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INVESTIGATION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

009917

1. Identifying Information:

Name Robert E. Webster

Date 3/16/78

Address _____

Place Holiday Inn

City/State Ellsworth, Maine

Telephone 207-667-9715 (h) 207-244-5531 (office)

Date of Birth 10/23/28

M or S _____

Social Security 207-667-9715

Spouse _____

Children _____

2. Physical Description:

Height _____

Color Eyes _____ Hair _____

Weight _____

Special Characteristics _____

Ethnic Group _____

3. Personal History:

a. Present Employment: _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

b. Criminal Record

1. Arrests _____

2. Convictions _____

4. Additional Personal Information:

a. Relative(s): Name _____

Address _____

b. Area frequented: _____

c. Remarks: _____

Investigator Harold D. Peaf

Date _____

Form #4-B

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

NAME Robert E. Webster Date 3/16/78 Time _____

Address _____ Place Holiday Inn

Ellsworth, Maine

Interview:

On 3/16/78 Staff Investigator Leap interviewed Robert E. Webster at the Holiday Inn, Ellsworth, Maine relative to his defection to Russia in July of 1959, his return to the U.S. in 1962, and related matters.

Webster was working for the Rand Corporation of Cleveland, Ohio at the time of his defection. He was sent to Moscow by the Rand Corporation to prepare an exhibit for the firm which would be displayed at the International Trade Fair.

Webster made three trips to Russia. He defected on the third trip, all the necessary arrangements with Russian officials were made during his second trip.

Webster's defection was on his own initiative and was not related to political ideology. He fell in love with a Russian girl, an interpreter at the hotel in which he was staying. Webster decided he wanted to remain with Vera _____ and made inquiry with Russian officials at the International Fair as to whether

Interviewer Harold D. Leap
(Signature)

Harold D. Leap
(Name)

Date Transcribed 4/26/78 bycs
(Ini)

it would be possible for him to remain in Russia.

The Fair officials relayed Webster's request to the proper government officials (could not remember names). The decision was made that Webster could remain with limitations. Webster knew this before he returned to the U.S. from his second trip.

Webster's first two trips were in preparation for the Fair. The third trip was to run the Rand Corporation exhibition at the Fair. The Russian Government officials encouraged Webster to defect during the fair. Webster was of the opinion that the motive for the Russian encouragement was his expertise in the field of plastics utilization. Webster said that the U.S. was ten years ahead of the Russians at that time. The Russian officials suggested that Webster leave a note for his American partner to the effect that Webster was going on a vacation for a few days. In reality Webster was only moved to another hotel along with his girl friend. This move was to delay the U.S. a few days in determining that Webster had defected.

The Russians decided that Webster should be located in Leningrad. Webster was given a position in a plastic research institution and he also worked part time in a factory. His pay was above normal for other workers.

he was also provided an apartment for Vera and himself. (Most Russians have to wait several years to get a desirable apartment.) They also provided Vera with a good position in Lenngrade. They also provided Webster with a one month vacation at a resort on the Black Sea.

At no time did anyone question Webster relative to intelligence matters. On one occasion Webster was asked by a government official why he did not marry Vera. Webster explained that could not as he was already married. The subject was never again discussed. At no time was he ever pressured about anything. He was not subjected to Communist doctrine or asked about his political views.

Webster was not contacted by the KGB. To his knowledge no officials ever identified themselves as KGB.

There was no reason to be contacted by the KGB. The government officials that aided Webster in his defection had his entire story. He possessed no knowledge of value to K.G.B. His expertise was in the field of plastic utilization.

Webster requested and received Russian citizenship. He was not knowledgeable of other defectors. He did not at that time know the name Oswald.

Webster decided to return to the U.S. after learning that his mother had a nervous breakdown because of his defection. He received this information via a letter from his father in May 1960. He decided that his actions were ruining too many people's lives. He discussed the issue with Vera who did not try to pressure him to stay even though they had a baby daughter. Webster stated that Vera understood. Webster made application with the foreign minister to leave Russia. The application was denied and he was notified he would have to wait one year to resubmit his exit visa. He waited one year and again submitted his request to leave and stated his reasons for the request. At no time did he misrepresent, to the Russians, the motives for his actions.

During the year he waited to re-apply, his father and former employer Mr. Rand assisted Webster on his effort to return thru the State Department. Webster contacted the American Embassy during a trip to Moscow for the purpose of watching a parade in Moscow Square. He talked to Consul Snyder. Arrangements were made with the State Department for Webster to return to the U.S. (if he was allowed to leave Russia) as a Russian Alien. The Russian government approved Webster's second

request and he departed Russia in May of 1962. He flew from Moscow to Paris to New York. At New York, a U.S. Marshall served a subpoena on Webster for an appearance before the Senate at some future date. At a later date (he could not remember the date) Webster did appear before the Senate in a closed session and answered questions relative to his defection and his desire to regain U.S. Citizenship. Webster obtained U.S. Citizenship in 1965.

A short time after his return he was first questioned at his home in Zelienable, Pa., by agents of the FBI. He was also debriefed two times by the CIA. The last debriefing by the CIA was in a Washington Hotel and lasted approximately a week. CIA's main interest was in Russian personnel. They had photographs of Russians whom they wished to know if he talked with. Webster signed a CIA secrecy oath not to reveal substance of CIA debriefing. Webster agreed to assist CIA in the future if he was ever contacted by the KGB. He was never, to his knowledge, contacted.

Digressing to Webster's contact with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Webster stated it was quite a delay for the U.S. Consul in Moscow (Snyder) to obtain State Department approval for him to return to the U.S. as a Russian Alien.