

Lopez Letter:

Dear Board Members:

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 hearing 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. 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 at Langley and was reviewed by high-level personnel at Langley. According to the CIA, it was not 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 posthumous biography published by the former Mexico City station Chief, Win Scott. 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.

All of this means 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.