

MEMORANDUM

June 22, 2017

TO: Jeremy Gunn

CC: Brian Rosen, Kevin Tiernan, Tim Wray, Joan Zimmerman

FROM: Manuel E. Legaspi

SUBJECT: Sylvia Odio

BRIEF SUMMARY

Sylvia Odio was a young Cuban exile living in Dallas, Texas during the latter part of 1963. She made the now-famous allegation that Lee Harvey Oswald visited her home sometime in late September 1963, accompanied by two other individuals of Cuban or Mexican descent. Mrs. Odio, who was an active member of the anti-Castro Cuban community in Dallas, stated that during the course of this visit, the three visitors (who were greeted at the door by her sister, Annie) discussed matters related to anti-Castro activities before departing. After the meeting, she was telephonically contacted by one of the participants (Leopoldo), and the two of them specifically discussed Oswald's presence at the meeting. In the time between the visit and the assassination, Mrs. Odio apparently wrote her father about the visit and discussed the matter with several of her associates.

In investigating this matter, the Warren Commission found Mrs. Odio to be credible. However, Commission investigators had trouble rectifying various elements of her testimony with their prior research on Oswald's whereabouts. If Mrs. Odio was correct in placing the Oswald meeting in between 25 and 27 September, it would conflict with the Commission's statement that Oswald had left New Orleans on 25 September on his way to Mexico City (via Houston). The Warren Commission resolved the issue somewhat by concluding that Loran Eugene Hall, an anti-Castro activist from California, was one of the individuals who visited Mrs. Odio in September. Mr. Hall told the FBI that he was in the company of two other individuals (William Seymour and Lawrence Howard) who roughly fit Mrs. Odio's description of her visitors. Based on Mr. Hall's statements and the testimony of other witnesses, the Warren Commission concluded that it was not Lee Harvey Oswald who had visited Mrs. Odio in September 1963. (Mr. Hall later recanted his statements when interviewed by the HSCA.)

File 4.0.4 (Sylvia Odio)

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The HSCA also found Mrs. Odio's testimony related to the Oswald visit to be credible. The Committee further investigated Mrs. Odio's background, including her mental and emotional stability, and attempted to find additional verification or documentation of the Oswald visit. Based on their investigation, and the testimony of Sylvia and Annie Odio, the HSCA concluded that there was a strong possibility that the person who visited their residence in late September 1963 was in fact Lee Harvey Oswald. In closing, the Committee took great pains to state that any conclusions drawn by their investigation were colored by the fact that the original investigation of the Odio allegations (by the Warren Commission) was incomplete and that the passage of time precluded a more complete investigation into this matter.

Recent allegations (LaFontaine) state that Oswald did indeed meet with Mrs. Odio in late September 1963, but that Sylvia invented a story about the identities of the two other men to protect an operation which involved the theft of weapons from the U.S. Army base at Fort Hood, TX. One of the other individuals is alleged to be a man associated with the DRE, Fermin de Goicochea, alias George Perrel.

Mrs. Odio's statements have generally remained the same through the years, although critics have pointed out that elements of her testimony have been inconsistent with those issued by her confidantes, such as Dr. Burton Einspruch, her psychiatrist, and her friend Lucille Connell.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigations into this matter by both the Warren Commission and the HSCA have left a paper trail which, fortunately, is easily traced. Therefore, upon initial review of the information, requesting additional documents related to this case would seem to yield mostly documents of marginal utility, especially given the comprehensive nature of the HSCA's work on this issue.

There are several areas, however, which might result in the acquisition of additional materials.

- Any larger attempt to address the gun-running aspect of the case should attempt to clear the record on the allegations that Sylvia was associated with individuals involved in such operations. This can be accomplished by 1) obtaining government and local law enforcement files on the monitoring of anti-Castro meetings/operations originating in Dallas, and 2) obtaining governmental documents (if they exist) on individuals allegedly linked to Sylvia and the gun-runners (such as her sister Sarita, Agustin Guitart, etc.)
- Additional attempts to find materials that could determine the veracity of Sylvia Odio's statements, such as any private records related to Cuban exile meetings in the Dallas area.

- More information on anti-Castro activities in Dallas at the time of the assassination would probably be detailed in internal exile group records, such as the recently donated DRE papers at the University of Miami.
- An interview with Sylvia Odio may prove to be fruitful if the ARRB staff decides to ask her more questions about the depth of her knowledge of possible gun-running activities and other anti-Castro activities in the Dallas area prior to the Kennedy assassination, and the minor inconsistencies in her (and her associates') statements through the years.

DOCUMENT SEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

(This is a preliminary list)

1. Any subsequent governmental (FBI, CIA, ATF, military, law enforcement) interviews and/or contact with the following individuals associated with Sylvia Odio and her anti-Castro Cuban activities in Dallas, Texas:

Amador Odio (Sylvia's father)

Annie Odio (sister)

Sarita Odio (sister, in 1963 was a student at the U. Of Dallas and was acquainted with anti-Castro Cubans at her college)

Rogelio Cisneros (Cuban exile contact of Sylvia's, went by the war name "Eugenio")

Marcella Insua (active member of the Dallas Cuban exile community)

Loran Eugene Hall

William Seymour

Lawrence Howard

Father Walter Machann (Sylvia's pastor and confidante. Sylvia allegedly informed Father Machann of the Oswald meeting before the assassination)

Dr. Burton Einspruch (Sylvia's psychiatrist)

Lucille Connell (Sylvia's confidante, noted Dallas socialite)

Dr. Agustin Guitart (New Orleans anti-Castro Cuban, an associate of Father McChann)

John Martino (former Castro prisoner, spoke on his experiences at a Cuban community meeting in Dallas attended by Sylvia, Machann, and General Edwin Walker. There have been rumors that Sylvia saw Oswald at this and other meetings and spoke about him to her associates)

Fermin de Goicochea (anti-Castro Cuban allegedly associated with Sarita Odio, was allegedly planning an invasion of Cuba at the time of the assassination)

John Thomas Masen

George Nonte, Captain, USA

Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE)

Junta Revolucionaria Cubana (JURE)

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Additional CIA records on the following exile groups:

Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE)

Junta Revolucionaria Cubana (JURE)