

New Report On Oswald And CIA

Washington

A former finance officer for the Central Intelligence Agency has testified before the House Select Committee on Assassinations that his colleagues told him that Lee Harvey Oswald was a secret operative for the agency in Japan in the late 1950s.

The witness, James B. Wilcott, who said that he served in the CIA from 1957 to 1966, contended in an interview that conversations with colleagues in the agency's Tokyo station after President Kennedy's assassination on Nov. 22, 1963, persuaded him that Oswald, who had served as a marine in the Far East, had been recruited by the agency to infiltrate the Soviet Union.

Wilcott said that he testified under oath at a closed session of the House committee last Wednesday, supplying the names of several CIA officials who might be able to give further details on the matter.

Robert Blakey, the chief counsel and staff director of the committee, declined to comment on the testimony.

According to several sources, the committee is investigating Wilcott's testimony.

Wilcott said he joined the CIA as a low-ranking finance officer in 1957 and was sent to Tokyo in 1960. At the Tokyo station, which was in a building that ostensibly housed U.S. Air Force personnel, Wilcott said, his responsibilities included making cash disbursements for

projects identified only by code names called "cryptos."

He said that in the months after Kennedy's death he had several conversations with personnel involved in covert operations. Those talks, he said, persuaded him that Oswald, who had been stationed at Atsugi Air Base, Japan, had been recruited to infiltrate the Soviet Union as a spy.

Wilcott said that he could recall only one specific conversation, which occurred shortly after Jack Ruby shot Oswald in Dallas. In an account of the conversation that he prepared for publication, Wilcott noted, "I was talking with someone, I can't recall who for sure, and I expressed disbelief about Oswald even being a CIA project. I was told something like, 'Well, Jim, so and so drew an advance sometime in the past from you for Oswald' or 'for that project under such and such a crypto.'"

"It was a familiar cryptonym to me at the time, which I have since forgotten, as well as the time that the advance of funds was drawn," he wrote.

Wilcott, a gray-haired man of medium height, said that his memory was sketchy after 15 years, and there appear to be several discrepancies in his recollections.

For instance, he remembered having learned of the Kennedy assassination on an afternoon flight of a private plane. However, Kennedy was shot at midday in Dallas, which would have been early the next morning in Japan.

Oswald served in the Far East from 1957 until November, 1958, and was discharged from the Marine Corps before Wilcott was sent to Tokyo.