

NATION

FBI: Oswald Was Not Well-Paid Soviet Agent

Debunks conspiracy theory

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A long-secret FBI report casts doubt on one of the persistent conspiracy theories in President John F. Kennedy's assassination, that Lee Harvey Oswald was a well-paid Soviet agent after, and perhaps even before, defecting to Moscow.

The FBI report said Oswald was so short of money in the Soviet Union that he once asked his mother, Marguerite Oswald, to mail him \$20 in cash. Before leaving the United States, Oswald had lent his mother \$100. From Moscow, in addition to requesting the \$20, he wrote that he was "short of cash and need the rest" of the \$100.

That seemed to support the Warren Commission conclusion that there was no evidence reflecting Oswald was a paid Soviet agent or that the Soviet Union was behind the assassination. The late Dean Rusk, Kennedy's secretary of state, testified before the commission in 1964 that he had seen no evidence indicating "that the Soviet Union was in any way involved in the removal of President Kennedy." The Warren Commission, appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate the assassination, accepted Rusk's assessment. But conspiracy theorists have argued over the years that Oswald was an agent manipulated by Moscow.

The FBI report on the case, based largely on agents' interviews with Oswald's mother and his brother Robert after his 1959 defection, has just been made public by the U.S. Assassination Records Review Board. The board is responsible for releasing documents on the 1963 Kennedy assassination that do not endanger national security. The FBI long opposed release of the report, on the ground that it would reveal bureau sources

and methods, but relented when the review board found no reason to keep the contents secret.

Marguerite Oswald told agents that after Lee Oswald's Marine Corps discharge in September, 1959, he visited her for three days in Fort Worth, Texas, and then left for New Orleans, ostensibly to work for an import-export firm. But a short time later, she said, she received a letter from him that said: "I have booked passage on a ship to Europe. I would of had to sooner or later, and I think it's best that I do now. Just remember above all else that my values are very different from Robert's or yours."

Oswald's mother, the report said, was "very much shocked" to learn he had gone to Moscow. She assumed he had financed the trip with \$1,600 he saved in the Marines. "She stated that he had never shown any proclivities for the ideologies of communism," the agents reported.

Responding to requests for money from Lee Oswald, his mother said, she tried several times to send him checks for \$20 or \$25 in Moscow, but they came back to her in the mail. One \$20 check, mailed Jan. 5, 1960, a year before Kennedy's inauguration as president, finally did get to Lee Oswald. But he sent it back with a curt note saying he "could not use the check, of course." Oswald urged his mother to mail him \$20 in cash. She did, but it came back in the mail.

"I hope you like Russia," Marguerite Oswald wrote Lee. "If you don't and want to come back, I believe it can be arranged." When Oswald returned to the United States in 1962, claiming he was disillusioned with the Soviet Union, he pleaded poverty and paid the transportation costs for himself and his wife, Marina, with a government loan arranged by the American embassy in Moscow.



UPI File Photo
Lee Harvey Oswald shown in a photo taken in 1959



UPI File Photo
Oswald's mother, Marguerite, in New York in 1964

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