

OSWALD'S VISIT TO MEXICO CITY

A. Chronology¹

07/20/63 CIA headquarters receives a cable (internal # 83858) from presumably Mexico City Station (addresser is blocked out on cable) informing them that an unidentified American telephoned the Cuban Embassy on July 19 trying for the second time in a week to establish contact. While speaking with Maria Luisa Calderon, he said that he was staying at the Alameda Hotel and would be leaving for Dallas on American Airlines on July 20. He also said that he refused to go to the Cuban Embassy because there was a possibility that an American spy might see him. After being lured to the hotel restaurant, this American identified himself as Eldon Hensen, cattleman from Athens, Texas. He said that he was willing to help the Castro government, but he wanted money for the cooperation. Hensen agreed to accept phone calls from this contact but only with key word "Laredo." (This document was included in Oswald's 201 file prior to the assassination. Source: Document id #: 1993.08.04.08:25:27:530053)

09/02/63 A Russian speaking female contacts the Soviet Embassy and asks

¹ If not otherwise indicated, the source of information for the chronological entries is the "Oswald's Visit" subfile of the Mexico City subject file.

to speak to Svyatoslav Fedorovich Kuznetsov, KGB. She identifies herself by name and as a professor from New Orleans.

She also gives the address of her apartment and requests a meeting. This lead is promptly followed up by station investigative assets who identify the woman and learn that she is attending a philosophers' conference at the University of Mexico. All available information is forwarded to Headquarters. (HMMA 22267 - Monthly Operational Report for September)

09/17/63 Mexican Consulate General in New Orleans issues a fifteen day tourist card, No. 24085, to Oswald.

09/18/63 Gilberto Alvarado claims to have witnessed a meeting taking place on this day inside the Cuban Embassy between Oswald and two other men during which Oswald received approximately \$6,500 in exchange for assassinating President Kennedy. (RIF 124-10230-10464)

09/20/63 The entrance to the Cuban consulate opens after having been closed for

(approx.) approximately two years.

09/26/63 Oswald enters Mexico at Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

09/27/63 Oswald arrives in Mexico City and checks in to the Hotel del Comercio.

[The photographic coverage of the Cuban Embassy for the

months of September, October, and November was between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on weekdays. The Cuban Consulate was open to the public Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. As part of Project LIONION, the VLS-2 (an automatic camera device) was set up in front of the Cuban Consulate. This camera had some operational difficulties, so the HSCA was unable to determine on exactly which days during Oswald's visit to Mexico City the camera was operational. (see Lopez, pgs. 25-27 and 10/18/63) Normal working hours of the Soviet Embassy were from Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The photographic surveillance of the Soviet Embassy (and Consulate, as the same entrance was used to enter both) was between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. (see Lopez, pgs. 28-29 & 31, 34-35) In addition to photographic surveillance, the Mexico City Station initiated three other types of coverage of the Soviet and Cuban Embassies: mobile surveillance and two others which are classified (see document entitled "Mexico Station Coverage of Soviet and Cuban Embassies (1963)]

An unidentified man telephones the Soviet Embassy at 1037 hours and requests a visa to travel to Odessa/Soviet Union. (transcript)

Silvia Duran at the Cuban Embassy telephones the Soviet Embassy at 1605 hours informing embassy personnel that an American citizen was at the Cuban Embassy requesting a transit

visa to the USSR. She was asked to leave her telephone number. (transcript)

Unidentified man in Soviet Embassy telephones the Cuban Embassy at 1626 hours and asks to speak to Silvia Duran. They discuss the visa application for the " American" who wanted to go via Cuba to the USSR with his Russian wife. The Soviet says that he has had no reply from Washington. (transcript)

09/28/63 Silvia Duran telephones the Soviet Embassy at 1151 hours who puts on the line an unidentified man who tells the Soviet that he was just at their Embassy and would like to give the Soviet his address. The Soviet tells him to return to the Embassy with the address. (transcript)

On either 09/27 or 09/28, or both days, Oswald was involved in one or more arguments with the Cuban Consul, Eusebio Azcue Lopez. According to both Azcue's and Alfredo Mirabal Diaz's HSCA testimony, Mirabal, Azcue's replacement, was also present in the Cuban Embassy at the time of these arguments. (Lopez) (see also 11/09/63)

10/01/63 An unidentified man telephones the Soviet Military Attache at 1031 hours, speaking broken Russian, requests information about a telegram that the Soviet Embassy was to send to Washington. Unidentified man said that he was at the Soviet Embassy "last Saturday". Soviet told him to call 15-60-55.

(transcript)

The same unidentified man who contacted the Soviet Embassy on 09/28/63 telephones the Soviet Embassy at 1035 hours and, speaking broken Russian, identifies himself as Lee Oswald.

He wants to know if the Soviet Embassy has received anything from Washington. Kostikov is identified as the consul to whom Oswald spoke on 09/28/63. Obyedkov replies no. (transcript)

10/01/63 According to the guest registry at Hotel del Comercio, Oswald checks out of the hotel but pays for one more night.

10/02/63 Oswald boards a Transportes Frontera bus bound for Laredo, Texas.

10/03/63 Oswald departs Mexico at Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

An unidentified man telephones the Soviet Military Attache at 1539 hours and, speaking in broken Russian, requests a visa. The Soviet instructs him to call the consul on 15-60-55. (transcript)

10/08/63 Mexico City Station sends cable, **MEXI 6453**, to CIA headquarters informing them that Oswald visited the Soviet Embassy and spoke with Kostikov. The Station also asserts that it has photographs of an American male visiting the Soviet Embassy on 10/01/63. This man is the infamous "unidentified man" with a physical description of age 35, athletic build,

height 6 feet, receding hairline, and balding top. There is no mention of Oswald's visit to the Cuban Embassy. In addition, this cable was not disseminated locally.

The Monthly Operational Report for September is sent from COS, Mexico City by Dispatch, **HMMA-22267**, to Chief, WH Division. Among many other issues, the COS reports that there were not any technical problems that " " could not handle.

10/09/63 Oswald's 201 file is transferred from its custodian, Ann Elizabeth Goldsborough Egerter of the Counter-Intelligence/Special Investigations Group (CI/SIG), to the Mexican Desk of Western Hemisphere. (Lopez)

10/10/63 CIA headquarters send a cable, **DIR 74673**, to State, FBI, Navy, and INS, informing them of Oswald's October 1 visit to the Soviet Embassy. The cable includes the same physical description as that in the *10/08/63* cable. Headquarters also inform the other agencies of Oswald's defection to the USSR and his marriage to Marina. There is no mention of Oswald's visit to Cuban Embassy, the identity of Kostikov as a KGB agent in the 13th department, or Oswald's arrest in New Orleans.

CIA headquarters send cable, **DIR 74830**, to Mexico City Station informing them of Oswald's identity and background as a defector. Again, there is no mention of Kostikov or Oswald's domestic activities with FPCC and other communist

organizations. In addition, headquarters request that Mexico City Station open a "P" file on Oswald. (Uncertain whether or not the cable was sent on October 10 or 11.)

10/15/63 Mexico City Station sends cable, **MEXI 6534**, to headquarters requesting a photograph of Oswald. In addition, the Mexico City Station opens a "P" file on Oswald (P-8593).

10/16/63 Memorandum from Winston Scott to the Ambassador regarding Oswald's visit to the Soviet Embassy and his contact with Kostikov. The memorandum also discusses Oswald's identity as a marine and defector. (The memorandum was also sent to the Legal Attache, Naval Attache, INS, Liaison with Legal Attache, and Liaison with Naval Attache.)

10/18/63 Legat Mexico City, Clark Anderson sends cable, **No. 109**, to FBI headquarters informing them of CIA's relay of information regarding Oswald's visit to the Soviet Embassy, his contact with Kostikov, and Oswald's identity as a marine and defector.

Another Operational Monthly Report for September is sent from COS, Mexico City by Dispatch, **HMMA-22307**, to Chief, ? - Photographic Branch and Chief, WH. In reference to the Cuban Embassy, the COS reports that on September 26, the VLS-2 Trigger Device covering the Consulate door was tested. It was found that new batteries would have to be purchased for this device; otherwise, the system tested out well. Furthermore, on the morning of September 27, "' '

installed the VLS-2 Trigger Device ... and used the 500mm lens issued with this system, one 400mm Telyt, one reflex housing to be used with the Telyt adapted to fit the Robot Star camera, one Robot Star camera, one solenoid release for mounting and triggering the Robot Star camera, one Kodak K-100 ... one 52 mm f/4 Cine Ektar Lens, and two additional tripods. '____' was requested to test the Robot Star camera for four days and the K-100 for another four days. When satisfactory results of this testing become available to the Station, they will be forwarded to '____' POB for examination." In addition, the COS reports that there was only one operational target survey completed during this month.

10/22/63 FBI headquarters sends cable, No. 743, to Legat Mexico City summarizing Oswald's background, including the date of return from the Soviet Union, his marriage to Marina, and his arrest in New Orleans for disturbing the peace when he was passing out FPCC literature.

SAC, Dallas communicates with FBI headquarters and SAC, Little Rock about Oswald's visit to Mexico City. Dallas informs them of Oswald's undesirable discharge after his defection to Russia, his marriage to Marina, his subscription to "The Worker", and his contact with the FPCC. Dallas also discusses the Oswald family's move to New Orleans in May of 1963 and their subsequent act of vacating their apartment on 09/25/63 and Mrs. Oswald's return to Texas.

11/06/63 Two FBI internal communications stating: "All contacts in Mexican subversive organizations contacted and unaware of presence in Mexico of Lee Harvey Oswald or who he is" and "All subinformants including all contacts Cuban and Soviet groups contacted without obtaining information on Lee Harvey Oswald."

11/07/63 COS, Mexico City sends a dispatch, **HMMA-22433**, to Chief, ? - Photographic Branch and Chief, WH regarding the use of the VLS-2 Trigger Device at the basehouse that covers the Cuban Consulate entrance. The COS reports that the Device is "performing well with little false triggering.... During the first two weeks of operation, the [Device] would trigger traffic entering and leaving the target entrance. Concerned with the consumption of film and the necessity of reloading the camera twice daily, ' ' devised a system whereby the [Device] would only photograph people leaving but not entering the target building. ' "'s system works about 80 percent of the time...." (Although, two records created after the assassination present two other time tables. MEXI 7098, dated November 27, 1963, states: "Station photographic coverage of Cuban Embassy did not include consulate gate until October." And HMMA 22726, dated January 16, 1964, states: "On the morning of December 17, 1963, [agency personnel] met at the ' ' base house to install the 35 mm SEQUENCE camera and the VLS-2 trigger device....Although the Consulate door was closed for a period of six days for unknown reasons as of the night of December 17, 1963, tests were made using the SEQUENCE

camera photographing people walking by the Consulate door.")

11/09/63 Oswald writes to the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C. and reports that he was unable to remain in Mexico because his tourist card was valid for only 15 days. He indicates that he had not planned to contact the Soviet Embassy in Mexico but did so because he had been unable to go to Cuba where he would have contacted the Soviet Embassy in Havana. (Two peculiar issues in this letter: Oswald writes that he "could not take a chance on requesting a new visa unless I used my real name, so I returned to the United States." But he did use his real name on the initial Mexican tourist visa/card. Also, he writes: "Of course the Soviet embassy was not at fault, they were, as I say unprepared, the Cuban consulate was guilty of a gross breach of regulations, I am glad he has since been replaced." (emphasis added) How would Oswald know that Azcue had been replaced by Mirabel? Both Azcue and Mirabel were present at the Cuban Embassy when Oswald applied for a transit visa, but Azcue handled the situation because Mirabel did not speak English. I have reviewed both Consuls' testimony in the HSCA Report and neither of them mentioned any instance where Azcue introduced Mirabel to Oswald during the argument inside the Cuban Embassy.)

11/22/63 Legat, Mexico City sends airtel to Director, FBI informing him of

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Oswald's entry into or departure from Mexico.

Mexico City Station sends cable, **MEXI 7014**, CIA headquarters regarding the arrest of Oswald in connection with the assassination of President Kennedy. The Station requests again a photograph of Oswald to compare with photographs from the Embassy surveillance project and informs headquarters that it will send copies of only visitor to Soviet Embassy on October 28 who could be identical with Oswald.

CIA headquarters reply to **MEXI 7014** and request that Mexico City Station report on all Soviet Embassy activity and reaction during all relevant hours.

Mexico City Station sends cable, **MEXI 7019**, to CIA headquarters informing them that the Station has photographs of the same unidentified American entering Cuban Embassy on October 15 who may be Oswald. They also are searching for other photographs taken at the Cuban Embassy on other days.

11/23/63 Special Agent Eldon Rudd informs SAC, Dallas about photographs taken on 10/01/63 and 10/04/63 at the Soviet Embassy of an individual believed to be an American and possibly identical with the person who had telephonically identified himself as Lee Oswald. Rudd also recounts the 10/01/63 phone call from the Cuban Embassy to the Soviet Embassy and the fact that an individual entered the Soviet Embassy shortly following this phone call. He also informs Dallas that CIA has advised them that the tapes have been erased and are not available for review.

In reply to MEXI 7014, CIA headquarters cables the Mexico City Station, DIR 84802, and requests that they report on all Soviet Embassy activity and reaction during certain hours.

In reply to MEXI 7019, CIA headquarters requests in cable DIR 84821 that the Station send a staffer to Washington to transport photographs.

In reply to MEXI 6453, CIA headquarters requests in cable DIR 84886 that the Station review all surveillance materials? since September 27 to locate all information possibly pertinent to Oswald.

Mexico City Station sends cable, MEXI 7023, to CIA headquarters to report on Silvia Duran's phone call from the

Cuban Embassy to the Soviet Embassy on behalf of Oswald that occurred on September 28.

MEXI 7024, replying to CIA headquarters' request to verify Kostikov's activities. According to the cable, Kostikov did not travel outside of Mexico and his work schedule was not abnormal.

MEXI 7025, transmitting partial transcripts of the September 28 and October 1 phone calls allegedly placed by Oswald to the Soviet Embassy.

MEXI 7028, making CIA headquarters aware of a phone call that the COS had received. Apparently, the caller had located "call" to Soviet Embassy of Lee Oswald made on September 28.

MEXI 7029, informing CIA headquarters that the photographs sent to Dallas were not of Lee Oswald and that the Station is continuing to review all photographs of persons entering the Soviet and Cuban embassies. Also, Mexican police suggest that Sylvia Duran be arrested and held until she reveals all details of Oswald known to her.

CIA headquarters informs Mexico City Station in cable DIR 84888 that FBI has concluded that photographs sent to Dallas were not of Lee Oswald.

MEXI 7033, asserting that Oswald was probably the

unidentified man who placed the other calls to the Soviet and Cuban embassies to obtain a visa.

MEXI 7034, informing CIA headquarters that the Station rechecked all photographs of persons entering the Soviet and Cuban embassies since September 1 and found no evidence of Oswald's visit. Also, the Station checked all flight manifests of planes arriving at Mexico Central Airport from U.S. and again found no evidence of Oswald's visit.

Acting Chief, SR Division prepares memorandum for Assistant Deputy Director, Plans regarding Oswald's meeting with Kostikov. In the memorandum, the author discusses the possibilities of circumstances during which agents may contact case officers.

11/24/63 Mexico City Station cables CIA headquarters, *MEXI 7054*, to inform them that Sylvia Duran has been arrested and interrogated about Oswald's visit to the Cuban and Soviet Embassies and to Mexico City, in general.

11/25/63 Deputy Director, Plans prepares a memorandum for C.J. Papich, FBI to discuss the transcripts of the five phone calls possibly placed by Oswald. The Deputy Director also indicates in this memorandum that "voice comparisons indicated that the 'North American' who participated in several of these conversations is probably the person who identified himself as Lee Oswald on October 1, 1963."

B. Other Observations

* CIA offices that sent and received communications to and from Mexico City Station concerning Oswald prior to the assassination were: Director, WH/3/Mexico, WH/8, ADDP, CI, CI/OPS, CI/SP, FI, SR/7, RF, VR (some others blacked out on cables).

* CIA offices that sent and received communications to and from Mexico City Station concerning Oswald after the assassination were: Director, C/WH 2, C/WH 5, WH 8, DCI, D/DCI, DDP, ADDP, CI, C/CI, CI/OPS, CI/IC 2, C/FI, C/FI 2, FI, C/SR 5, SR 7, C/SAS 5, SAS 8, D/OS 2, OS 2, VR.

* Willard C. Curtis seemed to be the "Releasing Officer" of outgoing communications from the Mexico City Station. (The name of the "Authenticating Officer" has been blacked out on all cables.)