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76-3086

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John H. Waller
Inspector General

SUBJECT : Washington Star Story, 1 October 1976

1. This is for your information only.

2. On 1 October 1976 the Washington Star published a news story with an Associated Press credit line, headlined CIA Viewed Oswald As Information Source (copy attached). The lead stated:

Contrary to sworn testimony, the CIA once considered using presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald as a source of intelligence information about the Soviet Union, according to a newly released CIA document.

In sworn testimony before the Warren Commission, former CIA Director Richard Helms said the Agency never had "or even contemplated" any contacts with Oswald.

The news story, in another section, made the following statement:

The November 25, 1963, memo explained that the Agency's interest in Oswald as a potential intelligence source was due to his "unusual behavior in the USSR," to which he had defected in 1959.

G. B.

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3. There was such a memorandum, written by a case officer then stationed in Paris, recently released under FOIA. Writing three days after President Kennedy's assassination, this case officer recalled that there had been interest in Oswald.

As soon as I had heard Oswald's name, I recalled that as Chief of the 6 Branch I had discussed -- sometime in the summer of 1960 -- with the then Chief and Deputy Chief of the 6 Research Section the laying on of interview (s) through WOTUMAP or other suitable channels . . .

I remember that Oswald's unusual behavior in the USSR had struck me from the moment I had read the first ODACID dispatch on him, and I told my subordinates something amounting to "Don't push too hard to get the information we need, because this individual looks odd."

. . . . I do not know what action developed thereafter

4. The Helms testimony before the Warren Commission on this subject was as follows:

Mr. Helms. On Mr. McCone's behalf, I had all our records searched to see if there had been any contacts at any time prior to President Kennedy's assassination by anyone in the Central Intelligence Agency with Lee Harvey Oswald. We checked our card files and our personal files and all our records.

Now this check turned out to be negative. In addition I got in touch with those officers who were in positions of responsibility at the times in question to see if anybody had any recollection of any contact having even been suggested with this man. This also turned out to be negative, so there is no material in the Central Intelligence Agency, either in the records or in the mind of any of the individuals, that there was any contact had or even contemplated with him.

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5. Mr. Helms did state exactly the words quoted in the news story -- "or even contemplated." But the context of those words was what was reported to him as the result of a search of records and memories. To this day those familiar with the extensive Oswald records state that there is no reflection in those records that anyone even undertook to propose or approve a contact with Oswald. It would have been natural to do so, but apparently any such thoughts did not progress to formal action. From the memorandum quoted, it is apparent that someone at Branch level did think about it, even if nothing ever came of it. This hardly constitutes a responsible or official or serious "contemplation" of the idea. Mr. Helms' full statement on this point seems literally correct in the full context of his statement, although more refined qualifications might have reiterated the basis for his conclusions. The news story is misleading on this point.

6. The news story statement that Oswald was considered due to his "unusual behavior in the USSR," is exactly the opposite of the statements of the quoted memorandum, which reported the care that should be used if Oswald were approached, because of his strange conduct.

7. The statement in the news story about Mr. Dulles consulting with Agency personnel on how to answer questions is basically true. The interpretation to be placed on this counselling will depend on the interpreter. The inference of the news story is that Mr. Dulles was counselling slanted responses on the Oswald issue, thereby tending to reinforce the interpretation of deception attributed to Mr. Helms.


John H. Waller

Attachment:

As Stated

cc: DDCI w/atts

DIG:SB Breckinridge:js (R 1487) 6 October 1976

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Document Contradicts Testimony

CIA Viewed Oswald As Information Source

Contrary to sworn testimony, the CIA once considered using presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald as a source of intelligence information about the Soviet Union, according to a newly released CIA document.

In sworn testimony before the Warren Commission, former CIA Director Richard Helms said the agency never had "or even contemplated" any contacts with Oswald.

The newly released document, written by an unidentified CIA officer three days after President John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, says that "we showed intelligence interest" in Oswald and "discussed . . . the laying on of interviews."

The unidentified officer added that "I do not know what action developed thereafter."

THE MEMO WAS AMONG hundreds of pages of documents from the CIA's file on Lee Harvey Oswald. The material was released to The Associated Press yesterday under the Freedom of Information Act.

A second document reveals that former CIA Director Allen Dulles, while serving as a member of the Warren Commission, privately counseled CIA officials on the best way to answer questions from the commission about allegations that Oswald was a CIA agent.

Dulles "thought language which made it clear that Lee Harvey Oswald was never an employe or agent of CIA would suffice," an unidentified CIA officer wrote Helms in April 1964.

"I agree with him that a carefully phrased denial of the charges of involvement with Oswald seemed most appropriate," the unidentified officer added.

When he appeared before the commission in May 1964, Helms, then head of the agency's clandestine services, testified under oath that "there's no material in the Central Intelligence Agency, either in the records or in the mind of any of the individuals that there was any contact had or even contemplated with" Oswald.

THE NOV. 25, 1963, memo explains that the agency's interest in Oswald as a potential intelligence source was due to his "unusual behavior in the USSR," to which he had defected in 1959.

"We were particularly interested in the (deleted) Oswald might provide on the Minsk factory in which he had been employed, on certain sections of the city itself, and of course we thought the usual (deleted) that might help develop (deleted) personality dossiers," the memo states.

The memo indicates that Oswald was also of interest to the CIA because of concern that his Russian-

born wife, Marina, might have been part of a trend for Soviet women to marry foreigners, leave the country and settle overseas where they could serve as spies.

THE MEMO ABOUT the agency's interest in Oswald said the discussions about Oswald occurred "some time in summer 1963." The author continued: "I don't recall if this was discussed while Oswald and his family were en route to our country or if it was after their arrival."

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STAFF

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DIRECTOR

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DISSEMI BY: 45

TO: IMMEDIATE []

UNINTEL RYBAT

1. AP WIRE STORY IN WASHINGTON STAR ON FOIA RELEASE OF OSWALD'S MATERIAL MAKES FOLLOWING STATEMENT WHICH YOU SHOULD BE AWARE.

QUOTE: IN SUORN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WARREN COMMISSION, RICHARD HELMS, THEN A BRANCH CHIEF AND LATER CIA'S DIRECTOR, SAID THE AGENCY NEVER HAD OR EVEN CONTEMPLATED ANY CONTACTS WITH OSWALD... NEULY RELEASED DOCUMENT, SAYS HE SHOWED INTELLIGENCE INTEREST IN OSWALD AND DISCUSSES... THE LAYING ON OF INTERVIEWS. END QUOTE.

MATERIAL

2. ABOVE MISCONSTRUED FROM SANITIZED RELEASED UNDER FOIA, WRITTEN BY FORMER OFFICER WHO WAS INTERESTED IN POSSIBLE USEFUL INFORMATION OSWALD MIGHT HAVE IN CONTEXT OF SOVIET REALITIES. IN RESPONSE TO DCI CALL TO ALL HANDS TO RECORD WHATEVER THEY THOUGHT MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO WARREN COMMISSION INTERESTS, OFFICER WROTE THIS THE DOES RECORD BRANCH LEVEL DISCUSSION BUT STATES THAT WRITER DOES NOT KNOW WHAT ACTION WAS TAKEN. E-2, IMPDET-H

DATE: 3 OCT 76
ORIG: CHAS. BRIGGS:DCM
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DDP W. W. Wells

CHRONO

THEODORE G. SHACKLEY, ADDO

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