaft."



Oswald after the assassination

31 January 1964

Information Developed by CIA on the Activity of Lee Harvey OSWALD in Mexico City 31 September - 1 October 1963

I. OSWALD's Activity in Mexico City

1. On 7 October the CIA Station in Mexico City received the following information from a reliable and proven source:

An American named Lee OSWALD had contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City on Tuesday, 1 October 1963. He had spoken [redacted] to the Soviet Embassy guard, Ivan Ivanovich OSYEDKOV, to whom he said he had visited the Embassy two days earlier, Saturday, 28 September. He asked whether there had been a reply to a telegram that the Consul with whom he had spoken, but whose name he could not recall, had promised to send to Washington, [redacted]

[redacted] whom OSWALD had talked; [redacted]

[redacted] had probably been KOSTINOV, OSYEDKOV, [redacted]

CIA Chiefs Suspected Castro Had Role

By Patrick J. Sloyan
WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington — Top U.S. intelligence officials suspected but never proved that Fidel Castro might have been a factor in Lee Harvey Oswald's assassination of President John F. Kennedy, according to one of the CIA documents made public yesterday.

The Central Intelligence Agency view was outlined in a 1975 letter to the director of a presidential commission that investigated the Kennedy administration's abortive plots to kill the Cuban leader in the months preceding Kennedy's death in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

In the month before Kennedy was killed, Oswald contacted the Soviet and Cuban Embassies during a visit to Mexico City, and those telephone conversations were intercept-

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ed and recorded by the CIA.

Of all the thousands of assassination-related documents made public yesterday, experts at the National Archives and senior U.S. intelligence officials said, researchers are likely to focus on new details of Oswald's Cuban connections. Because of the Kennedy plots against Castro, the CIA believed the Cuban leader had a motive to support Oswald, the intelligence officials said.

While saying no "credible" evidence of either a Cuban or Soviet link existed in Washington, "such evidence could exist in Moscow and/or Havana," said the 1975 CIA letter to David Belin, executive director of a 1975 report that disclosed CIA activities against Castro.

"The belief that there was Soviet and/or Cuban . . . connection(s) with Oswald will persist and grow until there has been a full disclosure by these governments of all elements of Oswald's handling and stay in the Soviet Union and his contacts in Mexico City," the letter said. "That, indeed, was the opinion at the working level, particularly in the counterintelligence component of the CIA in 1964."

Both the Castro government and the Soviet Union denied any involvement with the assassination of Kennedy. In addition, a Soviet KGB defector told the CIA in 1964 that his intelligence service viewed Oswald as "mentally unstable." But there has been no inside account of Cuban intelligence operations.

In 1964, the presidential commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren concluded that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy. Even though former CIA Director Allen Dulles was a member of the Warren Commission, the panel was not told of the series of attempts on Castro's life that were directed by the CIA. The agency had sought out Mafia leaders with ties to Cuba to carry out the assassination attempts.

In hindsight 11 years later, the CIA told Belin that there was "great significance" in a Castro interview with The Associated Press published in September, 1963. Complaining about U.S.-supported raids on Cuba, Castro said, "U.S. leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe."

The letter noted that the AP story was given front-page play in a paper in

New Orleans, where Oswald was a volunteer for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

"Castro's warning must be considered of great significance in the light of the pathological evolution of Oswald's passive/aggressive makeup . . . and his identification with Castro and the Cuban revolution," the CIA said.

The CIA traced Oswald's first contact with Cuba to early 1959, while he was in the Marine Corps at El Toro, Calif. According to another Marine, Nelson Delgado, Oswald said he had contacted the Cuban consul's office in Los Angeles. According to Delgado, Oswald showed him official correspondence and may have met with a Cuban official off-base.

But the CIA noted in 1975 that Delgado's evidence was never developed and pursued, "Thus the record of the beginning of Oswald's relationship with the Cubans starts with a question mark," the CIA said.

In addition to new details about Oswald's contact with Delgado, the CIA letter also recounted previously disclosed contacts by Oswald with the Soviet and Cuban Embassy officials in Mexico City.

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