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Oswald Case MAR 25 1976

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KGB Defector's 3-Year Grilling

Washington

A Soviet defector who assured U.S. officials that Lee Harvey Oswald was not a Russian agent was held in solitary for nearly three years while the CIA tried unsuccessfully to break his story, according to informed intelligence sources.

Yuri Nosenko, who claimed to be a high-ranking officer in the KGB with first-hand knowledge of the Oswald case, was freed in 1967 when CIA officials could no longer justify such extreme measures in the absence of solid evidence that he was an imposter, the sources said yesterday.

Suspicion of Nosenko's story, which a Warren Commission document said "if true, would certainly go a long way toward showing that the Soviet Union had no part in the assassination" of President Kennedy, was based mainly on the coincidence in timing between the Nov. 22, 1963 slaying and Nosenko's defection in Feb. 1964, the sources said.

Warren Commission files give no indication that the panel was ever informed of the CIA's suspicions about Nosenko. A recently released CIA memo shows that James Angleton, then head of CIA counterintelligence, told the commission that the CIA had no information that would either prove or disprove Nosenko's story.

The conditions of Nosenko's

confinement were first described in the Rockefeller Commission's report but without mentioning his name or linking him to the investigation of the Kennedy assassination.

"A defector was involuntarily confined to a CIA installation for approximately three years," the report issued last June said. "For much of this time the defector was held in solitary confinement under extremely spartan living conditions."

The report concluded that "such treatment of individuals by an agency of the United States is unlawful."

Sources familiar with the case said Nosenko was confined in a building which was "equivalent to Army barracks," where he had a bed, chair and toilet but no contact with other people. One former intelligence official familiar with the case said Nosenko was subjected to "hostile interrogation" but was not physically abused.

Associated Press