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Mr. G. Robert Blakey
Chief Counsel and Director
Select Committee on Assassinations
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Bob,

This will complete our review of the drafts provided by you, also completing comments on the package covered in other respects in my letter to you of 13 February. This treats the section entitled Cuban-American. In its present form the draft on the "Cuban-American" contains a variety of classified matters that should remain classified; in this form we have classified the draft SECRET and request that it be handled accordingly. (C)

It is understood that this paper is intended for unclassified publication. Comments here are intended to advance ways in which the story can be told in unclassified form. (U)

First, as a generalization, you are familiar with the current extra sensitivity on publicity of CIA activities and presence in Mexico. Sensitive political relations between Mexico and the U.S. are real considerations, and a rather highly orchestrated campaign against CIA in Mexico at this time adds to the concern. I have mentioned in my letter of 26 February the desirability of a formula that lets you make your general references and comments, without further advertising a CIA presence. The suggestion was to indicate that CIA personnel there were something in the nature of visitors for the investigation; the formula suggested was somewhat as follows - "CIA personnel assigned in Mexico for the investigation." I have identified references to the Mexico City Station on pages 2-6 and 12, and the Monterrey Base at 5, 6, and 11. I believe we can develop a formula that will be mutually acceptable on this. (S)

I believe that earlier we furnished you an "errata sheet" on detailed corrections you would wish to make. The comments in this letter will address other items of interest. (U)

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Page 2. As a matter of interest, on this page and those following, repeated reference to messages as being "classified;" this seems odd to us. As you are aware there is very little, if any, traffic between the field and headquarters that is not classified. Both the means of communication and the content are classified. Persons unfamiliar with the use of classifications may be impressed with it, but ^{it} is not substantively significant at all. (C)

Page 2-4. The following rewrite is offered, as a way to avoid unnecessary reference to the Mexico City Station: (S)

The first information on the travel of the Cuban-American appeared in early December 1963. At that time CIA headquarters received a message relaying a request for "urgent traces on U.S. citizen Gilberto P. Lopez." Lopez was reported as arriving in Mexico on November 23 en route to Havana and that Lopez had disappeared with no record of his trip to Havana. According to the message, Lopez had a tourist card, carrying number 24553, which he obtained in Tampa on November 20, 1963 and his passport number was 310162. The report stated that Lopez left Mexico for Havana on November 27 via Cubana (Airline). There was no background information on Lopez in Mexico and headquarters was requested to provide such information as it had. (U)

In another message the same date, the FBI office in Mexico was reported as having been advised by Mexican authorities that Lopez had entered Mexico on November 27 at Nuevo Laredo. (U)

On December 5, 1963 CIA Headquarters received a report that Gilberto Lopez had crossed the Mexican border at Laredo, Texas on November 23, 1963, and had registered in the Roosevelt Hotel in Mexico City on November 25 at 1600 in Room 203. Lopez was reported as departing on a Cubana flight for Havana on November 27. The report stated that a good photograph had been obtained of Lopez. (U)

A dispatch the following day forwarded copies of the photograph to CIA Headquarters, stating when the photograph was taken. The photograph of Lopez, contained in his 201 file at CIA, is dated 27 November 1963, and shows him wearing dark glasses; the background is dark and indistinguishable. (U)

The dispatch forwarding the photograph contained previously reported information on the number of Lopez's passport and tourist card, and on his entry into Mexico. It contained additional information--that he was the only passenger on Cubana Flight #465 on November 27, 1963 to Havana; that the

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flight had a crew of nine Cubans; that Lopez used a U.S. passport and a Cuban courtesy visa. The dispatch contained the following statement: "Source states the timing and circumstances surrounding subject's travel through Mexico and departure for Havana are suspicious." The dispatch "urgently" requested all available data on Lopez. (U)

This treatment is intended to be suggestive as to how the story can be told in its essentials, at the same time preserving the Agency's activities from unnecessary exposure. For instance, it omits reference to LITEMPO and LIFIRE as well as some of the more explicit statements. I would suggest that you should check with the FBI to see if there is any objection to the reference to information being received by it from Mexican authorities. (C)

Page 5. Suggest following for first paragraph: (U)

On December 5, 1963 CIA headquarters cabled the field that this Cuban-American was Gilberto Policarpo Lopez, who was born on January 26, 1940. ~~It also stated that Lopez was born on January 26, 1940.~~ It also stated that Lopez was not identical with a Gilberto Lopez who had been identified as active in pro-Castro groups in Los Angeles. (U)

Page 5. Second paragraph. The indicated deletions (Monterrey Station, [redacted] and reference to the [redacted] dealing with CIA) are appropriate. Thereafter, where [redacted] name appears, it should be "source," instead of the named person. (C)

Page 6. Agree with deletion of reference to Monterrey Base. (C)

Page 6. The cable is cited without comment; the portion selected for quotation was in error as the information did not "jibe" with what was already known. (U)

Page 6. The discussion of the 201 file indicates a misunderstanding on the part of the author. In 1975 CIA conducted a review of all 201 files involving U.S. citizens, to determine whether the files should be destroyed, or whether they should be retained because of some counter-intelligence interest. The administrative procedure for doing this involved a form titled "Review of 201 file on U.S. Citizen." The file of Lopez was categorized for retention because he was a subject of possible

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interest in the assassination investigation. The date 1975, apparently questioned by the editor, is correct. (U)

Page 6. In lieu of reference to LAM/FI, it might improve readability to substitute the word "responsible." Also delete the name of "Barry Gibson." (C)

Page 11-13. The HSCA draft labors at preserving the basis for a criticism of CIA in the handling of a badly flawed report from Monterrey, some four months after the assassination of the President. (C)

The report erred in so many ways that it clearly was misinformed extensively. The DCOS did not recognize these errors at the time of its receipt, which does not alter the basic flawed nature of the report; his statements that it "jibed" with other information does not make it so. (U)

It is quite a familiar thing in the world of intelligence for reporting to be evaluated, and discarded when it does not pass tests of reliability. In the case of the Monterrey report, it erred in just about every detail, on top of which it offers an opinion of the reporting source -- unsupported by any of the facts offered -- that there was something "suspicious" about the man. Not only was the report in error in just about every point. It was some four months after the assassination, when pressures for information were high, and reliable, timely, first-hand observation obviously was not a part of the source's information. To characterize it as "cryptic and impressionistic" is polite -- it was essentially a worthless bit of reporting. (U)

It not only was correct to discount the report; it still seems that it should have been discarded. That it appeals to the sanguine imaginations of a critically oriented staff investigator does not give it merit. The HSCA draft is badly exaggerated and labored on this point. (U)

It was a simple statement of fact that CIA could not investigate Lopez. And that report was, in any event, not a valid basis for taking anything "more seriously." To give it some quality beyond its objective merit must be judged as unprofessional. CIA did report to the primary investigative authority, the FBI, which appears to have conducted a thorough inquiry. (U)

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Other items in this section:

Page 11. Lopez was not "surveilled" in Mexico. That phrasing may give it an adventuresome quality, but the report was some four months after Lopez departed Mexico. It obviously not only did not come from an informed source, but there could have been no first-hand observation of the man. (U)

Page 11. Agree with deletions at bottom of page. (U)

Page 12. Delete reference to DCOS and source. (C)

Page 14. The alleged "sinister appearing events," represent an HSCA staff opinion, without supporting evidence. A man flew to Cuba, and no one knows much about him. His only significance, if any, exists in a coincidence in time. The FBI investigated him and reported to the Warren Commission, judging from statements in the Church Committee report and the HSCA drafts. (U)

Page 14. The Committee has no instances, documented or otherwise, of CIA deciding "to forego passing information to the Warren Commission out of a desire to not lay bare extremely sensitive sources and methods of intelligence." I have tried to think what the HSCA staff may feel constitutes material nonreporting, and have come up with the following: (U)

a. Anti-Castro plotting. As your own draft final report convincingly demonstrates, the concept of any relevance for that to the assassination investigation was not perceived until the later 1960s, subsequent to the Warren Commission. Failure to perceive, perhaps. To protect sources, etc., not shown. (U)

b. Failure to report on allegations of Calderon's DGI ties and her contact with Oswald during his visit to Mexico. Contrary to the HSCA staff investigator, it was in fact reported. (U)

c. Failure to report a suspicion of a DGI defector that Calderon was a CIA or American agent. Every uninformed

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suspicion is not reportable, especially when it is known to be false, as was the case here. Nothing to report, and nothing to protect. (U)

d. Calderon's single remark, out of the context of the conversation in which she made it. First, it is based on a mistranslation, kept alive and unchanged even after having been corrected. And she, herself, made it clear that this isn't what it meant, if anyone has taken the time to read it in context. (C)

e. Failure to report until April 1964 about Oswald's contacts with Soviet and Cuban Consulates in Mexico City. This is based on an error of a Warren Commission investigation. First, Mr. Helms told Mr. Rankin at least some of the story in mid-January 1964. The extensively detailed substance of that information was provided the Warren Commission later in January. This was reinforced by the Duran debriefings. That the Warren Commission investigator understood the uncontradicted information in the Commission's possession cannot be explained today, except that he erred. (U)

The staff investigators may have developed an interesting, however unfounded, thesis that protective reflexes prevented reporting. The cases don't support the thesis. Further, no one has told them that such was the case, and nothing anywhere records such a view. It comes out of the imagination of the investigators, uninhibited by objective facts. (U)

It is customary practice in intelligence reporting procedures to report information, protecting at the same time the source or method by which it was obtained. That may be difficult for someone outside the intelligence world to grasp or retain, but procedures are well established for ensuring reporting of such useful and valid information as is available, at the same time protecting its origins. (U)

The presentation is contrary to well recognized practice, as well as being unsupported by fact. If the basic statements of the draft are inapplicable, it certainly follows that their logical extension (reduction

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ad absurdum) does not contribute plausibility to the unsupported statement that the FBI withheld out of deference to CIA. (U)

I have proposed the following security changes:

1. New formula for referring to CIA in Mexico, in the various places it occurs in the draft.
2. Rephrasing of pages 2-4, with suggested text.
3. New phrasing on page 5.
4. Deletion of [] name on page 5.
5. Deletion reference to Monterrey Base on page 6.
6. Deletion of "Barry Gibson" on page 6.
7. Deletions on page 11.
8. Deletions on page 12.
9. Delete LIFIRE. ()

Footnotes. Corrections are below:

- 3/ Classified CIA Document IN 72615, 3 Dec 63.
- 5/ Classified CIA Document IN 72829, 3 Dec 63.
- 6/ Classified CIA Document DIR-86761, 4 Dec 63.
- 9/ Classified CIA Document IN 74227, 12/5/63.
- 11/ Classified CIA Dispatch No. 22579, 12/5/63.
- 14/ Classified CIA Document DIR-87188, 5 Dec 63.
- 16/ Classified CIA Document IN 43194, 19 Mar 64.
- 22/ Classified CIA Document IN 43940, 20 Mar 64.
- 23/ Classified CIA Document, Personality File Action Request. (U)

After you have received these, I am ready to discuss their application, where you encounter problems, with you, Gary Cornwell, or Mickey Goldsmith. In any event, it would be useful for us to get together soon. I realize you are very busy, but some personal exchanges may save time later. ()

Sincerely,

SDB

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