

*Transcript of ARRB Interview of Donald Monier
conducted August 12, 1996 by Dave Montague and Christopher Barger*

Montague: All right. All right, we're on tape right now. You do know that you're being recorded, Mr. Monier?

Monier: Yes, I do.

Montague: All right, once again, my name is David Montague, I'm with the staff here on the Review Board. I'm also with Christopher Barger, who's staff here on the Review Board. And you are Donald Monier, who I previously talked to back in June of this year-- just briefly touched base with you before, about the fact that you used to be with the United States Army's 112th Military Intelligence Group, is that correct?

Monier: Yeah, I was CIC, and then I changed to MI.

Montague: Right. If you don't mind, can I just rehash some of the conversation we had before, just to kind of get you back into the flavor? It's been two months.

Monier: Right.

Montague: Okay. When I talked to you before, I gave you a brief review-- overview-- about the Review Board itself, before... see, you didn't know anything about us at first. You had mentioned to me that you were initially with Army CIC, but left the CIC prior to the assassination; that you did some work with the 112th in a unit called the FOI Group--

Monier: Wait-- no, no. That's all wrong.

Montague: Okay.

Monier: I was with the 112th CIC Group in Dallas--

Montague: In Dallas.

Monier: I retired-- I mean, I got out--I served my three years in the Army and got out before the assassination--

Montague: Oh, okay.

Monier: --I mustered out in October.

Montague: Okay. All right. But you were aware of the fact--

Monier: --I probably left Dallas....it happened on my birthday, so it would be October the 3rd--
I probably left Dallas the very last part of September.

Montague: Okay, when was your birthday?

Monier: October 3rd.

Montague: Okay.

Monier: That was my mustering out date, I think.

Montague: Oh, okay. Right.

Monier: And, that relationship with the FOI we talked about was a special project that was an exercise that was conducted between CIC and-- that aspect of it-- and what was then called FOI.

Montague: Now, what was the FOI, and what was this project?

Monier: Well... CIC was targeted against other intelligence agencies as far as counter-intelligence, and the only positive things we did related to other intelligence agencies. However, there were positive collection efforts against what was then called 'Order of Battle' type of things-- the use of indigenous personnel in foreign countries against... again, I say 'order of battle; [it] could be tanks or--

Montague: Right.

Monier: --military operations, [or] whatever. And the indigenous personnel would be called 'agents', and the FOI personnel would have been called 'agent handlers.'

Montague: Right.

Monier: [They] handled sources, that's all.

Montague: Okay. And--

Monier: They were positive collection efforts.

Montague: Well now, what do you mean by that?

Monier: Well... I mean, anybody in intelligence would know the difference between positive and counter.

Montague: Right, right...I was just stating it for the purposes of the tape, that's all.

Monier: Oh, okay.

Montague: So you did some--

Monier: We trained, and this was an exercise that was held in Dallas.

Montague: Right. And what was [sic] the specifics of the exercise?

Monier: Well... basically, we acted as... whatever-- you know, Polish security, or whatever-- we presented ourselves as the opposition. And they were to come in black-- meaning without proper identification-- and do various things that an agent would do. For example, service dead drops, or cut-outs, or various things of this nature. And our role was to act as the security people; put them under pressure, interrogate them, polygraph them, search them at all hours... this type of thing.

Montague: Okay. All right, good. You mentioned a special photographic project?

Monier: Well, prior to the operation, we had to pick out various sites for the meetings of these agents-- or agent handlers, actually.

Montague: Right.

Monier: And, well, we photographed various sites, and submitted them to them [sic] for their approval; and also, we photographed the operation as we did it, with... I think we did have some 16 millimeter video... and some 35 [millimeter], of course.

Montague: Okay.

Monier: I mean, still pictures... of the thing in progress. So, it could be used for critiquing and for future schools. It was all part of operations out of Ft. Holabird at the time, which was the Army Intelligence Center.

Montague: Were there any specific targets of the photographic project? Or was this just a mock... you know, just a training exercise?

Monier: Oh, it was a mock exercise. One of the targets, I think, was.... it might have been called (*unintelligible*) at that time, or (*unintelligible*)... you know, the aerospace industry type thing. Their... part of their mission was, for example, to get photographs of areas that, you know, people shouldn't have access to. Our mission was to try to break them down if we'd catch them... make them confess.

Montague: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. All right. Chris?

Barger: Mr. Monier, I'm Christopher Barger, with the Review Board; I'm a military analyst. One of the allegations that's been raised is that it would have been standard procedure for the 112th or other intelligence groups to provide supplemental security to the Secret Service whenever there was a VIP visit. To the best of your recollection, was it standard procedure for the 112th... or was there any case in the past before the Dallas trip, where the 112th or 316th provided supplemental security to the Secret Service?

Monier: I have no idea. I can speak for ONI, because I was with Naval Intelligence later, and we did provide supplemental security. I... (*garbled*) when Nixon met with Dieu. But that was with Naval Intelligence. With Army Intelligence, I never had the occasion to provide security, because the president hadn't visited Dallas during the period of time I was there. I would assume that it would be normal for them to assess for manpower. I don't know, as I say-- it never occurred during the period of time was in Dallas. But it's highly conceivable [that] it would be.

Barger: Okay. One of the other things that we've heard from several people that were in the 112th was that as part of the counter-intelligence efforts that were going on, that files would have been collected on locals-- or dossiers compiled-- and what we're wondering is, to the best of your knowledge, did the 112th have a file on Lee Harvey Oswald, for whatever reason? If so, we'd like to know who was responsible for collecting that information, and would be able to tell us why it was begun in the first place?

Monier: They had no file... I mean, I never saw any files. There were a lot of files I didn't see. I was a sergeant. There were other people there, including civilians, that may have had different access than I had. However, I can't imagine why we would have

had a file on Lee Harvey Oswald, because he was in the Marines, and if anybody would have had [one], it would have been Naval Intelligence or the CIA.

Barger: Was there much liaison with either Naval Intelligence, or CIA, or any other intelligence agencies that were going-- that were down in Dallas at the same time?

Monier: There may have been, but I never had any.

Barger: Okay. Would it-- just because, again, I've heard from several other members of the 112th who've indicated that there may have been a file on Oswald. Would it seem to be standard procedure to have-- if you had a known Communist or pro-Castro agitator in the area-- does it seem strange to you that there would have been a dossier compiled on that person, or does that sound like something that ought to have been done?

Monier: Well, there was a certain amount of domestic intelligence going on at that time. But I don't... you know, I wasn't involved in it, so it could be someone else would know better than I on that.

Barger: Right.

Monier: I was peripherally involved in a few things that had to do with... like, I think there was a group called the Minutemen.

Barger: Right. Yeah, we are familiar with them, and the domestic intelligence--

Monier: There were some... like, what would be considered Title III operations today, but they're things that-- regulations were a little different in those days, as far as...

(All laugh)

Montague: That's easy... that's an understatement. *(Laughs)*

Monier: *(Laughing)* Yeah, they were pretty loose.

(All laugh)

Monier: You know, I mean, there were such things as black bag operations and whatnot. But again, I don't remember any on dissidents like that. Some of it had to do with people in the Army that were avowed Communists, or one thing or another, or, you know. I

can remember doing some things relative to that, but none of that had to do with Harvey Os-- Lee Harvey Oswald.

Barger: Okay. All right. To your knowledge, were any members of the 112th or 316th ever trained in protective VIP security as part of their duties while in Dallas?

Monier: To my knowledge, no.

Barger: Okay. The majority of the remainder of our questions had to do with the day of the assassination or the aftermath, and you clearly were not in Dallas at that point; so I'm going to skip the rest of them, with one exception. I was reading Mr. Montague's report of the phone conversation that the two of you had. He indicated there that you had indicated that you thought Lee Harvey Oswald might have been, or probably was, working for a branch of intelligence... is that correct?

Monier: Well... it has all the earmarks, to anybody who's ever been in the business.

Barger: Could you elaborate on that a little bit, please, for the record?

Monier: Well, the fact that I think he was a Russian linguist, and that... the way the Marine Corps trained him as far as releasing him to do various things. For example, just getting... you know, defecting to Russia. [I] mean, there were operations in the Navy... I think they were called Code 30, if I'm not mistaken.

Montague: Can you tell us something about that?

Monier: Well, it's fake defections. We had-- I worked in Hawaii-- and we had situations going on like that during the Vietnam War, where there were-- there's a pipeline-- where some of our people were defecting; got through the University of Hawaii, a couple of professors...and eventually, they'd be debriefed by the Russians, and wind up in Sweden or wherever, or some neutral country... after they had been totally debriefed. So, I mean, this is not an unusual operation to set up a fake defection. *(Pause)* For the purpose of gathering... you know, you can learn all along the way, plus... if they put you in a decent position, which, chances are, the Russians would have never done that--

Montague: Right. Did... do you know of anyone that was involved in any Code 30's during that time period?

Barger: That we could contact now?

Monier: In that time period-- this is later I'm talking about, during the height of the Vietnam War. Yeah, I've been involved in at least one Code 30 opera-- yeah, I'm not even sure if that's the correct designation... I mean, we're talking many, many years ago--

Barger/

Montague: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Monier: --(garbled) discussion, and I'm sure... if it hasn't been declassified by now, it should have been.

Barger: (Laughs) Well, on that topic, both Mr. Montague and myself have Top Secret clearances, and since this is a government agency discussing this here, you know, there's no problem with bringing up the topic.

Monier: Well, yes and no. I mean, this is not a secure line, number one, and--

Barger: That's true.

Monier: --number two, having clearances is not the same as having a need to know. However, as I say, nothing that I can think of that I'm relating is of any sensitive nature. I mean...

Montague: Is there anything else that you could elaborate, or share with us, that would help us to maybe find out more about Code 30's and their history, and so forth?

Monier: Oh, you mean... well, you'd have to go to the respective outfits to find that out-- I mean, what operations they ran. I know the Navy ran some; I'm sure the Marine Corps had a little outfit called, I think, CIC...that was very much patterned after the Army's unit. In fact, there was some training that went on, at Ft. Holabird in those days, of Marine Corps personnel.

Montague: When you say those days, you're talking about in the early sixties?

Monier: Right.

Montague: Do you know anyone that did training or anything like that-- any names... you know, you've done a lot of case work, you've been-- you were in the business for a long time-- you know, I'm sure [that] you may remember some names of some other

people during that time period.

Monier: Hmmm.

Montague: *(Laughing)* At least try to, after 33 years.

Monier: *(Laughing)* Yeah.

Montague: *(Laughing)* Yeah.

Monier: Yeah, well, your mind size degenerates during that period of time, too.

(All laugh)

I don't remember... I remember running one Marine through--

Montague: Okay.

Monier: --defection, that's all. And it was a member of the American Serviceman's Union, which was... there was some question going on about that, so we were running them in there, and then we had them defect.

Montague: Well, let me ask you this then, Donald, okay? I understand you don't remember any names of any particular people, but it might be helpful to us if you could just tell us a little bit about-- well, let me ask you this--

Monier: I could tell you a person who was in Dallas at the time; and my understanding-- and I forgot where I got the information-- I think it had to do with wondering how in the hell Oswald got out of the Texas School Book Depository building after the shooting; 'cause there was an agent-- Richard Burton, who was with the 112th at the time-- and he was still there, at the time, you know, after I left. And allegedly, he ran into the Texas School Book Depository building to call the office, to let them know that an assassination had occurred; and he couldn't get out, even with his credentials. So I always wondered how Oswald just bounced out of that building.

Montague: Well, not to get too far off point, but since you brought that up: If I throw another name at you, just tell me if it rings a bell, okay?

Monier: All right.

Montague: James Powell.

Monier: Sure, he was a roommate of mine for a while.

Montague: Really? Was he in the Book Depository that day, too?

Monier: Maybe it was Powell that-- maybe it wasn't Burton. Maybe it was Jim Powell that was in there, and tried to get out but couldn't. He had just called the office... Jim was a boy from North Carolina, or South Carolina, or somewhere around the country. Wherever Burlington would be, with mills, and things of this nature--

Montague: Oh, North Carolina.

Barger: Yeah.

Montague: Yeah. That's in North Carolina.

Monier: Is it? Okay.

Montague: Uh-huh.

Monier: Yeah, he was a good... a good picker on a guitar and a banjo. *(All laugh)* A great guy, incidentally. Whatever happened there, Powell would have had nothing to do with any of the kind of stuff. [sic]

Barger: Now, Powell has told us that he was off-duty that day, and was down in the area taking photographs on his own. And, what I'm wondering is, would it have been standard procedure-- or do you expect that there might have been somebody assigned from the unit to cover the motorcade route, or to take photographs that day? Would that have been something that was done, or does that not sound plausible?

Monier: [To my] knowledge, it would not have been assigned. Now, unless, [as] I say, they were tapped for manpower; that's possible, you know.

Barger: Right. *(Pause)* Is there anything else that you can think of that you would like to discuss with us, at this point? Or, that you can think of that might be of use to us?

Monier: No... *(pause)* ... uh...you know, I really think that whole thing *smells*. *(Montague*

laughs) And, you know, I'm not an Oliver Stone freak; but still, in all, there is a lot of things [sic] that just don't make sense to anybody with any intelligence background.

Barger: Right.

Montague: Donald?

Monier: Yes?

Montague: Let me ask you just one or two more-- just follow-up on-- regarding the fake defector thing, okay? The first one is... I believe I heard you mention that some of the programs in the different branches of [the] military service were sort of patterned-- what, after the Navy, or after the Army's--

Monier: Well, no, they all did their own thing.

Montague: Okay.

Monier: And this was-- okay, DIA was just formed-- actually, it was a paper organization back in the early sixties. And... but, until that-- until DIA was formed-- every agency did their own thing. In fact, they were running into each other, and that was the reason DIA was formed... allegedly. But then, like, when the CIA was formed for the same reason, then they do some empire building, and that's what occurred with DIA. It was not supposed-- it was supposed to be a coordinating agency, and then it took over a lot of things; right under CIA, supposedly, to funnel everything to CIA.

Montague: So, if I were to ask you what the standard procedure would be for actually-- not in *too* much detail right now, unless you'd like to give that-- what the standard procedure would be for running a fake defector through the CIC--

Monier: Oh, it would require approval. No local office would do that on their own hook. They would have to go to the headquarters to get approval of some type of thing like that. And in later years, it would have probably have had to have been cleared through with DIA, or, you know, further up. But in those days, things were a lot looser.

Montague: Did you do anything in terms of people-- like running articles, or anything like that? Or anything just to make them publicly appear to have left?

Monier: Uh... no. Are you talking about the Army, or Navy?

Montague: Any knowledge that you may have of fake defectors, in terms of running them; making them disappear... defect to another country.

Monier: (Pause) Well...

Montague: I hope I'm not saying the question wrong, Donald.

Monier: [I don't know] Army standard operating procedure-- 'cause my knowledge of this has to do with Navy, and not Army.

Montague: Okay. And would they keep track on them, though, after they leave the country, Donald?

Monier: Within capabilities, yeah. That would be-- I mean, you would have someone handling them.

Montague: Okay. Even if they were-- would they return back to the country, ever?

Monier: Well, I suspect it would be a matter [of] if they survived, number one, and number two, you know, [would be] what the situation was. I... my knowledge of it relates to... in fact, I tried to run one through, and couldn't get permission to run him through, on one... I mean...not haphazardly. I mean, it was done with headquarters' approval.

Barger: Sure. About how long-- and again, understanding that you worked with Navy, and not Army-- how long would there... how long a prep time would there be for it? How long would it take to sort of set up the situation and prepare the defector, before he or she left to go into country?

Monier: Well, mine had to do with people being-- winding up in a neutral country, after being debriefed. So, I don't think-- you're talking more on the category of how good the informant was, and whether he was capable of doing things like that.

Barger: Okay.

Monier: But mostly-- I mean, even... it was also to find out the pipeline of how-- you know, where the defect-- you know, where... like what professor at a university he might go to for various things.

Barger: Sure.

Monier: I'm getting into areas that would be best answered by someone who's...*(trails off)*

Montague: *(Laughing)* I understand. I really don't have any other-- besides of any-- since [you got] the package that I sent you, did you happen to think of any other notes, or any records or anything you may have that may be of interest to the JFK collection?

Monier: No, not really. *(All laugh)* Like I say, I was gone when it happened, so...

Barger: Right.

Monier: And I didn't-- during the time I was there, you know, I didn't even know Kennedy was going to be showing up there.

Montague: Oh, wow. Hey, before I forget, let me... I don't really have any other questions or anything--

Barger: Nor do I.

Montague: --and neither does Chris, but... I'd like to, once again, leave the door open with you, so that we can-- if we do think of something else, you know, just give you a call back, if that's okay.

Monier: Okay, sure. I have no problem with that.

Montague: All right, thanks. And once again, if you have any questions or anything like that, please feel free to contact us here at the Review Board-- you can call collect if you need to-- and, we certainly thank you for your time.

Monier: Yeah. One thing you ought to keep in mind, too, is that Dallas, and Texas in general at that time, was very, very right-wing. I mean, you had John Birchers around, some of whom were... I remember one who was, I think, going to be a brigadier in the National Guard. And, you know, we did investigations about people that were involved in the National Guard because of these things, too. So, you know, you have to understand the climate.

Montague: Well, I... thank you very much for that. Just... it just came to mind, before I let you off the phone... is there anyone that you can think of that comes to mind that was in the 112th, or any other respective role, that would know something about the activities during that time period, say, after you left?

Monier: Well, if you had a roster, I could tell you.

Montague: We do.

Monier: Okay. There would be a civilian there... gosh, if I could think of his name... and there was a red-headed guy who was a chief warrant officer.

Barger: What we could do, Mr. Monier, is mail you a copy of the roster that we do have, and see if any of the names ring a bell, and then try and contact you again about a week or so later. Would that be okay?

Monier: Yeah. As I recall, the head of the office was Harold M. Frindell.

Barger: Yes.

Monier: He was a colonel, or major--

Montague: You're correct.

Barger: He was a colonel.

Montague: Yeah, you're right. You're right.

Monier: And there was a civilian working there who I think was about a GS-12 at the time. *(Pause)* Could be Harold, but I don't know. No, it isn't. I can't think of his name now. He would've known most of the things that went on. He was one of the mainstays of the office there.

Barger: Okay.

Monier: And there was-- and the CWO... I can't think of his name right now, but he was red-headed, and you'd mentioned-- he did the liaison with all the local police, and the other agencies--

Barger: Coyle.

Monier: --and he would be the one that would know something. But, he may have transferred before then, I'm not sure.

Barger: Let me see if this name rings a bell with you. Could you be discussing, or talking about, Ed Coyle?

Monier: Ed Coyle.... could be.

Barger: Okay...

Monier: The name rings a bell. *(Laughs)* I can just see a red-headed, freckle-faced guy, but, I think that's probably him.

(Barger and Montague laugh)

Barger: Okay.

Montague: *(To Barger)* Well, we'll send him the list.

Barger: We will send you the list, and rosters that we do have, and we'll see if any of those names ring a bell for you. *(To Montague)* Do you have anything else here?

Montague: No. Do you miss your old times in San Francisco and Hawaii with the Agency?

Monier: Oh, I had a good time. I had more fun with DEA, though, I could tell you.

Montague: Yeah.

Barger: Well, we should probably get off tape here.

Monier: [Things were] a lot looser in that organization....in the past. *(Laughs)*

(All laugh)

Montague: Oh, oh, okay. Well, tell you what; let me take you off tape real quick, and then I'll just take care of a couple [of] administrative matters, okay?

Monier: Okay.