

ASSASSINATIONS

Former agent links Oswald

By Herb Borock & John Markoff

BASED ON WHAT I HEARD AT Tokyo Station, I became convinced that the following scenario is true: CIA people killed Kennedy. Either it was an outright project of headquarters with the approval of McCone or it was done outside, perhaps under the direction of Dulles and Bissell. It was done in retaliation to Kennedy's reneging on a secret agreement with Dulles to support the invasion of Cuba."

The man who made this statement to the House Select Committee on Assassinations lives quietly in a California suburb today. He is a technician for a small electronics company and spends most of his time raising and caring for his family.

But on the day President Kennedy was shot, Jim Wilcott led a very different life. He was a financial officer in a "Class A" CIA station in Tokyo, Japan. Wilcott was the man who made the disbursements for CIA covert operations in Japan.

Recently he told congressional investigators that Lee Harvey Oswald was a CIA agent controlled by the Tokyo Station's Soviet Russia Branch: "At one point, soon after Ruby shot Oswald, I was talking to someone, I can't remember 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.'"

Wilcott is the first CIA agent to surface who was present, inside the agency, and in day-to-day contact with the case officers who operated in the shadowy world that linked Oswald to the Kennedy assassina-

tion. Wilcott is one of more than 1,400 people who have been interviewed by staff investigators for the House Assassinations Committee that was established in September 1976 to investigate the murders of Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. The committee has been holding public hearings this month in Washington.

Wilcott contacted the committee to tell them about "the Kennedy assassination as I knew it at the completion of my second tour at Tokyo Station as of June 1964." Committee staff investigator Harold Leap came to California in January to record Wilcott's statement on tape. The committee then decided to interview Wilcott in Washington.

Wilcott's career inside the agency spanned nine years between 1957 and 1966, when he worked in Japan, Miami and Washington, D.C., occasionally involving himself in field operations as well as working as a financial officer.

to CIA

Oswald's role as double agent.

Wilcott claims it was because he was involved in the operational side of the CIA that he first learned that Oswald was an agent. To earn extra money while in Tokyo, Wilcott often worked as a duty officer in the station. While working, shortly after Kennedy was killed, he first heard discussions of CIA involvement in the assassination. He told the committee:

"The following day, Nov. 24, Sunday, I had day duty. Much talk was still going on although meetings had gone on among the branches all night. Much was said at these meetings about observing the 'need-to-know' principle. The mood had changed from the elation of the previous day to a more serious one. That was when I first heard about CIA somehow being involved. Not long before going off duty, talk about Oswald's connection with the CIA was making the rounds."

More than once, Wilcott was told about CIA employees who were "working on the Oswald project" in the late 1950s, he told the committee.

According to Wilcott, Oswald had been trained by the CIA at Atsugi Naval Air Station, the CIA's secret base for Tokyo Station's special operations. The

station's SR [Soviet Russia] Branch had responsibility for Atsugi where Oswald was stationed with a Marine Corps unit from 1956 to 1958.

"Oswald was recruited from the military for the express purpose of becoming a double agent on assignment to the USSR, Wilcott testified. "When Oswald returned from the USSR in June of 1962, either on his way back or after he got back, he was brought back to Japan, either to Atsugi or Yokosuka for debriefing."

In 1963 Oswald established a Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans to support the Castro regime. It seemed likely to Wilcott "that the original assassination project may have been to kill Kennedy and blame it on Oswald, who would be solidly linked to Castro as a pretext for another invasion."

Bay of Pigs, a bone of contention.

The failure of the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961 was

a major point of contention between the Kennedy administration and the CIA. The invasion plan was developed by the CIA's Deputy Director Richard Bissell, and had the full backing of CIA Director Allen Dulles. Kennedy fired both men after the invasion.

Supporters of Bissell and Dulles contended that Kennedy reneged on an agreement he had reached with them shortly after his election to provide U.S. military support for the invasion. Kennedy supporters said that Dulles and Bissell misled Kennedy by giving him false reports about anti-Castro sentiment in Cuba and by changing the invasion plans "to include the creation of an incident that would call for an all-out attack by the U.S. military," Wilcott told the committee.

The dispute between Kennedy and Bissell and Dulles was reflected within the CIA itself according to Wilcott. There was a group of "Kennedy liberals" who were mostly low-ranking employees, and

a dominant and strongly anti-communist group.

Wilcott remembers CIA conservatives accusing Kennedy of "treason" and calling him a "dupe of the USSR" after he negotiated the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in September 1963. The conservatives were also upset about Kennedy's support of integration, his positions against the oil depletion allowance, and his plans for withdrawing troops from Vietnam, Wilcott recalled. "More frequent and more bitter, however was the charge that Kennedy had reneged on his secret agreement with Dulles to support the Bay of Pigs invasion," Wilcott stated before the committee.

When Wilcott heard that Kennedy had been killed he went to the Tokyo CIA Station: "It was a scene of great excitement, confusion and wild talk. The conservatives were obviously elated and there was talk of an invasion of Cuba. From the very first day, everyone talked in terms of an operation, particularly the operational people, or in popular terms—a conspiracy," Wilcott testified.

The following day Wilcott first heard talk about CIA involvement with the assassination and of Oswald's connection to the CIA. "While this kind of talk was a jolt to me, I didn't really take it seriously then," Wilcott testified. But by the time Wilcott left Tokyo seven months later he was convinced that "Ruby was paid by CIA to do away with Oswald, and Oswald was a patsy."

KGB on to Oswald.

Wilcott believes that Oswald was set up because the CIA was concerned that they could not control Oswald's actions in

the future. When Oswald returned from the Soviet Union in 1962 he was debriefed by the CIA in Japan, Wilcott told us, because "they were having some kind of difficulty with Oswald. He knew that the KGB was on to him as soon as he stepped on Soviet soil. It was a stupid project from the start. There were too many compromising facets to his background that would have made him a good deep cover double agent and that therefore the Soviets were on to him right from the start. This made him very angry and this was why they had trouble."

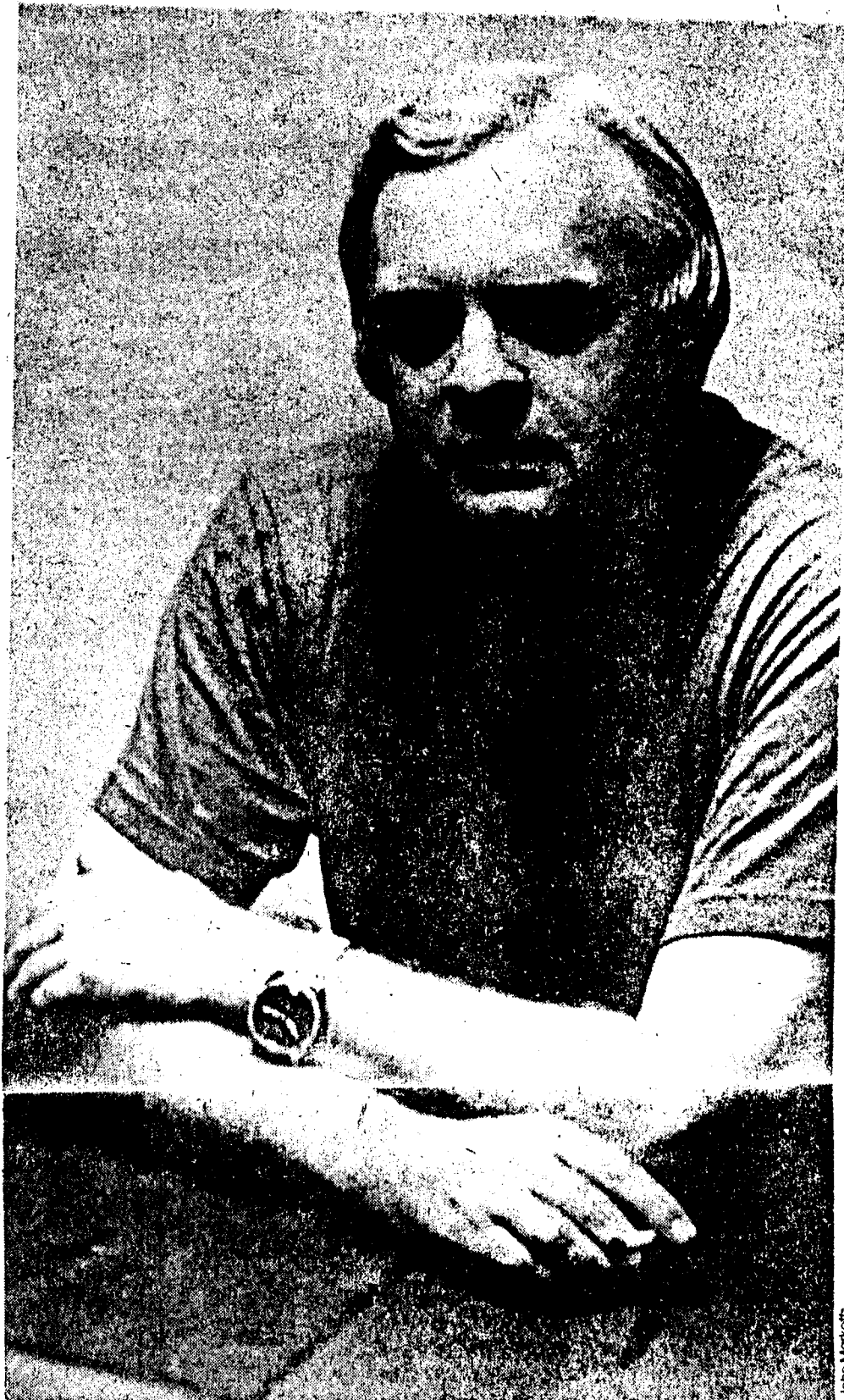
Wilcott said, "Oswald may have been set up as a patsy because they were having this trouble. He may have threatened to blow the whole thing about the double agent role in the Soviet Union. So they did get two birds with one stone. They set him up as Kennedy's assassin and got rid of him at the same time."

According to Wilcott, the CIA had connections with the Dallas police and certain individuals and corporations in Dallas at the time Kennedy was killed in that city. He told the committee:

"There was no doubt that CIA was in 'as thick as thieves' with the Dallas Police. Several different individuals or firms in Dallas had been involved in one way or another with acting as cut-outs for arms shipments to Cuban exiles for the invasion. He also remembered "hearing about some CIA people who had somehow helped the right-wing Minutemen in Texas to get arms, originally intended for the invasion."

When Wilcott was transferred from Tokyo to Washington in 1964 he found out about other non-foreign operations. He learned that the CIA believed it had the duty "to exceed the limitations of the CIA charter, or even the Congress and the President," he told the assassinations committee. In our recent interview with him Wilcott stated, "I used to hear this talk about, well, if a communist was elected president, the CIA was prepared to deal with that." ■

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John Markoff

Jim Wilcott, stationed in Japan, knew of Oswald as a double agent for the CIA.

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