

On November 25, 1963, only three days after the assassination, a young Nicaraguan, Gilberto Alvarado, went to the American embassy in Mexico. He startled U.S. officials by claiming that in September he had visited the Cuban embassy and overheard a conversation among Oswald, a Cuban, and a black man. According to Alvarado, the Cuban passed money to the black man, who then said, "I want to kill the man." Oswald replied, "You are not man enough—I can do it." The black man said, "I can't go with you. I have a lot to do." Oswald assured him it was all right: "The people are waiting for me back there." Then the Cuban man handed Oswald \$6,500 in large-denomination bills.<sup>109</sup> Alvarado also asserted that he had tried to warn the embassy before the assassination, but was ignored.

The CIA gave Alvarado's story its full attention. The information was sent to the FBI as well as to the White House.\* But under questioning from Mexican authorities, Alvarado recanted his entire story.<sup>110</sup> Then, when questioned by the Americans, he said the Mexicans had coerced him to retract. He repeated his original story, but failed a lie detector test. Later he said he was no longer sure of the date, and the person only resembled Oswald. Although Ambassador Thomas Mann, the U.S. representative in Mexico at the time, was not convinced the Alvarado story was completely false, Alvarado is now so discredited that few repeat his story.\*\*

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\*President Lyndon Johnson later believed that Castro was behind the assassination. The Alvarado story must certainly have contributed to LBJ's early suspicion.

\*\*On December 2, ten days after the assassination, another witness, Pedro Gutierrez, wrote President Johnson that he had seen Oswald receive a large amount of money from an official at the Cuban embassy. At first, this seemed an important confirmation of Alvarado's story, but the Gutierrez claim also crumbled upon subsequent investigation. Then, within days of the Gutierrez allegation, a CIA source pinpointed a Cuban, Gilberto Lopez, who had contact with the Tampa branch of Fair Play for Cuba, as a conspirator. According to the source, Lopez rushed into Mexico the day after the assassination, went to the Cuban embassy in Mexico City, and was spirited to Havana on a Cubana airlines flight that had waited hours only for him. While the Warren Commission's investigation of this story was weak, the Select Committee extensively researched it. While the Committee was