

MEMORANDUM

5 November 1996

To: The Record

From: Manuel E. Legaspi

Subject: Summary of the 10/28/96 meeting with former HSCA staffers Gaeton Fonzi, Dan L. Hardway, and Edwin Lopez Soto

It is my opinion that the meeting with the HSCA staffers was a success. Their statements were very informative and we obtained quite a few leads that we are currently following up on.

This memorandum will attempt to summarize statements which our guests made over the course of the meeting. Action items which have arisen as a result of the leads provided by our guests have already been incorporated into the J-track database and will not be detailed in this memorandum.

In addition to his comments, Fonzi provided the ARRB staff with a list of leads and people he felt the ARRB should contact.

SUMMARY

Messrs. Fonzi, Hardway, and Lopez arrived at ARRB offices approximately 0915. The record will indicate that a ten minute break took place at approximately 1030, and we took a half-hour lunch at 1200. Our discussions concluded at approximately 1440.

The atmosphere was relaxed, and even jovial at times. We found our guests very willing to discuss any aspect of their work with the HSCA as well as their overall opinions of the JFK case.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations Investigation

- All three of our participants stated that they came into the HSCA experience somewhat idealistic and departed with a more sober, and even cynical view of how Washington works.
- Despite this, Hardway stated that he felt that had the committee been granted funds that would

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ensure their survival for another six months, they would have been able to indict those individuals whom Blakey felt were responsible for the assassination. Had this happened, however, they probably would not have been able to convict anyone.

- Hardway and Lopez felt that their lack of experience in dealing with intelligence matters handicapped them significantly, at least in the early stages of the investigation. Since the information that they received from the agency was based only on their explicit requests, their inability to immediately gain an understanding of the confusing world of intelligence matters limited their access and added to their frustration.

- Hardway felt that intelligence types got away with “spinning” the final report of the Church Committee.

- In their opening statements, and throughout the session, Fonzi, Hardway and Lopez made many critical remarks towards the management of the HSCA’s investigative effort. They all exhibited frustration with the limits placed on their ability to conduct a full and wide ranging investigation into the assassination. Lopez and Hardway felt shackled by the lack of a desire on Blakey’s part to pursue leads which arose as a result of their examination of CIA files. Fonzi made specific statements about how the HSCA leadership did not want him to utilize his investigative skills in following leads, instead, they were more interested in him “touching base” with leads for the sake of including something “in the record.”

- Hardway stated that Committee members did not seem to care that much about the case. To illustrate his point, Hardway recalled that when David Atlee Phillips committed perjury during his testimony to the Committee, Chairman Louis Stokes immediately called for a lunch break.

MEXICO CITY

- Fonzi, Hardway, and Lopez are convinced that David Atlee Phillips and William Harvey were involved in an operation to put an anti-Castro “spin” on events coming out of the Mexico City station after the assassination. The Garro de Paz episode was one part of this operation.

- Although they never saw any direct proof of it, all three feel that there is a strong possibility that Elena Garro de Paz worked for the CIA in some capacity.

- Although they never saw a photo of Oswald in Mexico City, Hardway and Lopez are very sure that one of the impulse cameras stationed outside the Cuban and Soviet embassies took a picture of “Oswald,” (most likely a 3/4 shot) and that this picture still existed after the assassination of JFK.

- Hardway also opined that the Oswald case was definitely not a routine case, and as a result, it was handled in a special way by the staff of the Mexico City station and CIA headquarters. He went on to say that the Oswald information was probably communicated between the Chief of the Mexico City Station (Win Scott) and CIA HQ via “back channels.” These back-channel communications were used to minimize documentation of this information.
- Lopez still feels that there must be a record of one additional call between the alleged Oswald and the Soviet embassy (one more than the CIA says exists).
- One of the phone calls between “Oswald” and the Soviet embassy was conducted by someone impersonating Oswald. They felt that the impersonator was someone from the CIA’s Mexico City staff.
- Fonzi, Hardway and Lopez stated that there are two possible explanations for the “suppression of evidence” coming out of Mexico City: either someone was impersonating Oswald or LHO had someone with him.
- Hardway stated that they had asked for all of Mexico City Station Chief Winston Scott’s “stuff,” but he is sure that they did not receive much of it.
 - In an interview with the HSCA, CIA employee Daniel Stanley Watson stated that Scott was “LBJ’s boy in M.C.” and that he “never believed anything Scott told him the first time.”

ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS ON FIDEL CASTRO JACK ANDERSON ARTICLES

- In regards to the Jack Anderson articles which made public the CIA-sponsored assassination attempts on Fidel Castro, our guests were of the opinion that Anderson changed the tone of his articles after he was “talked to” by CIA-types. In his first article on the assassination attempts, Anderson indicated that the people the CIA sent to kill Castro killed Kennedy on their own; in his subsequent articles, he states that the men who were sent to kill Castro were “turned” by the Cuban dictator and ordered to kill JFK.

ANTONIO VECIANA

- All three, especially Fonzi, are inclined to believe Veciana's statements, based on the fact that he brought up the Oswald/Bishop link inadvertently;
- Veciana seemed very loyal to the CIA.
- If AV wanted to carry out a vendetta against someone in the United States government or intelligence community, there would be better ways to do it.
- General Escalante of Cuban intelligence believes that Phillips was Bishop.
- HSCA investigators did look into Military Intelligence files, as they related to Bishop but also in other areas. However, they were handicapped by the fact that DoD was not forthcoming with its files.

SYLVIA ODIO

- Fonzi believes the Sylvia Odio episode (where two Cubans and one "Norteamericano" visited Odio at her home in Dallas before the assassination of JFK) actually happened. He is not sure whether "Leon" was the real Oswald or a lookalike.
- A Soldier of Fortune named Whatley could have been one of the three men who visited Odio. Gerry Patrick Hemming could have also been one of the three men who visited Odio, however, Hemming's 6'6", 250lbs. + frame would have been noted by Sylvia.

CUBAN GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

- Fonzi has talked extensively with General Fabian Escalante of the Cuban Intelligence Service. Along with many other tidbits of information, Escalante told Fonzi that the following individuals might have been involved in the assassination:
 - Bernardo De Torres.** De Torres allegedly had pictures of Dealey Plaza from the day of the assassination. He later worked for the Garrison investigation, and had connections to Santos Trafficante. At one point, de Torres was subpoenaed by the HSCA, however, the FBI and CIA blocked the subpoena.
 - Eladio del Valle.** A former Batista official-turned anti-Castro activist and arms smuggler, he had connections to David Ferrie.
 - Hermenio Diaz.** Worked as Trafficante's bodyguard.
- Escalante states that nearly every anti-Castro group in the United States was deeply penetrated by Castro's intelligence network, and that Cuban Intelligence was more concerned with protecting Castro than with conducting offensive operations in the early 1960's.

JMWAVE

•The HSCA did not pursue individuals who worked at the CIA station in Miami (JMWAVE) other than the Chief of Station (Ted Shackley). According to our three guests, all of whom worked on CIA issues, the HSCA did not have access to other individuals stationed in Miami during their investigation and therefore could not look into that part of the case. Thus, certain individuals whom Fonzi, Lopez and Hardway felt were important were never questioned by the HSCA. "We didn't know who they were," complained Lopez.

CLOSING REMARKS

Both Fonzi and Lopez inquired as to the status of relations between the ARRB and the CIA regarding access to information. ARRB staff member Legaspi informed them that, unlike the HSCA, we have enjoyed a relatively smooth working relationship with the CIA, and that much of that can be attributed to the general move towards openness in our government, especially within places like the CIA.

Fonzi and Lopez expressed their support for the ARRB in acquiring and declassifying assassination-related documents, and volunteered their assistance if it was needed.

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