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OLC #78-2718/2

~~Aug 12 4 32 AM '78~~ 10 August 1978
Aug 11, 4 32 PM '78

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: HSCA Field Trip to Mexico City

1. The purpose of this MFR is to outline the details of subject trip for the period 6-8 August 1978 (Mexico City 46122 refers).

2. I departed Washington on Sunday, 6 August 1978 for Mexico City. Upon arrival I met with the COS and DCOS to discuss the interviews to be conducted on Monday, 7 August and Tuesday, 8 August by a HSCA team consisting of Gary Cornwell, Deputy to Mr. Blakey, Harold Leap and Edwin Lopez. It was agreed that the interview with Daniel Flores, staff, Mexico City Station (in alias) would be held in the Embassy and the interview with Raymond Alvarez Durant would be held in the del Angel Hotel using the microphone arrangement agreed to by Mr. Cornwell at the HQS planning meeting on Friday, 4 August 1978. Electronic equipment (including TV) had already been either brought from HQS or was available at the Station.

3. On Monday, we were advised by cable that the HSCA investigators would not be coming as scheduled. As I had already made arrangements to meet with Durant for identification purposes and to explain the interview arrangements, I decided to keep the meeting. The COS concurred. Durant was cooperative and accepted the delay as unavoidable. I advised him that I would give him as much advance notice as possible in any future interview. I did not specifically identify myself as Agency but there is little doubt that he was aware of my affiliation. Upon receipt of the second cable -- which rescheduled the HSCA trip (with Mr. Cornwell deleted) -- Durant was advised that the interview would, in all likelihood, take place on Tuesday, 8 August as originally scheduled.

4. At 0830, 8 August Leap and Gomez met with the COS and myself in his office. Neither Leap nor Gomez had any awareness whatsoever of the requirement to interview Flores. In fact, Lopez asked me if Flores was LIONION 1. Without exposing my concern about the lack of briefing such a question implied, I responded that LIONION 1 was in Madrid, not Mexico City. Parenthetically at the 4 August planning meeting, Cornwell had been briefed on the personal plans of Flores and had written down our request to interview him: (1) in

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alias and; (2) as early as possible in the week. In any event, after some expressions of dissatisfaction by the HSCA investigators against their staff about their lack of knowledge of the Flores interview, COS asked if AM MUG meant anything to them. Thus primed, they picked up on this and interviewed Flores in private. No deposition was taken. The investigators were requested to use an alias for Flores in both their notes and any subsequent reports.

5. Upon completion of the Flores interview, Leap, Gomez, the COS and myself met to discuss the Durant interview. The three room electronic arrangement in the del Angel Hotel was outlined. Neither investigator expressed any concern about this arrangement. Leap then brought out a copy of the Acting DDCI letter to Chairman Stokes concerning release from secrecy agreements for HSCA interviewees and requested that it be given to Durant before his interview and that Durant be orally advised that he was released from his secrecy agreement on matters relevant to the HSCA investigation. Leap emphasized that Durant would be the judge on what was relevant and what was not. The COS and I read the letter, discussed the situation and agreed that I would give the letter to Durant and so advise him of his release.

6. At 1015, Bruce Watson, GS-08, Chief of Registry, took Leap and Gomez to Room 810 in the del Angel Hotel. The electronic arrangement was explained to them by an OTS representative. Leap asked the OTS representative to stay in their room during the interview to correct any possible malfunctions. The OTS representative wisely declined. I subsequently complimented him on this proper response.

7. At 1045 -- with Watson at my request standing unobtrusively by with his diplomatic passport in the event of difficulty -- I met Durant in the lobby and took him to Room 809. I gave him the copy of the Acting DCI letter and advised him that he was released from his secrecy agreement on matters relevant to the investigation at hand. I then advised Leap on the microphone hookup that Durant was fully aware of the letter and his release. I then introduced Durant and left Room 809 for Room 808 where Watson and the OTS representative were already stationed.

8. After approximately forty-five minutes, Durant knocked on my door and advised me that the interview was over. I escorted him from the hotel. He expressed some concern about the difficulty of remembering events after fifteen years but said that he had done as well as he could do in responding to questions. He also expressed a willingness to cooperate in the future. It should be noted in passing that he was a "walk-in" to the Embassy approximately two months ago requesting further work with the Agency. This may explain, in part, his willingness to cooperate with the HSCA investigation. The COS shares this assessment with me.

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9. Watson returned the HSCA investigators to the Embassy where they expressed their appreciation to both the COS and myself and noted that the Durant interview was most worthwhile. The electronic equipment was cleared from Rooms 809 and 810 and Watson subsequently released all three rooms back to the del Angel desk clerk.

10. No surveillance or other problems were noted during this operation.

11. On Wednesday, 9 August I returned to HQS and reported the results of the trip to my superiors.


Niles R. Gooding, Jr.

Original - Mr. Breckinridge
1 - Mr. Sturbitts
1 - Mr. Briggs

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