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8 February 1979

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79-0551

HSCA

Executive ...

79-3460

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Legislative Counsel

FROM : S. D. Breckinridge
Principal Coordinator, HSCA

SUBJECT : House Select Committee on Assassinations References to
Overseas CIA Stations (U)

1. Action Requested: That you approve one of the options set forth in paragraph 11. (U)

2. Background: CIA's participation in the investigation of President Kennedy's assassination was limited by the pattern of Lee Harvey Oswald's life. He served in the Marine Corps in Japan, although he did not come to the attention of the CIA at that time. He travelled to the Soviet Union in 1959, returning to the United States in 1962. He did not come to CIA's attention until his defection was reported by the U. S. Embassy in Moscow. He travelled to Mexico City in late September 1963, returning to the United States in early October after a five-day stay. CIA detected his presence and reported it at that time as a routine CI report because he contacted the Soviet Embassy. (C)

3. False allegations by a disaffected CIA employee claiming CIA-Oswald ties in Japan consumed some of the Committee's time and attention. They discredited his testimony, but in the process of discussing it, they talk about the things he said, including his duties in Tokyo. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We would endeavor to have the Committee sanitize and downplay this section of its report simply because of the discredited nature of the witness's testimony. If this is unsuccessful, unclassified publication may become an issue. (C)

4. Oswald's entry to the Soviet Union, with a visa given by the Soviet Consul in Helsinki, leads to HSCA discussion in its report of [REDACTED] and the file held on the Consul, who was KGB. We believe this can be remedied by sanitization; if not, it could become an issue if HSCA insists on publication. (S)

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5. Oswald's visit to Mexico City and other developments there have produced detailed discussion of certain events in HSCA drafts. One of those intended by the Committee for unclassified publication has to do with a man who made allegations that Oswald received money in the Cuban Consulate for the purpose of killing the President. This considers the investigation of the allegation, with criticisms of the performance of the Agency. It involves detailed reference to the Station in Mexico. The other section intended for unclassified publication has to do with a man who flew to Cuba from Mexico City a few days after the assassination of President Kennedy. Again, there is extensive reference to the role of the Station. Another section referring to the Mexico City Station involves detailed discussion of sensitive sources and methods; the position on sources and methods is clear, but there is uncertainty in the Mexico Station aspect. (S)

6. The present issue is whether there can be some euphemism for describing CIA personnel in Mexico City for the investigation, without specifying that they were assigned there on a permanent basis, or whether we simply oppose any references. The Committee can be expected to contest our objections to any references to the Station or CIA's presence there for the investigation because the story cannot be told otherwise. To omit such references would mean that these limited sections would probably have to be deleted or so emasculated as to render them sterile and incomprehensible. (C)

7. The Warren Commission report has only limited references to CIA, crediting it with reporting Oswald's visit to Mexico City prior to the assassination, and obtaining by undisclosed means a photograph of an unidentified man. Other information from CIA is not specified in the report; while the press has accurately described those matters, the Agency has never officially confirmed it. (C)

8. The Church Committee report, in Book V, makes 28 separate references to the Mexico Station (not Mexico City Station), or its Chief, or its communications with Washington. While this is not publication by CIA, it has the quality of official confirmation by virtue of being contained in a Senate report. The Agency did not contest this at the time. Further, the Agency subsequently approved references to the Mexico City Station and its Chief, in the book published by David Phillips, possibly because already public in the Senate report. (C)

9. Staff Discussion: Since the Church Committee investigation, and the approval of the references in the Phillips book, there has been an increase in the sensitivity of the Mexico City Station. While CIA has come under attack in the Mexican Press from time-to-time in the past, the Station and the COS in particular recently have been the subject of a running campaign. This is the first time that a COS has been subjected to a prolonged personal attack in the local press. Heightened political controversy within the ruling PRI Party has focused attention on the Embassy and the Station, with allegations of bribery and other misdeeds

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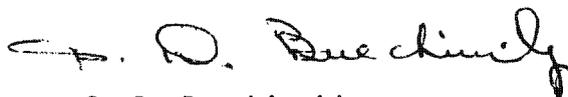
involving high-level officials. Because of the political discord within the PRI, certain high-level Mexican officials have at least seen fit to permit the continuation of this campaign if not supporting and instigating it. Their objective is to tarnish the image of other officials who are political opponents and traditionally have been very supportive of the Station. The interest of the United States in Mexico's gas and petroleum has heightened sensitivity concerning anything that may affect the political atmosphere. The official publication by any U. S. Government entity of material which confirms the presence of CIA operations in Mexico (past or present) provides new ammunition for renewed attacks on our Station and causes considerable embarrassment to the GOM. President Carter will be visiting in Mexico soon. The President himself has instructed the Attorney General that there can be no references to the Mexico City Station in its prosecution of the ITT matter. While the President can instruct a member of the Executive Branch on this matter, a formal position from him on this subject, directed to the Congress, does not have the same weight. (S)

10. The agreement between you and Chairman Stokes provides that when we receive an official notice of the intent to publish, you have five days in which to respond to him if you object. At present, we have this information on an informal basis and the five-day period does not apply. Therefore, this is posed to you in anticipation of a disagreement if discussions do not produce a way around the issue. (U)

11. Our options are:

- a. To seek some compromise by discussions; (U)
- b. Accept some euphemism that suggests the presence in Mexico of CIA people in 1964 for purposes of the investigation without specifying that they were assigned there permanently; (C)
- c. Categorically oppose publication of those sections mentioning any CIA presence in Mexico. (C)

12. Action Requested: We intend to pursue option (a), but prior to doing so, your decision on options (b) and (c) will be necessary to shape how we proceed. (U)



S. D. Breckinridge

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Fred Hitz

Legislative Counsel

2/14/79

Date

Agree w. option @. Before proceeding to (b) I would like a crash at convincing the leadership of the House and senior members of the Committee that with Mexican oil at stake, we should do nothing & invite their sensibilities.

John McMillan

Deputy Director for Operations

9 February 1979

Date

* Stan: Agree with Option c; oppose Option b. Agree to Option a assuming no mention of CIA in Mexico. At this very moment, the Mexican situation is super sensitive regarding CIA and we should not further inflame that situation by admitting to CIA activities in Mexico City under any guise or name.

Alan Wark

Deputy Director for Administration

2/12/79

Date

Once we've exhausted compromise, I assume we will have to settle for Option "b" in view of the existing record. Don.

I think we ought to object on principle (option c), but the prospects of success are not bright and fall-back positions are none too clear, because for example there may be no suitable replacement, making option b unrealistic.

Anthony R. DePomoy

General Counsel

2/13/79

Date