

More Mexico Mysteries

Adapted from a talk given at the
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Overview

The truth of what happened in Mexico City several weeks prior to the assassination of President Kennedy remains elusive. New revelations “from the files” deepen the mystery rather than clarify it in many cases. Once-secret HSCA depositions and documents in the HSCA’s “Segregated Collection,” particularly the so-called Russ Holmes Work File, contain an abundance of fascinating and disturbing details. This essay will not try to paint the larger picture or present some overarching new thesis. Rather, it is an interim vehicle for discussing some important new findings and revelations; adding bricks to the edifice whose ultimate form remains obscure.

Introduction – Mexico City: The Rosetta Stone

It is difficult to overstate the importance of what is usually called the “Oswald in Mexico City” affair. Certainly the topic was an important one to the CIA—probably a third of the 40,000 pages in the Russ Holmes Work File collection of CIA documents are devoted to it. The Mexico City story is important because it shows that there was a sophisticated operation which served to set up Oswald prior to the assassination, something beyond the wherewithal of Mob figures or anti-Castro Cubans acting alone. It is also important because it finally provides an explanation for why men like Earl Warren, who certainly weren’t part of any conspiracy and normally wouldn’t engage in such a stark cover-up, were put in the position where they did so. Mexico City is indeed the Rosetta Stone of the JFK assassination.

The most easily understood aspect of the Mexico City affair remains the tapes of an Oswald, who apparently was not Oswald, calling the Soviet Embassy in late September and early October of 1963. John

Newman spoke in some detail about these at the 1999 November in Dallas conference, and discussed some of the evidence which shows that the FBI did indeed listen to these tapes in the early morning of November 23, 1963. They determined that it wasn’t Oswald’s voice on the tapes, an inconvenient fact that began to be covered up that evening, even before Oswald was killed by Jack Ruby.

The Non-Oswald Tape

The conversation in which FBI Director Hoover informed the new President, Lyndon Johnson, about this, has itself been erased, as I discovered a few months after Newman’s talk.¹ In this conversation, a transcript of which survives, Hoover told LBJ:

We have up here the tape and the photograph of the man who was at the Soviet Embassy, using Oswald’s name. That picture and the tape do not correspond to this man’s voice, nor to his appearance. In other words, it appears that there is a second person who was at the Soviet Embassy down there.²

This phone call, now reduced to 14 minutes of hiss, was followed up that same day by a five-page FBI Report sent to both the White House and the Secret Service. This report repeated the message in no uncertain terms:

The Central Intelligence Agency advised that on October 1, 1963, an extremely sensitive source had reported that an individual identified himself as Lee Oswald, who contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City inquiring as to any messages. Special Agents of this Bureau, who have conversed with Os-

wald in Dallas, Texas, have observed photographs of the individual referred to above and have listened to a recording of his voice. These Special Agents are of the opinion that the above-referred-to individual was not Lee Harvey Oswald.³

Now I'm not going to go through the rest of the materials which corroborate this account, and show that the subsequent denials from both the CIA and FBI are without merit. Suffice to say that Jeremy Gunn of the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) got it straight from the horse's mouth, from two Warren Commission staffers who listened to the tapes in April of 1964. Although it's disturbing and symptomatic of the delicacy of this matter that the ARRB didn't see fit to get this acknowledgement in sworn testimony. Instead, we get the account in a bit of a roundabout fashion, in the form of a question asked of CIA Mexico City ex-employee Anne Goodpasture:

Gunn. I have spoken with two Warren Commission staff members who went to Mexico City and who both told me that they heard the tape after the assassination obviously. Do you have any knowledge of information regarding tapes that may have been played to those Warren Commission staff members?

Goodpasture. No. It may have been a tape that Win Scott had squirreled away in his safe.⁴

Ultra-Sensitive Sources

The fact that the CIA was taping the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City was of course an ultra-secret secret, a perfect place to hang a plot into and be sure that there would never be a full public airing. The Warren Commission got a lot of vague runaround regarding how the CIA knew what it was telling them during the early months of 1964, until finally in April three staffers were sent by the Commission to Mexico City to try and get some harder information. But even the seventy-page internal report of this trip, written by David Slawson in April 1964 but not released until 1996, never directly says that the tapes were been listened to, instead referring to transcripts:

Mr. Scott's narrative of course took a rather long time to complete, and we interrupted him at many points with specific questions. During the course of the narrative we were shown the actual transcripts, plus the translations, of all the telephone intercepts involved, and we were also shown the reels of photographs for all the days in question that had been taken secretly outside the Cuban and Soviet Embassy entrances.⁵

Documents like this will be used by some to continue to assert that the tapes never really existed at the time of the assassination. I think what's really going on here is that Slawson and Coleman got "the treatment" from the CIA. The ultra-sensitivity of the tapes was impressed upon them in the most forceful terms. This conclusion is not just conjecture.

For instance, William Coleman, David Slawson's partner, told the HSCA just how sensitive he believed the telephone tapping operation to be. In a recorded interview of August 2, 1978, he discussed just how much this had been impressed upon him, and even said he thought it was a "great disservice to the United States" that some of these secret operations were becoming public in the 1970s. He also told the HSCA that if this information had not been public knowledge already, "I would be fudging like hell with you fellows." He apparently went on to do just that, when Ed Lopez asked him directly about the question of the Oswald tapes surviving the assassination:

Lopez. Did the agency ever....explain why it did not have an actual tape recording of Oswald's voice?

Coleman (soft): "I haven't the faintest idea whether they did or did not. I mean, I don't know, I'm pretty sure this question was probably asked of them and they probably gave us...if they had—I don't know whether they had or they didn't have, I mean, I really don't know but I do know that there was...but I'm pretty sure that if we asked them "where is it?"..... (trails off)⁶

Coleman went on to explain why even detailed internal Warren Commission memos might not contain the most sensitive information in them. He also ex-

plained that this material was so secret that not even members of the Warren Commission could be let in on it:

Coleman. By that time.....we were sophisticated with the CIA, and therefore we wrote memoranda.....we tried to use the jargon of the CIA, because we felt it was important not to even indicate to everybody on the Commission some of these sources, because.....Dave Slawson had a special clearance with the CIA and there were some people that didn't.⁷

In fact, as late as May 5, 1964, nearly a month after their Mexico City trip, these Warren Commission staffers had apparently kept every single Commissioner in the dark about sources and methods. Besides the three staffers (Slawson, Coleman, and Willens), apparently only Commission Counsel J. Lee Rankin had been told. A Memo For the Record written by CIA's Thomas Hall of a May 5, 1964 meeting with Slawson notes that:

According to Mr. Slawson, only Messrs. Rankin, Willens, Coleman (?) and he presently know of the telephone taps in Mexico City. Slawson, Willens and Coleman were briefed on the taps during their visit to Mexico City.

.....

According to Mr. Slawson, no member of the Commission now knows of the telephone taps in Mexico City (he did not mention Mr. Dulles).

Mr. [*****] carefully briefed Mr. Slawson (probably rebriefed him) on the importance of these telephone taps to U.S. security and the grave damage that would be done to U.S. – Mexican relations if knowledge of their existence became public.

Mr. Slawson quite clearly was a bit unhappy that certain information could not be used, since the taps were the only source. Oswald's very bad Russian was the example he used. I asked what opinion Mrs. Oswald had of her husband's Russian. She thought that he spoke it very well.⁸

It's unclear whether any Commission members were ever told of the telephone taps.

“Who’s Kostikov?...[He’s] believed to work for Department 13 of the KGB -- the department responsible for assassination.”

40 Million Americans

Now, those who have seen the transcripts of the “Oswald” calls know they’re pretty innocuous if a bit confused, and are plausibly interpreted to be about Oswald’s visa request. The September 28 call has a disturbing comment that “I went to the Cuban Embassy to ask them for my address because they have it,” which would be the cause of much concern at the CIA post-assassination, as it appeared to imply an Oswald relationship with the Cuban Embassy. The October 1 call had something even nastier in it, a reference by “Oswald” to a previous meeting with a man whose name the Soviet guard on the phone supplies: Kostikov.⁹

Who’s Kostikov? Warren Commission Document 347, one of those withheld until the 1990s, is a CIA report on Oswald’s Mexico City trip, written on January 31, 1964. It contains the following:

Kostikov is believed to work for Department Thirteen of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB. It is the Department responsible for executive action, including sabotage and *assassination*. These functions of the KGB are known within the Service itself as “Wet Affairs” (mokryye dela). The Thirteenth Department headquarters, according to very reliable information, conducts interviews or, as appropriate, file reviews on every foreign military defector to the USSR to study and to determine the possibility of *utilizing the defector in his country of origin*.¹⁰ [emphasis added]

This information is apparently what prompted Lyndon Johnson to tell Senator Richard Russell:

.....we’ve got to be taking this out of the arena where they’re testifying that Khrushchev and

Castro did this and did that, and kicking us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour.¹¹

Johnson, of course, had learned almost immediately that it wasn't really Oswald on the phone, and so this Department Thirteen connection was a phony one. But he presumably didn't tell that to Chief Justice Earl Warren when he arm-wrestled Warren onto his President's Commission, with "what Hoover told me about a little incident in Mexico City."¹²

The Third Tape

Now again, the phone calls themselves are not really very sinister, though some dire implications could and were drawn from them in some quarters. But the assumption here is that the record is complete and unaltered. However, we have many reasons to suspect that this is not the case. In particular there are indications, as John Newman wrote about in *Oswald and the CIA*, that there was another phone call which is not in the current record.¹³ Newman made use of the Lopez Report's discussion of the testimony of David Phillips and that of Anna Tarasoff, half of the husband-wife CIA transcription team. But as we'll see, even the Lopez Report is incomplete in regard to the relevant testimony here.

David Phillips 1976 Allegation

First, David Phillips' allegation. On November 26, 1976, the day before he was to testify before the House Select Committee on Assassinations, CIA Chief of Cuban Operations David Phillips dropped a bombshell into the media. The AP reported, in a story headlined "Oswald Offered Soviets Data for Trip," that Phillips remembered another phone call, one not in the record.¹⁴ In that call, Phillips recalled, Oswald offered the Soviets information that "might be useful to them." Ronald Kessler of the Washington Post wrote a lengthier story the same day (of which the Russ Holmes Work File contains many copies, an indication of the interest elicited at CIA) entitled "Hill Panel Probing Oswald Call."¹⁵ Kessler reported that Oswald was trying to wrangle a free trip to the Soviet Union in exchange for information.

Now, as recorded in these articles Phillips' story was still not of a "Hey, I'm going to kill the President

like you told me" phone call. Nonetheless, it's more sinister than the calls we have transcripts for, and might very well include statements that would imply a working relationship between Oswald and the Soviets. And if this story is true, it indicates that the record on Mexico City has been fudged a bit, which is disturbing also.

The HSCA testimony of David Phillips is now public, held among the so-called Security Classified testimony in 9 boxes at the National Archives. Phillips was questioned by Richard Sprague, the HSCA's head at that point and for a few months more, until strange circumstances led to his ouster and replacement by Robert Blakey. In his deposition, David Phillips started out answering directly and then slowly started to dance sideways under questioning, trying to maintain his allegation without being pinned down too hard on specifics:

Mr. Sprague. The United Press has a specific quotation of a statement which they say you made to a United Press International reporter named Daniel F. Gillmore, quoting in part as follows: "I have the recollection hazy after fourteen years that Oswald intimated that he had information that might be useful to the Soviets and Cuba, and that he hoped to be provided with free transportation to Russia via Cuba."

Did you make that statement to Mr. Daniel F. Gillmore of United Press International?

Mr. Phillips. I did, sir.

Mr. Sprague. Is that statement accurate?

Mr. Phillips. I think it is, sir, yes, it is.

Mr. Sprague. There is, in the Washington Post of yesterday's date, a story by Ronald Kessler in which he quotes you in part stating that you recall from a transcript Oswald telling the Soviet embassy, "I have information you would be interested in, and I know you can pay my way" into Russia, but that is not part of the quote.

Is that what you said in part to Mr. Kessler?

Mr. Phillips. I feel I cannot answer that yes or no without explaining that I met with Mr. Kessler on two occasions, once for a long lunch, once in a coffee shop, and he called me two or three times on the phone.

In these discussions with Mr. Kessler, I did—he raised the subject of whether or not Oswald was offering information, was being paid, wanted to be paid to go to the Soviet

Union, and wanted to know whether or not I could confirm that. I did confirm in the sense—

Mr. Sprague. My question is, I have read a specific quotation, Mr. Phillips. You are under oath at this time.

Mr. Phillips. I understand.

Mr. Sprague. And I will reread the quotation, because I do want to know, did you make this statement in part. I understand that there were other parts to the conversation, but did you make this statement to Mr. Kessler—I'm not talking about you, I am talking about what Oswald allegedly said: "I have information you would be interested in, and I know you can pay my way."

Mr. Phillips. I think I may have said that or something near to it, but what I intended to convey was that Mr. Kessler was saying, well, is that the idea, and I said yes, that was the idea that we gathered.¹⁶

By 11 pages later in the interview transcript, though, Phillips had backed pretty far off the original story, and was talking about a conversation which was mainly about a visa:

Mr. Sprague. I do not want you to give an answer based upon what anyone else says. I do not want you to give an answer trying to square your answer with what you believe is on somebody else's transcript or anything else. I want this to be your own answer as best you can recall, of what was the purport of that first intercept.

Mr. Phillips. Okay. All right. Obviously after so long I can't remember it word for word, but I remember that the thrust of the conversation was Oswald saying to the Soviet he talked to in the Soviet Embassy, "What have you heard about my visa, what news do you have?" "What have you heard about my visa, what news do you have," something like that. I also recall that Oswald was saying "What's wrong, why don't you do this?" And I recall something in that conversation that I can only call an intimation that he said "Well, you really should talk to me," or something like that. Now, it seems that I recall that, and that is all that I recall with absolute clarity.¹⁷

The Tarasoffs and the Lopez Report

Now, if this story were solely told by David Phillips, researchers might very well write it off as some form of disinformation. But, as the Lopez Report relates, the story received corroboration. Anna Tarasoff, wife of Boris Tarasoff and part of the team which transcribed the Oswald calls, remembered such a conversation. The Lopez Report relates that on April 12, 1978, Anna Tarasoff was shown the extant transcripts of conversations, but that:

In addition to these transcripts, Ms. Tarasoff testified that she remembered one more conversation that involved Lee Oswald.¹⁸

In her own words:

According to my recollection, I myself, have made a transcript, an English transcript, of Lee Oswald talking to the Russian Consulate or whoever he was at that time, asking for financial aid.

Now, that particular transcript does not appear here and whatever happened to it, I do not know, but it was a lengthy transcript and I personally did that transcript. It was a lengthy conversation between him and someone at the Russian Embassy.¹⁹

Ms. Tarasoff remembered specifically another call with content similar to that described by Phillips. Furthermore, she remembered that the conversation was lengthy, unlike the short transcripts which exist now, and in English, not broken Russian or Spanish.

But the Lopez Report also notes:

Mr. Tarasoff did not confirm his wife's recollection of another conversation including Oswald. He said that he did not remember any other calls involving Lee Oswald or any details of Oswald's conversations that were not reflected in the transcripts.²⁰

And that's an accurate account of the Tarasoff's April 1978 testimony, which is now public, part of nine boxes of Security Classified testimony.

The Tarasoffs' Earlier Testimony

But completely ignored in the Lopez Report is earlier testimony of both Mr. and Mrs. Tarasoff, testimony given nearly a year-and-a-half earlier. In fact, Richard Sprague's team had barely finished interviewing David Phillips when they flew down to Guadalajara Mexico to interview the Tarasoff couple, on November 30, 1976. And in this interview, Boris Tarasoff didn't have the memory lapse he was to exhibit later, during the Blakey era.

The summary of this earlier interview, included along with the transcript in the file, contains the following:

The Tarasoffs claim to remember translating and transcribing at least two conversations involving Oswald. They remember that the first one was fairly short and routine. Oswald did not identify himself in this first conversation. The second one was much longer and Oswald did identify himself in this conversation. The Tarasoffs remember Oswald discussing his financial situation in this call. They deny making any editorial or marginal comments in the transcription of this call. The Tarasoffs remember nothing unusual about the first call or the circumstances surrounding its delivery or transcription. The second call was delivered to them and they were asked to transcribe the Oswald call as quickly as possible. Their contact expressed a strong interest in the identity of the caller and the substance of the call. The Tarasoffs translated and transcribed the call and returned the transcript on the same day, using an emergency contact as opposed to waiting until the next morning and using their standard contact.²¹

In this interview, both Tarasoffs clearly remembered an English conversation, which Anna transcribed as she typically handled English calls whereas her husband typically did the Russian ones. This may be responsible for her memory being better regarding the content of the call. But that there was such a call, in English, lengthy, and with a great deal of excitement surrounding it, both Tarasoffs were explicit, as this excerpt reveals:

Mr. Brooten. There was a second long con-

versation. Between the first conversation and the second conversation, were you asked to attempt to determine the identity of this person?

Mr. Tarasoff. Oh yes.

Mr. Brooten. All right, would you describe that.

Mr. Tarasoff. Well, to the best of my knowledge, we either got the note or was it passed verbally, I think we got a note, no?

Mrs. Tarasoff. Well, if I'm not mistaken, the party that brought the reels, there was a notation made to listen to number so-and-so on tape so-and-so dated whatever date it was, because each reel had a date and a number and according to the numbers, then there were, the transcripts of each conversation within that had a number, so you ran the tape until you came to a certain number and then you listened.

Mr. Brooten. Now, did they want you to or did they give you any instructions about attempting to determine who the caller was in that case?

Mr. Tarasoff. Yes, they certainly did. They wanted to know the name of the person. Then if we learned the name to get in touch with them immediately and turn in the transcript, to make the transcript, turn it in forget about Spanish, Russian or whatever was on the reel—

Mrs. Tarasoff. In other words, this was top priority if we got the name, to work on it.

Mr. Tarasoff. It was very important to them.

Mr. Brooten. All right sir. Now did you receive a second tape with this same individual speaking to anyone at the Soviet Embassy?

Mr. Tarasoff. Well that's, you mean the third conversation?

Mr. Brooten. All right, no but there was a second one.

Mr. Tarasoff. The long one, yes.²²

In this lengthy interview, the following points were made quite clearly:

- **Both Tarasoffs remembered.** Both Tarasoffs remembered another call.
- **Lengthy.** It was a lengthy call.
- **English.** It was in English, and Mrs.

Tarasoff transcribed it.

- **Financial Discussion.** Oswald discussed his financial situation.
- **Keen Interest.** The CIA was very keen on this call, both the identity of the caller and the substance.

An Incomplete Record

There are many other clues that something is missing from the CIA's story about what happened in Mexico City in late September and early October of 1963, and that the record we have today has been effaced. Another of the Security Classified depositions is that of Ray Rocca, who was Chief of the Research & Analysis division of Counter Intelligence at CIA. Rocca was shown the October cable traffic which reported on the Oswald calls. He exhibited a fair amount of confusion, referring repeatedly to cables which had been sent earlier than the "first" cable of October 8. Rocca finally threw up his hands and said of the "first" cable: "Well, it seems to me too late, that communication began earlier from Mexico City."²³

Win Scott, the CIA Mexico City station chief, was another whose account does not square with "the record" as it exists in CIA documents. In a manuscript entitled *Foul Foe*, Scott complained about the Warren Commission's account of the Oswald visits. Writing about the lack of a photograph of Oswald, for instance, he wrote: "persons watching these embassies photographed Oswald as he entered and left each one, and clocked the time he spent on each visit."²⁴ The HSCA uncovered this manuscript, whose contents were disputed by the CIA, but HSCA investigators were less sure that Scott was in error. Writing to DCI Stansfield Turner on October 13, 1978, HSCA Chairman Louis Stokes wrote a letter which began "I am writing you with regard to a matter of grave concern to the House Select Committee on Assassinations," and went on to describe problems with the CIA's story regarding photo surveillance. Regarding the Scott manuscript, Stokes wrote "Scott's comments are a source of deep concern to this Committee, for they suggest your Agency's possible withholding of photographic materials highly relevant to this investigation."²⁵

The Tarasoffs' 1976 testimony is clear and believable, despite the memory lapse exhibited by Boris Tarasoff more than a year later. This "missing call" might have occurred on Monday, September 30, a day suspiciously lacking in activity in the official record.²⁶

"On the lack of a photograph of Oswald, Scott wrote, 'persons watching these embassies photographed Oswald as he entered and left each one, and clocked the time spent on each visit.'"

No one's memory of such a call includes any ultra-sinister discussion such as a plot to kill Kennedy. But what is remembered of the call gives it a more sinister import than those now in the record. Besides Oswald's offer of information and assertions that "I know you can pay my way," the lengthy call might have contained indications that the Russian's knew Oswald and had dealt with him before. This would probably only be the case if the call was a complete fabrication, with neither Oswald nor the real Soviet Embassy officials on the other end, but there are many indications that the September 28 "Saturday" call is such a fabrication (among other things, both supposed parties to the call deny that such a call could have taken place on that day, when the embassies were closed).²⁷

Perhaps it is this "third call" which prompted Lyndon Johnson to bandy about the figure of "40 million Americans involved" in a nuclear exchange, and prompted a cover-up of more than just visa talk.

Telephone Taps and Human Informants

The new documents reveal more about how the telephone tapping operation worked, and what other sources of information the CIA had at its disposal in Mexico City.

Mr. Hoover's Informant

A reasonable working assumption has been that the tapes were flown up on the night of the 22nd on the same Naval Attache plane that carried the "Mystery Man" photographs. I think that's still the most likely scenario, even though there's not a single released document that says so. But there's another possibility.

On November 26, just after the dust had settled and the CIA and FBI had agreed that there were no tapes after all, only transcripts, CIA Director McCone and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had a little phone conversation. Here is an excerpt, taken from a transcript preserved in CIA files:²⁸

Hoover. But there is no question that he [Oswald] is the right man. There are a lot of aspects that we have dug up, for instance, with regards to the matter in Mexico City. We have now found that the photograph that was taken was not that of Oswald. We do find from *our informant* down there that Oswald did call at the Embassy that day and *the informant has given us the conversation that he had*.... [emphasis added]

Is Hoover being chummy here, referring to a CIA teltap operation as “our informant?” Or does he mean something else here?

The HSCA put this transcript in front of Ray Rocca, Chief of Research & Analysis in the CIA’s Counter Intelligence division. Rocca was a key player in 1963 and had been hired back during the Rockefeller Commission’s tenure to pull together materials on Mexico City. When shown this transcript, Rocca immediately recognized the “informant” as LIENVOY, the cryptonym for the taping operation. Here is an excerpt from his deposition:

Mr. Goldsmith. I would like to show you a transcript of a telephone conversation between Mr. McCone and Mr. Hoover dated 26 November, 1963. It is CIA document number 2134.

Does that appear to the [sic] a transcript of a telephone conversation?

Mr. Rocca. Yes, it does.

Mr. Goldsmith. Would you read the middle paragraph, which makes reference to an FBI informant.

(pause)

Mr. Rocca. That’s LIENVOY. That’s their material [*****].

Mr. Goldsmith. So, how would—

Mr. Rocca. I would interpret it that way. I have never read this piece of paper that I recall. That would be my reaction.

Mr. Goldsmith. For the record, let’s get this

clear.

The Director of the FBI, Mr. Hoover, is making reference to an informant that the FBI had in Mexico City, and he is indicating that the informant has informed the Bureau as to the contents of Oswald’s conversations in Mexico City.

From your answer, I take it that you assume that Mr. Hoover is referring to the LIENVOY operation.

Mr. Rocca. And he is subtly letting Mr. McCone know that Mr. McCone’s resources down there were not unique, that they, too, had access to [*****].

Mr. Goldsmith.

[*****].

Mr. Rocca.

[*****], yes.

Mr. Goldsmith.

[*****].

Mr. Rocca. Yes.²⁹

The following day, CIA HQ sent a cable down to the Mexico City station, alerting them to Hoover’s revelation. DIR 85245 of November 27 suggests that Sylvia Duran’s statements be used instead of the LIENVOY take, to avoid compromising the operation, and then goes on to discuss the problem of where the FBI is getting its information. In the following cable standard CIA-speak applies, so “KUBARK” refers to the CIA and “ODENVY” is the FBI.

2. PLS NOTE THAT DIRECTOR ODENVY IS GETTING FROM ODENVY MEXI MUCH INFO WHICH OBVIOUSLY ORIGINATES WITH THE LIENVOY OPERATION. ODENVY HERE APPARENTLY DOES NOT REALIZE THAT THIS INFO WAS PRODUCED BY A KUBARK OPERATION, AND INDEED, ODENVY MAY BE GETTING THIS LIENVOY INFO THRU ITS OWN CLANDESTINE SOURCES [*****] OR EVEN IN THE [*****]. PLS TRY TO CLARIFY WITH ODENVY REP THERE THE EXACT MANNER IN WHICH HE HAS OBTAINED SUCH INFO AND THE FORM IN WHICH HE HAS

SENT IT TO ODENVY HQ. WE MUST AVOID THE INADVERTENT COMPROMISE OF LIENVOY.

It's apparent that, one way or another, FBI Director Hoover had his own access to the telephone tap material, and even CIA did not appear to have known how. Does this mean the FBI had its own tapping operation? Probably not. While it remains unclear whether the FBI had access to raw tapes, or transcripts, or simply information, the most plausible explanation is that Hoover had people "in on" the CIA teltap operation, LIENVOY.

Naming it a "CIA" operation may be what is confusing things here, because it's likely that LIENVOY was not fully a CIA operation at all. There remain many redactions in these transcripts and documents in this area, but what is being kept secret does not seem to be so much the *methods* as the *sources*, specifically just who it was that ran LIENVOY.

One redaction in Richard Helms' HSCA testimony holds the key, and its contents can be guessed fairly easily:

Mr. Helms. I do not know whether it has been made, the Committee has been made of the fact that the reason for the sensitivity of these telephone taps and the surveillance was not only because it was sensitive from the Agency's standpoint, but the telephone taps were running in conjunction with the [*****] and therefore, if this had become public knowledge, it would have caused very bad feelings between Mexico and the United States, and that was the reason.³⁰

Substitute "Mexican DFS" for the redacted text, and things fall into place nicely. The Mexican security service no doubt managed the physical placement of telephone taps within their own country, and probably supplied the people who manned the listening post as well. Hoover, with his extensive contacts in Latin America, no doubt had his own backchannel into what was ostensibly a CIA operation but which was not really fully their show.

It's interesting to speculate as to exactly when the FBI got access to the "Oswald" tapes or transcripts, whether right away on November 22, or a few days later before the November 26 phone call, or *even prior to the assassination*.

As an aside, the Rocca HSCA deposition has another very interesting moment, prior to the discussion of the Hoover-McCone call. Michael Goldsmith, the HSCA interviewer, was trying to find out why the CIA's Counter Intelligence staff, the CI/SIG group in particular, was the one that opened the 201 file on Oswald a year after he defected to the Soviet Union. Goldsmith was curious, because CI/SIG was concerned primarily with penetrations of the DD/P, the operations group inside the CIA.

Mr. Goldsmith.My question is more narrowly focused in why would CI/SIG in particular have been opening the file.

Mr. Rocca. Because of their concern, basically, with the problem of Americans and they were the recipient of the materials, probably from the Office of Security, if not the actual copy of that material, certainly the chit chat. Bruce Solie was – B-R-U-C-E S-O-L-I-E – constantly in touch with Mr. O'Neill and with Mrs. Edgerter, I am sure.

Mr. Goldsmith. But from the face of it, it does not appear that Oswald posed any sort of a counter intelligence threat in terms of the penetration of DDP personnel.

Mr. Rocca. Of the U.S. security interest. At a very high level, though, he did, involving other departments and agencies of the government.

Mr. Goldsmith. I understand, and I am not suggesting that a file should not have been opened by the CI staff. I am just trying to determine why CI/SIG in particular, which was concerned about DDP penetrations, would have been opening the file.

.....

Mr. Goldsmith. How would the function of CI/SIG in that case be different from in the Office of Security, in general?

Mr. Rocca. It would be with respect to where and what had happened to DDP materials with respect to a defection in any of these places.

Mr. Goldsmith. Again, though, Oswald had nothing to do with DDP at this time, at least apparently.

Mr. Rocca. *I'm not saying that. You said it.* [emphasis added]³¹

Human Informants: Two, to be Exact, One Male, One Female

Telephone taps and photo surveillance were only two of the tools employed in the spy-vs-spy game played in Mexico City. Many of these operations are touched upon in a three-volume history of the Mexico City CIA station, sanitized excerpts of which were shown to three HSCA investigators.³² While still heavily redacted, this lengthy set of excerpts describes a variety of operations conducted against the Cuban Embassy (and other embassies). Microphones were planted in various offices. Wastebasket trash was recovered and analyzed. Passenger manifests from flights to and from Cuba were passed along. A photo-surveillance van followed “targets” around the city. While the first microphone transmitter was installed in the Cuban Embassy in February 1961, so many redactions are present that it is impossible to be certain that the planted microphones were in operation during the time of the Oswald visit in the fall of 1963.³³

But another operation ensured that more listening ears than microphones would be present in the Cuban Embassy. Have a look at this cable, sent from the Mexico City CIA station to headquarters on November 28, 1963.

[*****] REPORTED 27 NOV AFTER SYLVIA DURAN FIRST ARREST WAS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT THERE GREAT DEAL DISCUSSION OF THIS IN EMBASSY. SHE BACK IN OFFICE 25 NOV AND SEEMED QUITE PLEASED WITH HER PERFORMANCE. HER ACCOUNT INTERROGATION CONTAINED LITTLE NEW EXCEPT POLICE HAD THREATENED HER WITH EXTRADITION TO U.S. TO FACE OSWALD. SHE HAD NO FEAR OF CONFRONTATION. [*****] DESCRIBES HER AS VERY INTELLIGENT AND QUICK-WITTED. OF ASSASSINATION ITSELF [*****] SAID THERE ALMOST NO DISCUSSION IN EMBASSY. STAFF MEETING 23 NOV VERY SHORT AND SOMBER WITH GENERAL IMPRESSION BEING ONE OF SHOCK AND DISBELIEF. HEARD NO EXPRESSIONS OF PLEASURE. [*****] SEEN NIGHT 27 NOV HAD NOTHING TO ADD TO ABOVE. INDEED HER VERSION MUCH LESS DETAILED.

NEITHER [*****] NOR [*****] HAD ANY PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OSWALD PRESENCE CUBAN EMBASSY AT ANY TIME.³⁴

The report above clearly comes from human informants inside the Cuban Embassy. This cable and others³⁵ show that there were two informants, one male and one female, who worked there. Their identities are not revealed, at least in these cables of the days following the assassination, where their identities are redacted.³⁶

What did these human informants know of the events of September/October 1963? The last line of the above cable says that they had no personal knowledge of Oswald’s presence, and this claim was reiterated in a cable sent the following day from CIA HQ to the White House, FBI, and State Department:

NONE OF THESE SOURCES HAD ANY PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF ANY VISITS THAT LEE OSWALD MAY HAVE MADE TO THE CUBAN EMBASSY IN MEXICO CITY OR OF ANY BUSINESS HE MAY HAVE TRANSACTED.³⁷

The key phrase here may be “personal” knowledge, as opposed to what these informants learned from other employees. HSCA investigators Ed Lopez and Harold Leap found and interviewed these two informants, without permission from the CIA. According to another HSCA investigator, Gaeton Fonzi, the informants told Lopez and Leap that “the consensus among the employees within the Cuban Consulate after the Kennedy assassination was that it wasn’t Oswald who had been there.”³⁸ The informants also said that they had reported this fact to the Agency.

Luisa Calderon’s Foreknowledge

The “Oswald” tapes weren’t the only taped conversations of concern to the CIA and the assassination investigators. A November 26 call between Cuban Ambassador to Mexico Hernandez Armas and Cuban President Dorticos was a cause of some concern. Hernandez told Dorticos that the DFS had asked Sylvia Duran about intimate relations with Oswald, and Dorticos for his part repeatedly asked whether she had been asked about monetary payments to Oswald.³⁹ Another taped call, one which caused the HSCA much

consternation, involved Cuban Embassy employee Luisa Calderon. Volume XI of the HSCA's Report, careful to avoid disclosing sources and methods, laid out the issue:

A reliable source reported that on 22 November 1963, several hours after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Luisa Calderon Carralero, a Cuban employee of the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, and believed to be a member of the Cuban Directorate General of Intelligence (DGI), discussed news of the assassination with an acquaintance. Initially, when asked if she had heard the latest news, Calderon replied, in what appeared to be a joking manner, "Yes, of course, I knew almost before Kennedy."⁴⁰

The "reliable source" is again a telephone tap, which captured a conversation at 5:30 PM local time, several hours after the assassination. A loose "transcript" of the conversation starts this way:

HF asks LUISA if she has heard the latest news and LUISA, in a joking tone says, "Yes, of course, I knew almost before Kennedy."
HF smiles and comments that it is very bad;
....

There are a few oddities here. How one ascertains that a person is "smiling" in a telephone conversation is one. Also, this conversation was accompanied by a handwritten note which includes: "22 Nov Lienvoy Luisa Calderon and man outside." "Man outside" is typical CIA-speak for a man on an outside telephone line (and LIENVOY is the teltap operation). But the "transcript" notes that the other person is HF, presumably Hispanic Female. The handwritten note also says that "cc original and transcript sent to Galbond via Kingman. Nothing to Buro yet," interestingly keeping the FBI in the dark for the moment.⁴¹

In any case, the HSCA became greatly concerned about the possibility that Luisa Calderon had exhibited foreknowledge of the assassination with her joking statement "Yes, of course, I knew almost before Kennedy." If a "conspiracy buff" took some similar statement on the part of an American official and ballooned it into a conspiracy mountain, they would of course be subjected to deserved ridicule. But the double-standard applied to Cubans, particularly one thought to be in the employ of the Cuban intelligence

service, made this case different. In his interview with William Coleman, Ed Lopez devoted 15 minutes to the topic of Luisa Calderon, even though Coleman couldn't even remember who such a person was. The HSCA wrote several pages in Volume XI about their concerns, and the page devoted to her in the Final Report was more space than they devoted to many more important matters.

An obvious question here is whether Luisa Calderon made any statements between the time of the assassination and this 5:30 PM call, statements which might clarify whether she really had any foreknowledge or was merely joking. For instance, is there a document with transcripts of *all* taped calls for November 22, and does Luisa appear in other, earlier calls?

There is no evidence that I've found to indicate that the HSCA asked this question, or received such a transcript log. But one does exist. RIF #104-10404-10426 contains 49 pages of Spanish transcripts and English translations for November 22, 1963. And indeed there is not just one but two prior calls involving Luisa Calderon, one at 1:30 PM and one at 2:00 PM.

Here is the beginning of the English translation of the first call:

1330 hours. Unidentified woman calls LUISA (in Cuban Embassy). Caller asks LUISA if she knows the news about KENNEDY'S death.

LUISA: is surprised....says it is a lie and asks who?

CALLER: in an attempt in Texas.

LUISA: further surprise and again asks if news is official and when did it occur.

CALLER: yes, it happened at 1300 hours.

LUISA: laughs and says how great.⁴²

.....

The second call came a half-hour later. If Luisa Calderon exhibits foreknowledge in this call, it is related to Oswald's death and not Kennedy's:

about 1400 hours. YOYA calls to Cuban Embassy and asks LUISA if she heard the news and she says yes.

YOYA: what do you think of it?

LUISA: Well I don't know. I still don't know what opinion to have about it.

YOYA: What bruts. A good shot. Direct. Listen. Now they are going to say that it was from here. That it was some Cuban.

LUISA: That is possible. Then if they don't say it; they will die.⁴³

.....

It is very hard to believe that the HSCA would have written what it did about Luisa Calderon if HSCA staffers had seen these transcripts, which seem to exonerate Calderon of what was always a pretty weak charge. Was this just a case of bureaucratic snafu, with these earlier transcripts getting lost in the shuffle and overlooked? That too is hard to believe. The CIA Office of Legislative Counsel took the trouble to write Robert Blakey a ten-page letter in 1979, much of it taken up with bickering over the HSCA's writeup on the Calderon affair.⁴⁴ Now that the damage was done, and the HSCA led on a wild goose chase into Cuban-conspiracy-land, the CIA was concerned that the HSCA would blow its sources and methods in their writeup. So the letter goes into great detail bickering over the exact wording of the Spanish words which were translated into "I knew almost before Kennedy," never pausing to mention "Oh, by the way, here are some earlier transcripts that will put the whole business to rest." It's of course possible to argue that people at the Office of Legislative Counsel were unaware of the earlier calls, but the idea that the CIA would not know how to look for "the day's take" of transcripts for November 22 is ludicrous. This episode is very damning of the Agency, adding fuel to the thesis that the Agency was more than happy in the 1970s to do what it had done with Warren Commission 15 years earlier, which is to push Communist conspiracy theories vigorously and divert the investigations from more fruitful avenues of research.

A final point about the Calderon affair has to do with the importance of original research using the documents, and being careful of writers with an agenda. I am referring to Gus Russo's *Live by the Sword*, a book which generally asserts that Oswald killed Kennedy by himself but a lot of secret sources and interviews conducted by Russo in the 1990s suggest that Oswald may have been dealing with Cuban agents and possibly egged on by them, and then bad Bobby Kennedy had to order a coverup because he and Jack had been going after Castro due to an ego-driven personal vendetta.

Russo discusses Luisa Calderon, and even includes some new information from the new documents. Russo repeats the famous "I knew almost before Kennedy" quote, but then adds this:

CIA transcripts of the conversation support the source. But they reveal even more detail.

The conversation is punctuated by so much laughter, and such joyous disbelief, that the two parties appear giddy. Calderon, through her laughter, said that she couldn't believe the news of Kennedy's death, and continually remarked on how great it was. When the caller said that Kennedy was "shot three times in the face," Calderon exclaimed "Perfect!"⁴⁵

Russo exaggerates the amount of "laughter" and "joyous disbelief" in the conversation, unless he has been somehow privy to an actual recording and not the transcript in the record that the rest of us can read. But far more interesting is how he conflates multiple conversations into one. Calderon did indeed reply "Perfect" when told Kennedy was shot three times in the face. But she did this during the recently-released 1:30 PM call, the one in which Calderon repeatedly expresses surprise at the news of the assassination, not the 5:30 PM "foreknowledge" call. Russo has conveniently left out the exonerating aspects of this earlier call, and used only the portion that makes Calderon look bad. Readers beware.

The Enigma of Pedro Gutierrez Valencia

If the Luisa Calderon story has been cleared up at all, there's another story that's about to get more complicated. This one has to do with a man named Pedro Gutierrez Valencia. Mr. Gutierrez was one of the people who saw Oswald take money in or near the Cuban Embassy. His story was quite a bit different from that of Gilberto Alvarado Ugarte, the Nicaraguan undercover agent whose story appears in the Warren Report under the moniker "D," but Gutierrez' story was also of great concern to the Commission. Alvarado was ultimately discredited by a lie-detector test and retracted his story. But Gutierrez' story was never really discredited. In the Coleman-Slawson "foreign conspiracy report" that came to light in the 1990s, Gutierrez was of more concern than Alvarado.⁴⁶

The gist of the Gutierrez story, as told to the FBI and the Warren Commission is as follows. Gutierrez wrote a letter on December 2, 1963, to President Johnson, which caused him to then be interviewed multiple times by FBI agents during early 1964. In the letter and interviews, he stated that in the course of his duties as a credit examiner he was in the Cuban Em-

bassy in Mexico City on September 30 or October 1, 1963. While leaving the Embassy, he bumped into a Cuban who was accompanied by an American—the two were having a heated exchange in which he heard the words “Castro,” “Cuba,” and “Kennedy.” The Cuban was counting out money which he passed to the American, and the two then got into a car and drove away. After the assassination of President Kennedy, Gutierrez viewed pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald and realized that the American accompanying the Cuban had been Oswald.⁴⁷

Gutierrez was interviewed four times by the FBI in early 1964; reports of these interviews are located in Commission Exhibit 2121 in WH24. Gutierrez’ neighbors reported that he was a serious and trustworthy individual, and his story was taken seriously. Ultimately, it was ignored based on the fact that he didn’t recognize a photo of Oswald when shown one by the FBI, and that he had only gotten a glimpse of Oswald, who was with the Cuban Gutierrez had bumped into. But these were light grounds on which to dismiss a detailed story by a seemingly credible person.

Gutierrez and the HSCA Interview

When the HSCA went to Mexico in 1978, Gutierrez was among those interviewed. The Lopez Report notes that he was interviewed on June 5, 1978, after an earlier conversation.⁴⁸ But of what Gutierrez had to say, the Lopez Report has only this footnote:

1192/ Pedro Gutierrez Valencia claimed that he bumped into Lee Harvey Oswald at the Consulate on September 27, 1963. Valencia was at the Consulate doing a credit check on one of the Cuban employees.

There are two curious aspects of this footnote, apart from its brevity. One is the date of the alleged encounter, which is September 27 here, the day Oswald arrived in Mexico City. The other is the claim that Gutierrez bumped into Lee Harvey Oswald, not the Cuban accompanying him.

Are these minor inaccuracies, or typos, or changes in the story? As it turns out, they are the tip of a very strange iceberg.

I have not yet run across any transcript of the Gutierrez interview, but there is an audiotape on the shelves of the National Archives. It is not a tape of the

“While leaving the Embassy, Gutierrez bumped into a Cuban accompanied by an American...he heard the words ‘Castro,’ ‘Cuba,’ and ‘Kennedy.’ After the assassination he realized that Oswald had been the American.”

interview itself, though it displays the correct date (June 5, 1978). Instead, it is a tape of a person apparently reading, or re-enacting, the interview, using English instead of the Spanish language that the original interview must have used. Given the dramatic tone of voice employed at various points in the tape, it appears to be an English-language reading conducted by someone listening to the original interview with headphones or perhaps even in person, as there appear to be faint voices in the background. The tape itself does not have any revealing information as to the method by which it was created.⁴⁹

Same Gutierrez, Different Story

In the tape, “Gutierrez” told the HSCA that he indeed wrote a letter to President Johnson, and then went on to dispute just about every aspect of the story told in that letter and subsequent interviews.⁵⁰ After beginning to agree with the story as retold by Ed Lopez, the interviewer, Gutierrez began to express confusion and bewilderment at some of the statements attributed to him. For one thing, in the taped interview he claimed to have bumped into Oswald, but remembered nothing about a Cuban, finally saying:

Gutierrez: I just don’t remember him [Oswald] being accompanied by another person.

After more confusion by Gutierrez as to the contents of the letter, Lopez then read from the FBI reports, including facts about Oswald taking money from the Cuban and putting it in his left pocket, following both men to their car and watching them get in, and so on. Since Gutierrez said he remembered nothing about a Cuban, he also didn’t remember these aspects of his story either.

At one point, Lopez tried to enlist Gutierrez’ help in figuring out how the FBI attributed statements to

him which he now was denying:

Lopez: I'm sorry if I appear to be pressing you, Mr. Valencia.....and also.....ensure that the statements that the FBI credits you with were in fact accurate statements.....you do not speak any English. I'm wondering now, is it possible that they had a translator present when they interviewed you?

Gutierrez: No, they did not have a translator. They spoke broken Spanish and I spoke broken English.

The interview kept returning to the Cuban or Cuban-American who was allegedly counting out money and with whom Gutierrez is supposed to have bumped. Gutierrez repeatedly expressed bewilderment:

Lopez: Mr. Valencia, let us now go over the description of the Cuban-American.....First of all, you described him of course as Cuban-American, is that correct?

Gutierrez: That is an enigma to me. I do not remember him being accompanied by a Cuban-American.

In this segment, the translator's voice displays great incredulity and bewilderment when delivering Gutierrez' words:

Lopez: In Exhibit number 2121, they stated that you described the other man as white, male, Cuban, 33 to 35 years old.

Gutierrez: I do not **ever** remember describing him as such. I don't remember **anything** about this Cuban-American. I mean, it could be that I said it and that I'm senile now and I don't remember, but I do **not** ever remember mentioning anything about a Cuban. [emphasis in voice on tape]

Gutierrez also disputed less important facts, such as who the credit check was for and its ultimate disposition. But the interview kept coming back to whether Gutierrez had bumped into a lone Oswald or into a Cuban who was counting out money for Oswald. I don't know how a Cuban who didn't exist could hand money to Oswald, but Ed Lopez kept at it:

Lopez:it states that you reported that the Cuban-American handed some money over to the American. Is that true, Mr. Valencia.....Do you remember declaring it?

Gutierrez: I do not ever remember that occurring; I do not remember ever stating that whatsoever. Never.

What to make of this? These possibilities present themselves:

1. **Gutierrez' story was fabricated by the FBI in Mexico, and Gutierrez was telling the truth in 1978.** The letter, which had a thumbprint matched to Gutierrez, would be a key piece of evidence in evaluating this possibility. Even apart from the letter, though, the idea is a little far-out. Hoover's FBI was pushing the lone-nut thesis, not Cuban conspiracies, although the FBI in Mexico might have marched to a different drummer. But this would have had to have been a fairly large conspiracy to sell such a story, which could easily have fallen apart if Gutierrez really wasn't a part of it.
2. **It's all just a snafu; the story got mixed up and exaggerated innocently, maybe due to language problems.** Hard to believe, given four detailed interviews with the FBI. Again, the letter would be important here.
3. **Gutierrez was telling the truth in 1963 and 1964, but retracted his story in 1978, probably under pressure to do so.** This seems at least as likely as the alternatives. Without a tape recording of the actual Gutierrez interview, though, it's impossible to even begin to evaluate his demeanor with an eye toward gauging his truthfulness in 1978.

Gutierrez is an enigma. His original story of the Cuban counting out money to Oswald seems all too convenient, a tall tale or a truthful story of a staged incident. With the 1978 retraction of most of the story and Gutierrez' seeming shock at being told his own story, things have only gotten weirder.

Publishing the Mystery Man Photograph

The last Mexico City story in this essay concerns the photographs taken of an unidentified person who

has often been called the “Mystery Man.” New releases contain some items of interest. The man’s identity remains unestablished, though CIA files contain a fair amount of conjecture that he is Yuriy Moskalev, a Soviet scientist whose photograph shows a passing resemblance to the unidentified Mexico City man.⁵¹



The Commission’s Desire

But of greater interest than this unlikely identification is the cable traffic surrounding the Warren Commission’s decision to publish a photograph of the Mystery Man in its Exhibit volumes (the photo was published in WH16 as Commission Exhibit 237, titled “Photograph of unidentified man.”).

For reasons explained but still not entirely clear, FBI agent Bardwell Odum showed one or more of these photos to Oswald’s mother Marguerite on the evening of November 23, 1963. The man in the photos has a superficial resemblance to Jack Ruby, and Marguerite subsequently asserted before the Warren Commission

that she had been shown a photo of Ruby before Ruby killed her son.

The Warren Commission understandably wanted to rebut Marguerite’s assertion. In order to do so, the Commission intended to publish one of the “Mystery Man” photos, proving that it wasn’t Jack Ruby. On July 20, 1964, Warren Commission staffer Wesley Liebeler met with Arthur Dooley at CIA. Liebeler had already received affidavits from FBI’s James Malley and Bardwell Odum regarding the photograph, but Liebeler also wanted an affidavit from the CIA regarding the date the photo was taken, and indicated that the Commission would publish the photo.⁵²

Richard Helms supplied an affidavit to Chief Counsel Rankin 3 days later, along with a request that the Warren Commission not publish the photograph, giving as reasons that “...it would jeopardize a most confidential and productive operation” and “It could be embarrassing to the individual involved who as far as this Agency is aware, had no connection with Lee Harvey Oswald or the assassination of President Kennedy.”⁵³

The CIA’s concern for this individual’s privacy is touching, but the Commission did not back down. Two months later, on September 22, Arthur Dooley and Louis Pucket of CIA visited the Commission, where they met with staffers Goldberg and Liebeler, who insisted that the photo must be published, but deferred the final decision as to cropping and other matters to Chief Counsel Rankin.⁵⁴

CIA Headquarters promptly alerted the Mexico City Station the next day regarding publication of the photo. The possibility that publication would “blow” the photo-surveillance operation was on Headquarters’ mind, and the cable noted:

“OUSLER BEING CALLED TO WASH TO GIVE INFORMED OPINION OF POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO LILYRIC OR LIMITED” [the photo surveillance operations].⁵⁵

In a follow-up memo the next day, Headquarters invited the station’s comment on possible exposure of the photo surveillance operations, but added “IT IS NOT POSSIBLE HAVE PHOTOS EXCLUDED FROM REPORT.”⁵⁶

September 25, A Busy Day

The Mexico City Station was not happy. Reply-

WC TESTIMONY OF MARGUERITE OSWALD

Book I page 152-153

Mrs. Oswald: Now, Mr. Hart Odum, the same FBI agent, that insisted upon my daughter-in-law going with him from the Adolphus Hotel, knocked on the door at the Executive Inn. I had had my robe and slippers on, and I pushed the curtain aside when he knocked. He said, "This is Mr. Odum."

So, I opened the door. This is very important. I would like to not talk about it. I would like to show you what I did. This is so important.

I opened the door just a little, because I had the robe off and I didn't want anybody to come in. The door is just ajar. I am going to take my shoes off gentlemen, because I have this worked out. This is my height. He said, "Mrs. Oswald, we would like to see Marina."

I said, "Mr. Odum, I stated yesterday you are not going to see Marina. We are awful tired."

"Well, we just want to ask her one question."

"Mr. Odum, I am not calling my daughter. As a matter of fact, she is taking a bath."

She wasn't.

He said, "Mrs. Oswald, I would like to ask you a question."

I said, "Yes, sir." The door is ajar. This is my height. I wear bifocals, which enlarges things. And in his hand — his hand is bigger than mine — in the cup of his hand, like this, is a picture. And the two corners are torn off the picture. This is a very glossy black and white picture of a man's face and shoulder.

Now, Mr. Odum wasn't too tall. I need somebody else. Mr. Odum's hand with the picture — what I am trying to say — he is facing this way — showing me. So my eyes are looking straight at the picture. And I have nothing else to see but this hand and the picture, because the door is afar. And there is nothing on the picture but a face and shoulders. There is no background or anything. So I can identify this picture amongst millions of pictures, I am so sure of it. It was a glossy black and white picture. So I said, "No, sir, believe me. I have never seen this picture in my life."

With that, he went off.

There was another man with him.

ing on September 25, the Station responded that "STATION UNCLEAR AS TO PURPOSE SERVED BY PUBLICATION PHOTO OF PERSON NOT EVEN INVOLVED IN THIS CASE." After complaining that Marguerite Oswald could simply be ignored in this matter, the cable went on to add a very curious paragraph: "IF AS MEXI PREFERS TO BELIEVE OF ODENVY SHE SHOWN SPREAD OF CROPPED PHOTOS ALL OF WHICH TO APPEAR, NO OBJECTION HERE TO PUBLICATION OF REF PHOTO. IF THIS INCORRECT AND THIS SOLE PHOTO SHOWN HER AND TO BE PUBLISHED AGAINST MEXI WISHES, REQUEST EXACT ACCOUNT OF WHAT ODENVY TOLD HER."⁵⁷

This cable is strange in several regards. For one thing, the testimony of Marguerite Oswald is explicit that she was shown a single photograph by FBI Agent Bardwell Odum, "in the cup of his hand." And an affidavit signed by Odum on July 10, 1964, refers to his cropping and display of a single photo. So why does the Mexico City station "prefer to believe" that she was shown a spread of cropped photos. And if this is really true, was it a spread consisting of all of the Mystery Man photos flown up from Mexico City (several were indeed supplied), or was it a spread of other photos which included a single Mystery Man photo? If the latter, why would they all have been cropped?

Probably the strangest aspect of the cable is that the Mexico City station did not object to an entire spread of photos being published; the objection was if publication was to be of a single photo. This makes no sense if the real objection had to do with blowing the photo-surveillance operation (i.e., showing backgrounds which would reveal camera placements to the Cubans and Soviets, etc). The more photographs published, the more likely someone would identify the source. What is going on here? The cable ends with the plea: "STATION WOULD APPRECIATE EFFORT TO DELETE PHOTO FROM PUBLICATION."

Headquarters replied the same day, confirming that the FBI had indeed shown Marguerite Oswald an entire spread of photos, "BUT SUBJECT PHOTO ONLY ONE WHICH ATTRACTED ATTENTION."⁵⁸ And again on the same day, Mexico City Station responded, announcing its plans to evacuate the photo-surveillance stations in anticipation of publication of the offending photograph. But the detailed plans for such evacuation were preceded by the most curious statements in all of these cables, reproduced below:

From the Warren Commission's 26 volumes of Evidence, book 11, page 468

AFFIDAVIT OF BARDWELL D. ODUM

The following affidavit was executed by Bardwell D. Odum on July 10, 1964.
PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION
ON THE ASSASSINATION OF
PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF TEXAS,
County of Dallas, ss :

I, Bardwell D. Odum, having first been duly sworn, depose as follows:

I am presently a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, and have been employed in such a capacity since June 15, 1942.

On November 23, 1963, while acting officially in my capacity as a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, I obtained a photograph of an unknown individual, furnished to the Federal Bureau of Investigation by the Central Intelligence Agency, and proceeded to the Executive Inn, a motel, at Dallas, Texas, where Marina Oswald was staying.

In view of the source of this picture, and, in order to remove all background data which might possibly have disclosed the location where the picture was taken, I trimmed off the background. The straight cuts made were more quickly done than a complete trimming of the silhouette and I considered them as effective for the desired purpose.

I desired to show this photograph to Marina Oswald in an attempt to identify the individual portrayed in the photograph and to determine if he was an associate of Lee Harvey Oswald.

It was raining and almost dark. I went to the door of Marina Oswald's room and knocked, identifying myself. Marguerite Oswald opened the door slightly and, upon being informed that I wished to speak to Marina Oswald, told me that Marina Oswald was completely exhausted and could not be interviewed. Marguerite Oswald did not admit me to the motel room. I told her I desired to show a photograph to Marina Oswald, and Marguerite Oswald again said that Marina was completely exhausted and could not be interviewed due to that fact. I then showed Marguerite Oswald the photograph in question. She looked at it briefly and stated that she had never seen this individual. I then departed the Executive Inn. The conversation with Marguerite Oswald and the exhibition of the photograph took place while I was standing outside the door to the room and Marguerite Oswald was standing inside with the door slightly ajar.

Attached hereto are two photographic copies of the front and back of a photograph.* I have examined these copies and they are exact copies of the photograph of the unknown individual which I showed to Mrs. Marguerite Oswald on November 23, 1963.

Signed this 10th day of July 1964.

(S) Bardwell D. Odum,
BARDWELL D. ODUM.

1. REFS OBVIOUSLY CROSSED. IN STATION VIEW DANGERS PARA 3, LARGELY RECOGNIZED IN REF A, STILL APPLY.

2. ONLY REMAINING HOPE WOULD APPEAR BE TO GET ASCHAM PREVAIL ON COMMISSION NOT ONLY RETOUCH BACKGROUND IN PHOTOS BUT ALSO RETOUCH FACE TO DEGREE OBVIOUSLY NOT IDENTIFIABLE WITH

RUBY BUT ALSO NOT WITH ACTUAL SUBJECT OF PHOTO.⁵⁹

This cable is remarkable. The “dangers para 3” refer to the earlier Mexi cable’s assertion that “CANNOT PREDICT SECURITY EFFECT OF PUBLICATION WITHOUT ANSWER PARA 2,” where paragraph 2 is the strange assertion previously shown, i.e., that the Mexi station was fine with publication of an entire spread of photos, but not of the single Mystery Man shot.

What is yet more remarkable here is the Mexico City Station’s request to retouch not only the background *but also the face* of the unidentified man. The Warren Commission had agreed to strip out every stitch of background at CIA’s request—now the CIA, or at least the Mexico City Station, abruptly urged a photo alteration to avoid revealing (to whom?) the identity of the supposedly unknown Mystery Man. It strains credulity that such a request was made by people who did not know the identity of the man in the photograph. There is at least one albeit cryptic indication in the record that they did.

After arrangements were made on November 22 to send the photos to Dallas, Mexico City CIA Station Chief Win Scott wrote a letter to J. C. King, Chief of the Western Hemisphere division of CIA. The letter begins:

Dear J.C.:

Reference is made to our conversation of November 22 in which I requested permission to give the Legal Attaché copies of photographs of a certain person who is known to you.⁶⁰

ASCHAM

And who is ASCHAM, who might prevail upon the Commission to perform this retouching of the face in the photo? The requesting cable does not reveal the identity of this obviously important person. But another document in released DDP (Deputy Director for Plans) files is a seven-page writeup of a meeting between ASCHAM and an unidentified high-level Mexican official, brokered by CURTIS (CIA Station Chief Win Scott). The memo of this meeting, which took place on January 14, 1961, uses

pseudonyms throughout, but there are enough clues to provide a reasonable guess as to ASCHAM’s identity. ASCHAM was a high-level U.S. official. ASCHAM had a brother who was also a high-ranking U.S. official and who was “very sick” in 1958. In the memo of the meeting, ASCHAM seems closely allied with both the CIA and with U.S. business interests. ASCHAM is almost certainly Allen Dulles, whose brother John Foster was Secretary of State under Eisenhower until his death by cancer in May 1959.⁶¹

Whether Dulles was contacted or not, the Warren Commission did go on to publish the Mystery Man photograph, and CIA photo-surveillance operations were momentarily disrupted. The face in the photo was not retouched. Why did it need to be? Who was this man? Who in CIA knew who he was? Was his photo really sent to Dallas as a mistaken picture of Oswald, or was he thought to be an accomplice, or was something else entirely at work here?

Conclusion

Mexico City remains an enigma wrapped in a mystery inside a riddle, or however it goes. The 1976 Tarasoff interview is one of the keys to a deeper mystery not revealed for the most part in “the record,” which increasingly smacks of coverup. But a coverup of what? Not a Cuban or Soviet conspiracy, in my view, but rather of a false Communist conspiracy, one which had more seemingly legitimate evidence supporting it than there now appears to be. And one which was somehow wrapped in a “legitimate” CIA operation, perhaps a staged provocation involving Oswald or “Oswald” at the Cuban Embassy, that was hijacked into an assassination plot. In such a scenario, the CIA’s ability to untangle itself from the Kennedy assassination per se may have been an impossible task, necessitating an Agency coverup. Problematic for the CIA also is that some Agency insiders may very well have been in on the assassination plot.

Anne Goodpasture, author of the 133-page Mexico City Chronology⁶² and right-hand aide to CIA Mexico City Station Chief Win Scott, knew more about the real goings on during the “Oswald” visit than most. What does it mean, then, that she put the following in the lengthy Mexico City Station History, which was apparently written in 1969 and 1970?

In 1963 the routine reporting of an operational

lead by LIENVOY developed into a long investigation. A man with a US accent, speaking broken Russian, telephoned both the Soviet and Cuban Embassies on 26 September and 6 October 1963. He identified himself as Lee Oswald and Harvey Oswald.⁶³

If the record is to be fully believed, then the paragraph shown above is replete with errors. Both dates are wrong, and no call to the Cuban Embassy was made. And the caller never referred to himself as “Harvey Oswald,” a name that keeps showing up in the record like an unwanted relative.⁶⁴

Not surprising then, when in 1978 Anne

Goodpasture interrupted her HSCA interviewers before they had barely asked a question, to let them know that she might say things that conflicted with the record:

Miss Goodpasture: I am just concerned that some of my testimony may be in conflict with records.

Mr. Goldsmith: I understand.

Miss Goodpasture: Through faulty memory.⁶⁵

Faulty memories, perhaps. Faulty records, more than likely. Faulty history, for certain.

Sources and Notes:

1 See the article *The Fourteen Minute Gap*, available online at

<http://www.history-matters.com/essays/frameup/FourteenMinuteGap/FourteenMinuteGap.htm>.

2 The phone call transcript is available from the LBJ Library and at

http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/lbjlib/phone_calls/Nov_1963/html/LBJ-Nov-1963_0029a.htm.

3 FBI Report of November 23, 1963. Available in Church Committee records, RIF #157-10014-10168.

4 Anne Goodpasture ARRB testimony of December 15, 1995, pg. 27.

See http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/arrb/cia_testimony/Goodpasture/html/Goodpasture_0148a.htm.

5 David Slawson Warren Commission report entitled “Trip to Mexico City”, April 22, 1964, 104-10011-10097, at

http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/wc/wcmemos/Trip_To_Mexico_City/html/104-10011-10097_0001a.htm.

6 Taped HSCA interview of William Coleman, August 2, 1978. Audio available at

http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/hasca/unpub_testimony/audio/HSCA_Coleman.htm.

7 Ibid.

8 MFR of Thomas Hall of meeting with David Slawson, May 5, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10404-10115.

9 Transcripts of both conversations are in MEXI 7025, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10413-10159.

10 Warren Commission Document 347, p. 10.

11 Phone call between Lyndon Johnson and Richard Russell, November 29, 1963, 8:55 PM. Available from the LBJ Library and at

http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/lbjlib/phone_calls/Nov_1963/audio/LBJ-Russell_11-29-63_2nd.htm.

12 Ibid.

13 *Oswald and the CIA*, John Newman, 1995, Carroll & Graf, pp. 369-377.

14 *Oswald Offered Soviets Data for Trip*, AP story of November 27, 1976. In Russ Holmes Work File among set of newspaper clippings at 104-10400-10010.

15 *Hill Panel Probing Oswald Call*, Washington Post story of November 27, 1976, by Ronald Kessler. Also in 104-10400-10010.

16 HSCA testimony of David Phillips, November 28, 1976, pp. 39-40. This and other CIA Security Classified deposition transcripts (Tarasoffs, Rocca, Helms, and others) are all available online at

<http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/hasca/secclass/contents.htm>.

17 Ibid, p. 51.

18 *Oswald, the CIA, and Mexico City* (aka Lopez Report), p. 82.

19 Ibid, p. 83.

20 Ibid, p. 86.

21 HSCA Tarasoff testimony, November 30, 1976, summary material.

22 Ibid, pp. 22-23.

23 HSCA testimony of Ray Rocca, July 17, 1978, p. 84.

24 Quoted in *Deep Politics II*, Peter Dale Scott, p. 9.

25 Letter from HSCA Chairman Louis Stokes to DCI Stansfield Turner, October 13, 1978, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10406-10425.

26 Though it should be noted that the earliest post-assassination records, including the November 23 FBI memo to the White House and

Secret Service, refer to an October 1 call.

27 See *Deep Politics II*, Peter Dale Scott, p. 15.

28 There are many indications that FBI Director Hoover and more than one CIA Director taped their own phone calls, though such tapes have not been released and may well be destroyed.

29 HSCA testimony of Ray Rocca, July 17, 1978, pp. 277-278. There are 53 redactions in this transcript, which was last reviewed in 1997.

30 HSCA testimony of Richard Helms, pp. 51-52.

31 Rocca HSCA testimony, pp. 217-218.

32 Mexico City Station History Excerpts, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10414-10124. The three HSCA investigators who were allowed to look at even the sanitized excerpts were Chief Counsel G. Robert Blakey, Deputy Counsel Gary Cornwell, and Michael Goldsmith, who conducted most of the Mexico City-related depositions.

33 Ibid. Operations against the Cuban Embassy are covered in pages 226 through 298.

34 MEXI 7115 of Nov 28, 1963. In Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10404-10159.

35 See also MEXI 7615 of Jan 2, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10404-10130.

36 John Newman has identified one of the informants as Luis Alberu. See *Oswald and the CIA*, chapter 18. According to Newman, Alberu is also the informant to whom, in 1967, Sylvia Duran admitted a sexual relationship with Oswald.

37 DIR 85670 of Nov 29, 1963. In Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10404-10144.

38 Gaeton Fonzi, *The Last Investigation*, Thunder's Mouth Press, 1993, p. 294.

39 The conversation, sinister as it could appear to some, had its comic aspects as well. The phone connection was terrible, and most of the conversation is spent with the two parties trying desperately to make themselves understood. The vigorous promotion of the idea that a conspiracy to kill the U.S. President had been conducted by parties who couldn't even make a phone call to each other has its amusing side. Perhaps the connection was so bad because of too many taps on the line. An excerpted transcript was sent from Mexico City to CIA HQ on November 26, 1963, document is MEXI 7068, in the Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10404-10175. A complete version, which includes the comical inability of the parties to communicate, was sent to the Warren Commission on May 22, see RIF #1964 104-10009-10183 in the 1996 ARRB releases.

40 HSCA Report, Appendix XI, p. 494.

41 Handwritten note and transcript in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10162.

42 104-10400-10162, p. 22.

43 104-10400-10162, p. 23.

44 Letter of February 15, 1979, from OLC to Robert Blakey, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10157.

45 Gus Russo, *Live by the Sword*, Bancroft Press, 1998, p. 226.

46 HSCA document #180-10096-10364. Pages 98 through 102 discuss the Gutierrez allegation. This report is available online at http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/wc/wcmemos/Oswald_Foreign_Activities/contents.htm.

47 The story is told in slightly greater detail in the Oswald Foreign Activities report cited previously. The yet more detailed FBI reports are in CE 2121.

48 Lopez Report, p. 271.

49 The tape is HSCA record number 180-10131-10396, also labeled tape Z-25. It is available online at http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/hasca/unpub_testimony/audio/HSCA_Gutierrez.htm.

50 I have not been able to locate a copy of the letter itself.

51 Documents theorizing that Moskalev is the mystery man include 104-10413-10055 and 104-10413-10077, among others.

52 Memorandum of Arthur Dooley of July 20, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10293.

53 Memo from Helms to Rankin, July 23, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10292.

54 Dooley memorandum of September 25, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10279.

55 DIR 51937 of September 23, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10291.

56 DIR 52398 of September 24, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10290.

57 MEXI 1011 of September 25, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10286.

58 DIR 52774 of September 25, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10287.

59 MEXI 1018 of September 25, 1964, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10288.

60 Letter from Win Scott to J.C. King of November 22, 1963, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10400-10302.

61 Memo of meeting between ASCHAM, CURTIS, and WITHHELD, in DDP files at 104-10310-10001.

62 Several copies exist, one is RIF #104-10086-10001, available online at http://www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/cia/80T01357A/104-10086-10001/html/104-10086-10001_0001a.htm.

63 Mexico City Station History Excerpts, in Russ Holmes Work File at 104-10414-10124, p. 43-44.

64 See Appendix II: The Documentary Life of Harvey Lee Oswald, in Peter Dale Scott's *Deep Politics II*.

65 HSCA testimony of Anne Goodpasture, November 20, 1978, p. 6.

Editor's Note: The deposition of Anne Goodpasture is available through both JFK Lancer Online Resources

http://www.flash.net/~jfk/laner/Transcripts_Depos.html and [History-Matters.com](http://www.history-matters.com)

Read the transcript of John Newman's November In Dallas presentation on "Mexico City and the "Oswald" Tape" at

http://www.jfklancer.com/backes/newman_1.html