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SECRET

DDI 22-2310

15 MAY 1972


1675/2

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy Director for Plans

SUBJECT : Release of Documents Furnished to the
President's Commission by the Central
Intelligence Agency

On Monday, 8 May 1972, Mr. Arthur Dooley visited Congressman Richard Ichord to show him the exhibits he requested and to answer any questions. Mr. Ichord is Chairman of the House Committee on Internal Security. It was quickly apparent that he knew very little about the Oswald case, and that he had been misled by Bernard Fensterwald, Jr. regarding the extent of CIA's coverage of Oswald when he was in Mexico City. Mr. Ichord examined the documents and raised a number of points which were answered candidly and without reservation. He thanked us for easing his mind and said that we could consider the matter closed. Mr. Ichord was well-disposed toward this Agency from the onset and assured us that anything said or shown to him would be held in strict confidence. A more detailed memorandum is attached.


Raymond G. Rocca
Deputy Chief

Counter Intelligence Staff

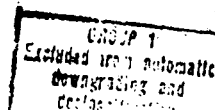
1 Attachment, A/S

Document Number

1057-947 R

for FOIA Review on SEP 1976

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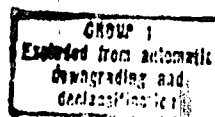
SUBJECT: Lee Harvey Oswald Case: Briefing of Congressman
Richard Ichord, 8 May 1972

1. Mr. Joseph O'Neill, Office of the Legislative Counsel, presented Mr. Arthur Dooley, who furnished the exhibits requested by the Congressman, and answered his questions as follows:

2. Mr. Ichord said he was concerned over one aspect of the Oswald investigation from the standpoint of his committee. He wanted to know if "during CIA's investigation of Oswald when he was in Mexico" we developed any evidence of a conspiratorial relationship between the Soviets and Oswald either through our coverage of the Embassy or outside meetings. He specifically referred to Soviet consular officials Pavel Antonovich Yatskov and Valeriy Vladimirovich Kostikov, one or both of whom Oswald contacted at the Soviet Embassy. (Both Yatskov and Kostikov were identified in the Commission's Report as consular officials and KGB representatives.) I told him that CIA did not have Oswald under investigation when he was in Mexico City; directed his attention to the pertinent exhibit; and explained that the KGB affiliations of the two Soviets were supplied by CIA experts who were aware of their activities and not by anything said or indicated by Oswald in the evidence compiled by us. Mr. Ichord examined the exhibit, noted that Oswald's short conversations only related to securing visas; indicated that he had been misinformed; and said that he had no further questions to ask on this point.

3. He said that his question was sparked by Bernard Fensterwald, Jr. a former constituent, about whom he knew very little when he requested the documents. Since then he has learned of Fensterwald's dubious credentials as an expert on the assassination and of his association with Jim Garrison and others of questionable repute. I detailed our own difficulties with Fensterwald, his insistence that we are hiding something, and how, as Executive Director of the Committee to Investigate Assassinations, he has been pressing us to release our classified documents under threat of invoking the Freedom of Information Act.

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4. At Mr. Ichord's request, I gave him a complete rundown on how CIA learned of Oswald's presence in Mexico, and the circumstances surrounding the photo of the unknown man which was taken in front of the Soviet Embassy. I specified and refuted the assorted allegations regarding this picture which were generated by Edward Epstein, Wesley Liebeler (a former Commission attorney), Mark Lane, Jim Garrison, and later Bernard Fensterwald, Jr. I mentioned that Fensterwald told us a year ago that he knew the identity of the unknown man but so far has not volunteered his name. One of Garrison's charges was that Oswald was a CIA agent and that we cut him out of the picture. I took the occasion to stress that Oswald was not a CIA agent and that we never had anything to do with him.

5. I mentioned that when the President's Commission came into existence Mr. Helms issued specific instructions to cooperate fully with the Commission and to give it complete access to any information bearing on the assassination; that Commission members, at Mr. Helm's invitation visited our Mexico City station for an on-the-scene briefing and inspection. I told him that we have not released exhibits relating to Oswald's visits to the Soviet and Cuban Embassies, because the sources of the above information are extremely sensitive and still productive. Mr. Ichord fully agreed on this score and complimented us on the extent of our coverage.

6. Mr. Ichord asked what steps CIA was taking to declassify its other documents. I told him of the required five year cycle (one coming up shortly), the review process, our interim releases, and CIA's desire to release them all as quickly as the need for protecting them subsides. I pointed out that most of our material consists of "nut complaints", rumors, gossip, etc; which have no security significance per se but could be embarrassing to innocent persons; disclose a productive and friendly foreign source; or acknowledge CIA's presence abroad where diplomatically this would be inadvisable. I cited our experience with the "crank call" that originated in Canberra, Australia; how in 1968 we tried to declassify this exhibit but Australian security officials objected on the grounds that it would publicly acknowledge CIA presence on their soil and perhaps stir unwarranted controversy. I stated that despite the above-type problems we gradually have been declassifying

CIA's material, sanitizing exhibits, as necessary to protect our sources and methods.

7. I mentioned in passing, that two other things beyond our control have contributed to the misconceptions over our exhibits: A) The inadvertent release by National Archives of the master list of numbered exhibits shortly after the demise of the President's Commission without distinguishing between overt and classified items; and B) the fact that many exhibits bear different numbers but are interrelated, thus giving a false impression that there are more exhibits than is the case. The release of the master list without the accompanying documents caused much apprehension and misinterpretation, particularly among assassination "buffs" and Agency critics. I cited the "Oswald and the U-2" entry which was widely exploited until we declassified the document a couple of years ago.

8. Mr. Ichord asked if any CIA members served on the President's Commission. I said no, but mentioned that former DCI Allen Dulles was on the Commission. He then turned to the makeup of the Commission staff and how it was chosen. I replied that we were not really competent to comment on how it was chosen but the staff consisted largely of attorneys of varied political and ethnical backgrounds from widely separated parts of the country; that, from my observation, the Commission was impressively organized and a highly motivated, hard working group.

9. Mr. Ichord stated that he had no further questions to ask and thanked us for easing his mind. We offered to produce any other documents he might wish to see. Mr. Ichord replied that this would not be necessary. He returned our exhibits and told us to consider the matter closed.


Arthur E. Dooley
CI/R&A