

MEMORANDUM

February 26, 1996

To: Jeremy Gunn
cc: David Marwell, Tim Wray, Doug Horne, Dave Montague,
From: Eric Scheinkopf
Subject: Defector Study and Debriefing Project "mission statement"

Mission Statement

Identify, locate, obtain and declassify records relating to the possibility that an agency or agencies of the United States government "planted" defectors in the USSR in the period from 1955-1963, and if so, whether or not Lee Harvey Oswald was a participant in such a program. If such a program existed, identify, locate, obtain and declassify records relating to the debriefing of these defectors.

There have long been unsubstantiated allegations that the United States Government may have planted false defectors in the USSR and that Lee Harvey Oswald might have been one of them. Information helping to prove or disprove these points could help clear up some of the questions that exist about the assassination. While the House Select Committee on Assassinations' work on the defector issue provided background for this memorandum, this project is intended to be an independent analysis of the defector and debriefing issue.

Investigative Procedures

There are two ways that I recommend proceeding in trying to find about the existence of such a program.

The first is to examine the details of a military briefing program for personnel that traveled to the USSR and other Warsaw Pact nations during 1955-1963. Perhaps the same organizations that gave the briefings before a trip took place conducted a debriefing afterwards. Determining which offices in which agencies conducted them might provide some leads as to how debriefings of returning Americans who had "defected" to the USSR or other Warsaw Pact nations were conducted. This might help us determine if Oswald was debriefed by a unit of the Defense Department. Part of this project might involve examining the debriefing procedures for the FBI, and the CIA as well as the military.

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File 4.0.4

The second way to learn more about the defections of Americans to the USSR during the 1955-1963 period would be to take the names of a few defectors and see if any news stories were written about them at the time of their defection. If a defector was being sent to the USSR as a "plant," it would be logical to have the defection publicized in a negative way. An examination of news stories could determine if the publicity surrounding Oswald's case was part of a pattern or an isolated incident. I recommend that we take the names of three or so other defectors and see if any news articles were written about them. Perhaps through these articles we could find out who the pertinent reporters talked to in the United States Government for their information.

Conclusion

I believe that it would be worth pursuing these lines of inquiry. However, if nothing substantial is found after a short period then I believe that no more resources should be devoted to this issue.