

Assassination Records Review Board

600 E Street NW ▪ Second Floor ▪ Washington, DC 20530

April 7, 1995

Dear Board Members:

I am extremely gratified to report that, as I write this letter, a team of ARRB analysts (with appropriate clearances) is engaged in the review of documents at the FBI. Monday will mark the inauguration of a similar review effort at the CIA. The process of review is underway which places additional importance on the issues that the Board will be addressing next week. We are anxious to resolve the important definition question and to get your guidance on informant and sources/methods postponements.

In this regard, we are enclosing a (redacted) copy of one of the more important documents produced by the staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations: Lee Harvey Oswald: The CIA and Mexico City (generally cited as the "Lopez Report"). We will be using the document at the upcoming Board Meeting to provide examples of redactions taken by the Agency, particularly under statutory restrictions 1(a) (agent-officer) and 1(b) (sources or methods). At the meeting we will have available for your inspection an unredacted original with yellow markings highlighting the redactions.

A brief background on the Lopez Report may be helpful, and Jeremy has provided the following:

As you will recall from the CIA briefing, the Agency was particularly concerned about sources and methods issues in Mexico City. The Lopez Report shows why. The unredacted portions of the report reveal that there was intensive surveillance of the Cuban and Soviet embassies (as would be expected) at the time of the Oswald visit.

The substantive issues raised by Oswald's Mexico City visit (September 27 to October 2, 1963) have also long been of significant interest. The visit was an important component of the two major news releases last week (SOLO and *The Washington Post* story on the October 10 cable). According to the CIA, the Mexico City Station first learned that Oswald contacted the Soviet Embassy on October 1. On October 8, Mexico City cabled Langley to state that a person calling himself Lee Oswald visited the Soviet Embassy. The cable described Oswald as "an American male who spoke broken Russian" and who was of the "apparent age 35, athletic build, circa 6 feet, receding hairline, blading [sic] top" In response, Langley identified Oswald as a defector to the Soviet Union. The return cable did not identify Oswald's pro-Castro activities -- despite the fact that such information was available at Langley and was, according to the *Washington Post* story, reviewed by high-level personnel at Langley.

According to the CIA, it had not been aware that Oswald had also visited the Cuban Embassy and Consulate in Mexico City until after the assassination when it went back and reviewed its files. The Mexico City trip has been steeped in controversy. Some assert that Oswald never went to Mexico City, others have concluded that he never visited the embassies. The controversy has been perpetuated by a manuscript written by the former Mexico City station Chief, Win Scott, made available after his death. He criticized the official CIA position and said that his station had identified Oswald early on at both embassies and kept Langley regularly informed. Further controversies include disputes about whether CIA actually obtained a surveillance photo of Oswald, whether it kept sound recordings of his conversations with the embassies, and other inconsistencies in the recollections of CIA personnel.

It is our view that the Lopez report will provide a valuable heuristic device for understanding the Agency's concerns on sources and methods as well as a substantive primer on some of the important Mexico City issues. It should provide enough concrete examples of sources/methods postponements to determine the Board's basic approach and philosophy on this key issue.

Additional briefing material and a detailed agenda should be in your hands early next week.

Best Regards,