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SUBJECT : Flights from Mexico City to Havana on 22 November 1963

- REFERENCE:
1. What is the total CIA information on the two flights from Mexico City to Havana?
  2. What was done at the time to develop further information on this matter?
  3. Can further information be acquired on this matter now?

FINDINGS:

1. The Mexico Station records confirm only one flight from Mexico City to Havana on 22 November 1963. This was the regularly scheduled Cubana Airlines flight. There were two reports of small aircraft flights (one a twin engine flight to Mexico City connecting with Cubana for onward transportation to Havana of a mysterious passenger; and the other a flight allegedly from Dallas, Tijuana, and Mexico City to Havana with two "gang-land" type passengers.) Beyond the original reports (from sources of undetermined reliability) there was nothing in the Mexico Station records to substantiate that these flights occurred.

2. Facts substantiated by Mexico Station records: On 22 November 1963 a Cubana Airlines plane from Havana arrived at the Mexico City International airport at 1620 hours - Mexico City time and departed on a return flight to Havana at 2035 hours - Mexico City time. It was on the ground in Mexico City for about four hours which would be considered normal for servicing for a turn-around flight carrying passengers in both directions. This information was obtained from sensitive telephone taps in the process of routine operating procedures on 22 November 1963.

3. Report not substantiated by Mexico Station records: On 30 November 1963 CIA Headquarters cabled Mexico City that a report had been received that the 22 November 1963 Cubana departure had been delayed five hours from 1700 to 2200 hours awaiting an important passenger who arrived at the Mexico City airport in a private twin motor aircraft at 2130 hours Mexico time. Passenger transferred directly to Cubana plane without going through customs or immigration and travelled in pilot's cabin to Havana. 2/ This information was passed to the Mexican officials on 2 December 1963 for investigation. There is no record of a reply. We know from independent information in paragraph two above that some parts of this report are in error. The Cubana flight was not delayed for five hours. It had departed for Havana from Mexico City at 2035 hours which would be at least an hour before the twin motor aircraft was alleged to have arrived in Mexico City. The source's name is on the manifest as a passenger from Mexico City to Havana but the time supplied by him does not agree with other information considered reliable.

The Mexican Government assured the U.S. Ambassador that it was taking steps to control travellers and closed the border with the U.S. for several hours immediately after the assassination. 3/ A flight of a private aircraft such as this is possible but it is unlikely that such unusual activity as this would have gone unnoticed by the Mexico Station team of observers who reported on Cubana Airlines flights. 4/

4. Report not substantiated by Mexico Station records: On 2 November 1964 the Hamburg Base reported that a source in Cuba claimed to have seen an aircraft with Mexican markings discharge passengers at the Havana airport at 1700 hours on 22 November 1963. The source reported that the two passengers "were gangsters" and that "the plane had just come from Dallas, via Tijuana (where it was forced to land because of engine trouble) and Mexico City." 5/ This information was sent to the FBI on 23 December 1964 for investigation. 6/ The FBI responded on 31 December 1964 that Tijuana would have been an unlikely place for a "forced landing" on a flight from Dallas to Havana. Their office was making no further inquiries in the absence of additional details from CIA. They suggested that CIA conduct an investigation in Tijuana. 7/ (Tijuana is almost the same distance from Dallas flying West as Havana would be flying Southeast or Mexico City would be flying South.) The Mexico Station had no investigative assets in the Tijuana area. The information was a year old when received and much too vague for retroactive checking of records. The untested source who had provided the report died before he could be questioned for additional details.

5. The SSC V report page 103 further complicates travel data by the listing of the Cubana Airlines flight delay from "6 p.m. until 11 p.m." The writers of this report were probably trying to transpose the departure time to the equivalent of Eastern time. Their information is dated 1 December 1963 which is probably a mistaken reference to the cable which is dated 30 November 1963. 2/ The Mexico Station file copy of this cable carried the date of 1 December 1963 which is the date it was received. 2/

SOURCES:

- 1/ Transcripts from Cuban Embassy and Cubana Airlines conversations on 22 November 1963 discussing arrival time of flight, it's delay in arriving, and departure. Joint CIA Mexican Government telephone tap of four separate Cuban Embassy lines. Summary translations are in English from the Spanish language transcript. These are not verbatim transcripts. The Spanish text is the original monitor's interpretation of the conversation. The English text is an interpretation of the monitor's interpretation. (File: 50-9-12 Folder 23, 22 November 1963 Job 64-518/84, Space 307389.)
- 2 / Cable from CIA to Mexico City Station DIR 36054 dated 30 November 1963. (File: 201-289248) Mexico City Station file copy of DIR 86054 which is dated 1 December 1963, the date of receipt. (201-289248). Extract of the information passed to the Mexican Government officials for a check on this aircraft, dated 2 December 1963. (File: 201-289248).
- 3/ Cable from U.S. Embassy, Mexico City, Ambassador Thomas C. Mann, dated 22 November 1963, Control 269, SECSTATE 1177, advising the Department of State that the Mexican Government had closed the border with the U.S. for all travellers not personally and well-known to the Mexican Government. (File: Mexico Station File P-8593).
- 4/ LIFIRE surveillance team. Their case officer at that time was Robert H. Feldmann of LA Division.
- 5/ EGGA-3171 dated 2 November 1964, a dispatch from Hamburg Base reported information from Professor Walter SIMON who had received it a year earlier from a Cuban colleague. (AMLOAN Job #66-602/61, File: 19-6-79/3, volume 1). HMMA-13244 dated 30 December 1964 transmitted to Mexico City Station a copy of the CSCI-316/02545-64 which had been sent to the FBI on 23 December 1964. (201-322247).
- 6/ CSCI-316/02545-64 dated 23 December 1964 (201-322247).
- 7/ FBI memorandum dated 31 December 1964 DBA-9434, Subject: Lee Harvey OSWALD responding to CSCI-316/02545-64 (201-322247).