

MEMORANDUM

March 20, 2017

TO: Jeremy Gunn

FROM: Irene Marr

SUBJECT: Research Project - Silvia Duran

There has been a certain amount of confusion surrounding the existence of additional CIA documents concerning Silvia Duran, specifically with regard to the reports of her two arrests by the Mexican Direccion de Seguridad Federal (DFS), alleged changes or falsification in her story that were passed on to the Warren Commission, and questions whether there exists yet another version of her interrogation that is not available in the collection.

Duran was known to have had direct contact with Lee Harvey Oswald during his visit to the Cuban and Soviet Embassies in Mexico City during September and October 1963. Her late September 1963 phone calls from the Cuban consulate to the Soviet Embassy on behalf of "an American citizen" later determined to be Oswald, were intercepted by the LIENVOY telephone tapping operation. On November 22, She reportedly recognized the name of Lee Harvey Oswald on the radio when the news first broke that he was the suspected assassin who killed President Kennedy, then recognized his picture in the newspaper the next day. Duran was detained by the Mexican Direccion de Seguridad Federal (DFS) on two occasions, and questioned or interrogated at least three times¹.

¹Doc #131-593, 26 NOV 63 Referring to first arrest: "Source advised that he interrogated Silvia Duran on two occasions," and Doc # P-7969, MEXI-7364, 12 DEC 63, states "Duran arrested second time 27 November, interrogated 28 and released 29 NOV."

Throughout the JFK collection, there are a number of duplicates of Duran's first interrogation, which took place on 23 November 1963 and then formally reported by the Mexican authorities to the Mexico City Station on 26 November 1963. This version has been referred to as the "10-page statement" and includes Duran's own statements, plus the statements of her husband and the various individuals, (relatives, friends and neighbors of the Durans) brought in for questioning by DFS. There is also a copy, open in full, of the report covering Duran's second arrest and interrogation on 27-28 November. The confusion centers around an elusive 23 November statement² certified by a DFS official on 7 May 1964 which does not appear to be the same report the CIA station disseminated to other agencies. The existence of this statement, which is a Duran-only account, appears in an English translation prepared by the Department of State, Division of Language Services, in May 1964. This report (LS No. 16257) states that the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs was forwarding a "certified photostatic copy of the statement made before the Mexican authorities on November 23, 1963, by Silvia Tirado Duran."

Peter Dale Scott in *Deep Politics II* alleges that the 23 November report of Duran's interrogation prepared by the DFS and provided to the U.S. in May or June 1964 was a falsified version. He detected problems with the initial reporting by the DFS and with the subsequent English translations. The key suppressions he cites are the following:

1. *Scott charges that the name Harvey Lee Oswald used by the DFS in the early Spanish versions of the Duran et. al testimonies was deliberately "suppressed" and changed (author's note: as opposed to corrected?) to Lee Harvey Oswald in the subsequent English versions.*

In the Spanish version of the report, Silvia Duran and her husband Horacio Duran Navarro both refer to "Lee Harvey Oswald," while four of the other five other people questioned all denied having known "Harvey Lee Oswald, presumed assassin of the President of the United States." In the English translations of the testimony, the name was corrected, or in Scott's words "replaced," with Lee Harvey Oswald. Scott's rationale that there had to have been an earlier statement is that "So many scattered and unexplained references to 'Harvey Lee Oswald' attest to at least one archetypal document we do not have." A review of the records reveals that the "scattered and unexplained references" could just be a result of the dissemination of duplicates and the perpetuation of the same error.

2. *Scott makes the claim that the "written statement" first given by the Mexicans to the CIA Station Chief on the night of November 23 and summarized in the Station's cable MEXI 7046 is missing from the record.*

²This document was not found in the CIA collection but in a separate file in the ARRB SCIF.

Upon reading MEXI 7046, it is ambiguous as to whether there was an earlier “written statement” given by the Mexicans. It is possible that the first report was given orally to the COS, and was then written up formally in the 26 November report. The first *written* report of Duran’s statement was submitted to the Station on 26 November. The alleged 23 November report (the certified Duran-only statement) does not surface until May 1964 in the diplomatic notes exchanged between Mexico and the U.S. Department of State³. This exchange evidently came about as a result of the Mexican government’s cooperation with the United States regarding the Warren Commission investigation into Oswald’s visit to Mexico City.

3. *Scott charges that Duran’s statement that Oswald said he was a member of the Communist party was suppressed.*

Duran’s alleged statement that Oswald said he was a “Communist and admirer of Castro” appears in Echeverria’s preliminary report of 23 November to the COS, Mexico City, a comment which could have been made orally. This is further confused by what was reported in the 10-page Duran-et. al. statement and then contradicted in the later May 1964 report of the Duran-only statement. According to the Spanish version of the Duran-et. al. statement of 26 November, Duran states Oswald was a member of the “Fair Play for Cuba”, (*dijo pertenecer al “Trato Justo para Cuba.”*) In the English translation of the 23 November Duran-only statement prepared by DFS but sent to the Department of State in May 1964, “the declarant could not state -- because she could not remember---whether he said he was a member of the Communist Party.”

It should also be noted that in this later version, Duran stated that he appeared to be the leader in New Orleans of the organization known as “Fair Treatment for Cuba.” (A more literal translation of “Trato Justo para Cuba.”)

Another source of confusion, but not one pointed out by Scott, regarding the number of Duran statements that were actually documented can also be found in the 26 November report by the station source. According to this report, as of this date “source advised that he interrogated Silvia Duran on two occasions,”⁴ but this covers the first arrest. It appears that one report was submitted covering the results of these interrogations. The second arrest took place on 27 November. (MEXI-7101, MEXI-7104). Therefore, even if Duran was questioned twice during the first arrest, there is only one account provided of her interrogation.

³Responding to ARRB’s request to query the Mexican government for any additional documents concerning the assassination, the U.S. State Department informed ARRB on April 8, 1997 that the Mexicans sent copies of the diplomatic notes exchanged between the two countries in 1963-64 which duplicate copies of the same correspondence in the Mexico post files now in the State collection at NARA.

⁴ Doc. No. 104-10015-10357

In response to our inquiries to locate other statements, the CIA has maintained that all searches for the missing statement have led back to the first 10-page statement and conclude that there was some confusion in the original reporting of its existence. However, the State Department translation of documents received from the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs in May 1964 which included a translation of the November 23, 1963 certified statement of Silvia Duran, does suggest another copy existed. If so, it is curious that the certified statement made on 23 November did not end up in the CIA's initial reporting of the Duran testimony, and only the 10-page report and the report of her second interrogation made it into circulation.

In order to determine whether all possible reports of Duran's interrogations have been accounted for, I have prepared a summary of the key events concerning the arrest, interrogation and release of Silvia Tirado de Duran in the immediate aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination, and related communications through May 1964.

23 November

Suggestion that Silvia Duran be arrested and questioned (TX-1915 23 NOV, 104-10015-10055)

23 November

Cable from DIR to Mexico City "Arrest of Silvia Duran is extremely serious matter... Request you ensure that her arrest is kept absolutely secret." (DIR 84916, 23 NOV 104-10015-10118)

23 November

First arrest. (MEXI 7029 23 NOV. 1963; MEXI 7042 23 NOV; MEXI 7054 24 NOV; DIR 84950 25 NOV; MEXI 7115 28 NOV.)

23 November

Memo for the Record Re: MEXI Station Role in Arrest of Duran by Mexicans. Mr. Scott said "too late to call off arrest." (TX-1240 23 NOV, 104-10015-10059)

23 November

Preliminary report from Echeverria. Duran completely cooperative, gave written statement attesting to two visits by Oswald. . "Said he Communist and Admirer of Castro." (MEXI 7046 24 NOV, 104-10015-10274)

24 November

Summary of Relevant Information on Lee Harvey Oswald at 0700. (Doc No. 130-592)

25 November

Information on Silvia Duran (MEXI 7065 25 NOV, 104-10086-10002).

25 November

Duran returns to work at Cuban Consulate. Claims police threatened her with extradition to U.S. to face Oswald. (MEXI 7115, 28 Nov.)

25 November

FBI interviewed Salvador Diaz Verson in Miami who claims he was told by Dr. Dorrell Navarros, exiled Cuban newspaperman with *Exelsior* that Oswald and Duran went to the Caballo Blanco restaurant on Oswald's second day in Mexico City where they met an official of the Cuban Embassy. (JFK Box 26, F9)

26 November

Mexico City Station receives 10 page statement in Spanish (#131-593)
(Document P.D. Scott cites as having suppression #1)

26 November

HQ disseminates information on Silvia Duran to FBI (DIR 84950)
The 10 page statement of Duran's first interrogation is prepared by "source."
Spanish Summary of Interrogations of Silvia Duran, Horatio Duran Navarro, Ruben Duran Navarro, Betty Serratos Duran, Lidia Duran, Barbara Ann Bliss, Charles E. Bentley, et. al. (Open in Full)

26 November

Transcript of conversation between Cuban Pres. Dorticos and Amb. Hernandez Armas regarding Duran's questioning and whether asked about passage of money to the American. MEXI 7068.

26 November

Amb. Mann suggests Duran be re-arrested. (MEXI 7072)

26 November

Report by source with the 10-p. statement containing the interview of Duran dated 25 November. Cover memo signed by JKB later states source advised that he interrogated Duran twice. Report in Spanish. (104-10015-10357, TX 1920)

26 November

Copy of JKB cover memo above, without the attachment (104-010015-10190)

26 November

Blind Memo from Win Scott to J.C. King, Copy of 10-page statement taken by confidential source on 25 November

27 November

Letter concerning items being sent that were mentioned in a cable. "John Horton's return tonight gives me the opportunity to send you some items I mentioned to you in a cable today. . . I am sorry we have not had the time to translate the longer one of the two. . ." (104-10015-10189)

27 November

HQ advises Mexico City Station to not re-arrest Duran. (However, by this time she had already been picked up by DFS. (DIR 85178)

27 November

DIR 85245 DOJ preparing report on assassination, "request you cable a translated version of statements." (DIR 85245).

27 November

Duran arrested for second time on 27 November, interrogated on the 28th, released on the 29th. Interrogation based upon questions prepared by Station and approved by LEGAT. (MEXI 7364, 12 December 1963)

27 November

Sending photostatic copy of ten-page statement, sorry no time to translate. (MEXI 7107, DIR 85245)

29 November

Duran was released at 1900 hours on 28 November, and is kept under close surveillance. Appears only to have been involved in the business of possible Cuban and Soviet visas for Oswald. (MEXI 7125, 29 NOV.)

29 November

Cable - Translation of Report by Mexican Police on Interrogation of Silvia Tirado de Duran and her Husband. Copy of 10-page statement obtained by DFS during first detention. (DIR 85758 29 NOV, 104-10015-10229)

29 November

Memo from DDP to Dir, FBI, attn: Papich: Ref: Teletype message No. 85758, 29 November. "Forwarding herewith the Mexican Police Report of their interrogation of Subjects and other persons

on 23 November..." Note saying "see 26 NOV 63 (TX-1920) orig a." (104-10015-10247)

29 November

Memo fm Win Scott to LEGAT, Subject Silvia Tirado de Duran. "Attached is a copy of a ten-page statement . . . obtained by Gobernacion during the first detention of Subject." (TX-1912 29 NOV, 104-10015-10245)

29 November

HQ disseminates highlights of official Mexican interrogation of the Durans. (DIR 85670, 29 Nov. 1963)

29 November

HQ disseminates to FBI, DOS, WH information relating to Duran's second arrest. (DIR 85714, 29 November 1963)

29 November

HQ disseminates to FBI, DOS, White House rush translation of report by Mexican police of interrogation, her husband and the others immediately following their arrest on 23 November. (104-10015-10229, DIR 85758)

21. 12 December

FBI pushing to wide up its analysis of the Oswald case and urgently needs results of the interrogations of Duran and husband during second arrest. (DIR 88642, 12 December)

12 December

HQ disseminates to FBI, DOS, WH information obtained from second interrogation of Duran. (Based upon MEXI 7364, 12 Dec, and DIR 88747, 12 Dec.)

13 December

Mex Station forwards to HQ 2 copies of interrogation report on the second arrest of Duran and the list of suggested questions submitted by Station. A copy of each was given to the Legal Attache on 13 December 1963. (104-10018-10085)

10 January 64

HQ forwards dissemination to FBI containing translation of official Mexican police report on second interrogation of Silvia Duran, done 28 Nov. 1963 (CSCI-3/779, 482, 10 January 1964)

21 February

Agency forwarded to Win Scott memo with 2 enclosures:

- A. Results of interrogation of Silvia Duran, her husband, et.al. immediately following detainment on 23 Nov. 63.(NOTE; Probably referring to the 10-p. Statement)
- B. Results of interrogation of Silvia Duran on morning of 28 Nov. 1963 (Memo for Mr. J. Lee Rankin, 21 Feb 1964, fm. R. Helms, Deputy Director for Plans, Subject:Translations of Interrogation Reports of Silvia Duran)

26. 18 May (Date of FBI Report)

Date of FBI report containing compilation of facts known to date on LHO trip to Mexico. DFS made available copy of signed statement which had been made by Duran to Mexican police on 23 Nov. Translation from Spanish of statement is recorded on pp. 35-41. (FBI Report, 13 May 1964; Subject: Lee Harvey Oswald)

27. Undated but most likely after 14 May 1964.

Department of State Division of Language Services Translation of the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs LS No. 16257. Includes cover letter No. 505503 informing the DFA was sending copies of documents relating to Oswald, including a certified version of Duran's first statement. This is not the same version that appeared in the 25 November version. Here "the declarant could not state--because she did not remember--whether he said he was a member of the Communist Party." *(Author's note: Does State Department have original Spanish copy?)* Cover memo refers to Embassy note No. 1349, dated April 10, and not No. 504826, dated May 14 of the Department of Foreign Affairs.