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Mexico Station Coverage of Soviet and Cuban Embassies (1963)

1. Unilateral Coverage:

From the time the Mexico Station was opened in April 1947 until the arrival of Mr. Win Scott as Chief of Station in 1955, the Station had developed a support apparatus to exploit leads from the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City. This umbrella type project (LIPSTICK) consisted of multiline phone taps, three photographic sites, a mobile surveillance team and a mail intercept operation.

Telephone taps (LIFEAT) were placed by an employee of the local telephone company who was handled by a Station case officer. The number of lines tapped was limited only by the availability of a listening post nearby and the availability of language (English, Spanish, Soviet, Polish, Czech, etc.) transcribers. Generally, these were Mexican or Mexican-American recruited agents.

Three photographic sites were handled by a Station case officer assisted by technicians on TDY from Headquarters who advised the Station on the best types of cameras, films, and concealment devices. These operations had sub-crypts under project LIPSTICK (namely: LIMITED, LILYRIC and LICALLA). LIMITED was a fixed site directly opposite the Soviet Embassy (across the street) which had both a vehicle and a pedestrian entrance. The gate to the Soviet Embassy was on the northwest corner of the

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Soviet compound and the LIMITED site was diagonally across a double laned street on the southeast corner of that block. (See attached diagram). LIMITED was the first photo base and operated strictly on an experimental basis in the early stages. This base, however, was closed when the Station received word that the photograph of the "unidentified man" was being released by the Warren Commission. LILYRIC was an alternate photographic base. It was located in an upper story of an apartment building on the same side of the street as the LIMITED site but in the middle of the block south. It had a planted view of the front gate of the Soviet Embassy. LICALLA, the third photographic site, was located in one of a row of four houses on the south side of the Soviet Embassy compound. This site overlooked the back garden of the Soviet Embassy compound. The purpose of this operation was to get good identification photographs of Soviet personnel. The three photographic sites were managed by a recruited agent who was a Mexican citizen, the son of an American mother and Mexican father (deceased). This agent collected the film from the LIMITED and LILYRIC sites three times a week. The film was then developed and printed into 8 x 10 contact print strips. LICALLA film was originally processed in the Station but in early 1959, due to the resignation of a technician, this film like that of LIMITED and LILYRIC was processed on the outside by a recruited agent.

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Mobile surveillance was conducted by two American staff officers. These two officers organized a surveillance team of six recruited agents which used late model cars and a panel truck for surveillance. The team could be activated by radio from the LIMITED site whenever someone of interest left the gate of the Soviet Embassy. These agents were aware of the LIMITED site since they had been issued LIMITED photographs for identification purposes.

The Station also conducted a unilateral mail intercept operation, LIBIGHT, which was handled by an American case officer. A recruited Mexican agent, who had a semiofficial status, obtained selected letters from a subagent employed by the Mexican postal system.

2. Liaison Coverage:

Liaison coverage was unreliable and insecure as characterized by the nature of the Mexican services at that time. The Mexican Direction of Federal Security (DFS), with which we conducted liaison, was a hip-pocket group run out of the Mexican Ministry of Government. This Ministry was principally occupied with political investigations and control of foreigners. Their agents were ~~vicious~~^{brutal}, and corrupt. A Station officer trained a number of them in name tracing and travel control. In 1958, at the instigation of a Mexican official, a joint telephone tap operation came into existence. The operation, which became known as

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LIENVOY, was run by a Mexican officer. The listening post had 30 lines connected at one time. The transcription room was staffed by Mexican Army officers. In 1961, because of mismanagement by the Mexican principals, the Station chief, himself, became the project case officer. A Station officer assisted him in the daily supervision of the listening post, and in picking up the transcripts and the tapes. There was also an American technician inside the listening post.

3. Oswald Coverage:

In mid-1962, the Mexican officer in charge of LIENVOY (the joint tap operation) asked the American officer at the LIENVOY listening post for the telephone numbers of the Soviet, Cuban and Satellite Embassies in anticipation of possible coverage. The Station immediately disconnected all of the unilateral telephone taps on these Embassies so that they would not be discovered when the Mexicans hooked up their taps. The Mexicans soon thereafter connected five Cuban lines, five Soviet lines, three Czech lines, two Polish lines, and one Yugoslav line. At the listening post, a live monitor made short summaries of conversations of interest which were then included in a daily resume for the Chief of Station. Later, when a reel was completely recorded, full transcripts were typed and passed to the Station; however, there was usually a time lag of a day or two. Reels which contained Russian

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~~r a language other than Spanish or English were taken to another location~~
for translation and typing. Mr. Boris Tarasoff did the Russian translations but because of the volume of Russian conversations, the translations usually ran about a week behind the date of the conversation.

As soon as the Station learned that an American identifying himself as Lee Oswald phoned the Soviet Embassy, Miss Ann Goodpasture of the Station started screening all photographs. However, here again, there was a backlog because the photographs were picked up three times a week but those picked up were usually for dates a few days before since the technician who was processing the film, did so on a night-time basis. Further, photographs were not made initially until a complete roll of film was used. Later this was changed and the operator cleared the camera at the end of each day regardless of amount of unused film remaining. The instructions were to cover the entire work day (office hours) and to photograph all Soviets, their families, all foreigners, and cars with foreign license plates. Human error did occur but generally the agents were conscientious. The Cuban Embassy coverage had more sophisticated equipment using a pulse camera which frequently developed mechanical difficulties.

Oswald came to the attention of the listening post operators from a tap of the Soviet line. It was picked up and taken to Mr. Boris

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Tarasoff for translation because the caller was trying to speak in Russian. There was some delay because Station personnel waited to compare the photographs with the typed transcript. All transcripts were made in either Spanish or English since the Chief of Station could read only these two languages and because he personally screened the transcripts for operational leads.

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