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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

April 22, 1964

FROM: W. David Slawson

SUBJECT: Trip to Mexico City

On Wednesday, April 8, 1964 Mr. Howard P. Willens, Mr. William T. Coleman, Jr., and Mr. W. David Slawson, all on the staff of the Commission, flew from Washington, D. C. to Mexico City. Mr. Coleman returned on Sunday, April 12 and Mr. Slawson and Mr. Willens returned on an airplane leaving Mexico City at about 3:20, Monday afternoon, April 13. This memorandum will briefly summarize this trip plus some of the meetings held in preparation for it.

TUESDAY - APRIL 7

10:20 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Willens, Coleman and Slawson met with Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Thomas Mann, Mr. Thomas Ehrlich of the Office of the Legal Adviser for the State Department, and two aides to Mr. Mann in Mr. Mann's office at about 10:20 a.m. Assistant Secretary Mann was Ambassador to Mexico at the time of the assassination and personally directed the investigatory effort and our relations with the Mexican law enforcement authorities immediately after the news of the President's death reached Mexico City. A copy

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kind of ruthless action, either through some hope of gaining from it or simply as revenge. The Ambassador added that not even the allegations of Alvarado or other rumors which may have been current in Mexico City to the effect that money had been given to Oswald were really the cause of his suspicions, since the Alvarado allegations were not made until a day or so later, but that the fact that Oswald had visited the Cuban and Russian Embassies in Mexico City shortly before the assassination, which he had learned from his security officers at the Embassy, plus what he believed about Castro's character, seemed sufficient to him to raise the gravest suspicions. ~~Later, he pointed out, when he had a chance to listen to the Dorticos-Armas~~ ~~his suspicions were strengthened.~~

Ambassador Mann knew of no contacts by Oswald with anyone in Mexico City other than his visits to the Cuban and Soviet Embassies and his staying at the Hotel del Comercio. ~~Ambassador Mann said that our intelligence took~~ ~~taking~~ photographs of both the Cuban and Soviet Embassies whenever anyone left or entered their main entrances, at least during the normal visiting hours on Monday through Friday, during the daytime when pictures could be taken without artificial light.

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view of the facts known to him and his assistants at the time and in view of the extreme seriousness of the occurrence.

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

At 3:30 in the afternoon Mr. [REDACTED] of the CIA came to the Commission offices and conferred there with Slawson, Willens and Coleman. This conference grew out of a suggestion made by Mr. Richard Helms of the CIA about two weeks previous, in which he had mentioned that it would be a good idea if a representative of his agency met with those persons from the Commission who planned to go to Mexico just before they left, in order to insure that the CIA could properly advise us of any last-minute arrangements and properly alert its people in Mexico of our arrival.

We discussed whether we would journey to Mexico officially and openly or completely incognito, and [REDACTED] offered to make arrangements to get us into Mexico completely unnoticed if we desired to do so. We told him that we did not want to try to keep the trip entirely secret. We would do our best to avoid any kind of newspaper publicity or public announcements. We intended to introduce ourselves at the

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Embassy and to Mexican officials as what we in fact were, representatives of the Commission.

~~_____~~ said that in dealing with Mr. Winston Scott, the CIA Chief for Mexico, we would be working with one of the top foreign operatives in their entire organization. He said that the CIA would give us complete cooperation.

We outlined to ~~_____~~ our entire proposed plan once we arrived in Mexico, in general terms, and asked for his comments on how best to achieve our goals. His reply in every instance was that we should deal on the spot with ~~_____~~. *the CIA representative.*

~~_____~~ thought that our proposed journey was a very good idea. He repeated what Mr. Helms of the CIA had said a while ago, that there is no substitute for the "case officer" being "on the spot."

WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8

8:15 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Our plane was scheduled to leave Washington from Dulles Airport at 9:30 in the morning and accordingly all three of us met at the Washington Air Terminal in the Albert Pick Motel at about 8:15 and later arrived at the Airport at about

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his expert opinion was that no foreign conspiracy arising out of or connected with the territory of Mexico existed in connection with the assassination. He said that he felt that if such had existed, although perhaps they would not have solved it by this time, they at least would have some firm indication that it was in existence, which indications were in fact lacking. We asked Anderson how many different allegations of conspiracy had been received by his office and he replied, six. These were: the Gutierrez allegation, the Alvarado allegation, the Diaz Verson allegation, the Martino-Roja allegation, the letter from Victor Cohen, and the allegation concerning the Stanford University student. Mr. Slawson commented that in his opinion only the first three allegations mentioned even seemed serious and that, after analysis, the only one that still seemed serious was Gutierrez'. Anderson readily agreed.

3:20 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

After lunch the three of us went to Mr. ^{"A2"}Scott's office, and were there introduced to his deputy, ^{"A1"}[REDACTED]. The conference was begun by Mr. Scott giving us a complete narrative of the CIA's activities in connection with Lee Harvey Oswald, beginning in September 1963 when they first picked up information that Oswald had appeared at the Russian and Cuban

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Embassies. ~~Mr. Scott~~ stated at the beginning of his narrative that he intended to make a complete disclosure of all facts, including the sources of his information, and that he understood that all three of us had been cleared for Top Secret and that we would not disclose beyond the confines of the Commission and its immediate staff the information we obtained through him without first clearing it with his superiors in Washington. We agreed to this.

~~Mr. Scott's~~ narrative of course took a rather long time to complete, and we interrupted ~~him~~ at many points with specific questions. ~~During the course of the narrative we were shown the actual transcripts, plus the translations, of all the telephone [REDACTED] involved, and we were also shown the reels of photographs for all the days in question that had been taken secretly outside the Cuban and Soviet Embassy entrances.~~

~~Mr. Scott's~~ narrative disclosed that the CIA's action immediately after the assassination consisted basically of alerting all its confidential sources of information throughout Mexico to immediately channel all information into their headquarters, and of compiling as complete dossiers as possible on Oswald and everyone else throughout Mexico who at that time the CIA knew had had some contact with Oswald. This meant especially Silvia Duran, who because she had previously been having an

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embassies might be available. Scott said they were not. He explained that photographic coverage was limited by and large to the daylight weekday hours, because of lack of funds and because no adequate technical means for taking photographs at night from a long distance without artificial light, which was of course out of the question under the circumstances, had been developed.

We brought up the question of Gutierrez and received from Scott and [redacted] basically the same information we had previously learned from the FBI, though somewhat attenuated because, as Scott and [redacted] pointed out, the FBI was carrying the primary responsibility with Gutierrez. We suggested that Gutierrez' story might be confirmed or refuted by photographs taken by the CIA, that in particular the automobile he claimed to have seen might show up on the fringes of some of these photographs, and we inquired whether an appropriate examination of the picture reels had been made. [redacted] replied that such an examination had not yet been made and that he suspected that it would disclose nothing new, because the photographs covered little more than the entrance itself. However, he promised to make such an examination. (About a day later Scott reported to us that such an examination had been made and proved negative.)

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In answer to our question, ~~_____~~ and Scott gave their professional opinions that there probably was not a foreign conspiracy connected with Mexico involving the assassination of the President. They, like Anderson, felt that had there been such a conspiracy they would at least by this time have had some firm indications of its existence.

We asked ~~Mr. Scott~~ ^{that} to set up a meeting with Secretary Echevarria for all three of us at the earliest possible time. We wanted both ~~him~~ and Mr. Anderson there, if possible, both as an interpreter and because ~~their~~ previous personal acquaintance with the Secretary would facilitate our dealings. ~~Scott~~ telephoned Anderson and confirmed this request.

We then reentered our discussion of the assassination in general, as it related to Mexico. It appeared that the CIA in Washington had not forwarded certain material developed elsewhere to ~~Scott~~, even though these materials might have reasonably related to the Mexican investigations. For example, the contents of the letter which Oswald wrote to the Russian Embassy after he returned to the United States, describing certain aspects of his trip, had never been disclosed to ~~Scott~~ or his staff. We showed them the contents of this letter at this meeting.

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time, but that it not be permitted to hold up the information at this stage.

~~Back in the CIA offices, during Willens' absence, Slawson and Coleman discussed the cable traffic from the Soviet and Cuban Embassies both during the time of Oswald's visits there in September-October 1963 and immediately after the assassination. Scott and [REDACTED] said that no increases or unusual variations had been noted at either time. We then discussed briefly the possibilities that the National Security Agency might be able to "break" the codes for the times when Oswald was in Mexico City, using as a key the fact that Oswald's attempt to obtain a visa was probably communicated to Washington on Friday or Saturday, September 27 or 28. Scott pointed out that all his office did with coded materials was to send them back to the National Security Agency in Washington in the form in which it obtained them. They felt that the code-breaking might be possible, however, and should be tried.~~

FRIDAY - APRIL 10

9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

Coleman, Willens and Slawson appeared at the FBI offices at 9:00 a.m., as we had agreed to do the previous evening, and there met Rolfe Larson. The plan had been that we

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accurately identifying documentary material, by number or other code, and advised him to see that the number of hands through which a document was passed was kept to a minimum and that each document was kept in the custody of a reliable person at all times. Larson gave the impression of readily understanding all this and he of course agreed to our suggestions.

3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

"A."

*ensure some
confidential CIA
production*

By pre-arrangement we met at 3:30 with ~~Winston Scott~~. With him again was his assistant, ~~██████████~~. The occasion for this meeting was to ~~give us the opportunity to go through all~~ the ~~██████████~~ carefully and to use them as a basis for reconstructing Oswald's activities insofar as they touched upon the Cuban and Soviet Embassies. This we did, and we then showed ~~██████████~~ and Scott the result of our work, for their comment. They agreed in every respect with our conclusions. I will not go into great detail here because these conclusions will of course be incorporated in our narrative report on Oswald's activities in Mexico, but in outline the conclusions were as follows: "

On Friday, September 27:

Time

10:00 a.m.

Flecha Roja bus arrives in
Mexico City

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Time

10:37 a.m.

Oswald telephoned the Russian Embassy, to get "visas to Odessa."

Sometime later

Oswald visits Cuban Consulate.

Sometime later still

Oswald visits Russian Consulate.

Some time later still, which includes the period 4:05 to 4:26 in the afternoon

Oswald visits the Cuban Consulate and during this visit Silvia Duran calls the Russian Consulate and soon thereafter the Russian Consulate telephones her back.

Saturday, September 28:

Time

Morning

Oswald visits the Russian Consulate

Some time including 11:51 a.m.

Oswald visits the Cuban Consulate and during this visit Silvia Duran phoned the Russian Consulate.

Some time later

Oswald probably again visited the Russian Consulate

Tuesday, October 1:

Time

10:31 a.m.

Oswald telephones the Russian Embassy and is told to call the Russian Consulate instead.

11:30 a.m.

Oswald calls the Soviet Consulate. He is hung up on.

We then discussed the Dorticos-Armas [redacted] and examined them in some detail. We asked Mr. Scott for his

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received in Mexico and in Washington from the CIA. All of us realized that any decisions arrived at this afternoon could be tentative only, since the final decision would have to be made at the higher echelons of both the CIA and the Commission. Slawson put out the suggestion that the Commission might publish a narrative containing all the detail obtainable from Silvia Duran's statements and from the "open" investigations carried on by FBI agents and Mexican police agents throughout Mexico, supplemented to some extent by the information obtained through the CIA's ~~confidential sources~~ and the CIA's ~~informants~~. This supplement, however, would not be in detail; rather, for example, it would use phrases like "in the afternoon" in place of "4:05 p.m." Also, no absolute quotes would be used. Only the substance of conversations would be given. The sources for this narrative would be stated to be Silvia Duran's interrogation, the "open" investigations and "other confidential sources considered reliable by the Commission and the federal intelligence agencies involved." Mr. Scott's reply to this suggestion was that he thought it would be acceptable to the CIA. He said that although it involved a certain amount of compromise of his security arrangements, the compromise was acceptable when balanced against the importance of the occasion. ~~We asked whether he felt it would disclose to Russian and Cuban~~

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intelligence the existence of this particular [REDACTED] by the CIA. His reply was that they probably assumed its existence anyway. (It should be noted that the proposal put forward would disclose nothing as to the existence of any photographic observations. Nor, I believe, would it disclose anything that would permit enemy intelligence to discover who the CIA's informants are in Mexico or where they are located.)

We then briefly discussed the statement of Silvia Duran which we had read earlier in the day in the FBI offices. The CIA had not yet seen this statement.

5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The three of us then returned to Clarke Anderson's office. Anderson gave us a report on his meeting with Ibanez. He told us that Ibanez and he had discussed our making arrangements to see Silvia Duran. The outcome of the discussion was that Ibanez himself was very agreeable but said that he would have to clear it with his superior, Echevarria.

6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

We returned to room 510 and on the way there were handed a copy of the formal request to the Mexican Government for its complete report on the assassination. A copy is

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trying to follow up. For the last month or two, however, Betty Mora had been extremely sick and so this whole line of investigation was temporarily stymied. For several years Betty Mora has not been in good health, and in Anderson's opinion she is not a reliable person anyway, so he did not feel that her assertions would ever amount to much. He promised us a report on them, however, notwithstanding his feeling that they were not to be accorded a great deal of weight.

Finally, we posed the question to Anderson whether he knew of anything further, important or unimportant, which we as representatives of the President's Commission ought to be told. After some thinking and after asking Larson whether he had anything along these lines and receiving a negative response, Anderson replied that he believed he had given us everything he knew.

for a brief discussion.
We then briefly dropped into the CIA's office again and saw Scott and [redacted] We were told by [redacted] that the examination of the reels of photographs pertaining to the time periods covering Gutierrez' visits to the Cuban Embassy had been examined and that the results were negative. No automobiles appeared in the photographs and no persons were shown who answered the descriptions given by Gutierrez or who might have been Gutierrez himself. (I will note here that we did

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not ask the CIA to have these photographs displayed directly to Gutierrez. This would of course have been the easiest way of determining whether the person he identified as the Cuban who passed the money to Oswald was shown in one of the photographs, but this would also have involved such a serious breach of CIA security arrangements that we did not believe that it was justified.)

the CIA
[] We then asked Seott and [] the same question we had asked Anderson about there being any further information we should be given. His answer *that answer* concurred in by [] was to the same effect as Anderson's.

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taxicab from his hotel to the neighborhood of the Cuban and Russian Embassies and return, but that he almost certainly walked back and forth between the two embassies once he was in that neighborhood);

8. Various telephone calls (In this connection I told Larson that it would be sufficient for our purposes if the FBI were to furnish us with the cost of a single local call, since we were probably in a better position to figure out how many telephone calls Oswald made than was the FBI); and

9. Purchase of six picture postcards.

~~Mr. Slawson then went to Mr. Winston Scott's office where he met Mr. Scott's secretary, "Dottie," as arranged by Mr. Scott the previous Saturday. Dottie carried the telephone [redacted] into the nearby conference room, handed them over to Mr. Slawson and remained in the room throughout the entire time Mr. Slawson worked on them. Mr. Slawson spent until about 11:30 taking notes from the [redacted] after which he returned them to Dottie. These notes are in the attached memorandum dated April 21, 1964.~~

4 ~~Mr. Slawson then returned to the FBI section of the Embassy,~~
then arrived.
~~where he met Mr. Willens~~ The two of us held a very brief discussion with Mr. Clarke Anderson in his office. Mr. Willens told Anderson that he, Willens, and Slawson and Coleman as well had been very favorably impressed with the high quality of the FBI officers we had met in Mexico City and with the manner in which they were carrying out their work in connection with the assassination. It was apparent, however, that except for the "Alvarado" investigation, which so far as we could observe had been very thoroughly handled, high-quality