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Name Robert ZambenardiDate 6/3/78 Time 11:00 amAddress MexicoPlace Hotel Maria Isabel, Mexico City

Interview:

Mr. Zambenardi was interviewed by HSCA Staff members Dan Hardway, Gary Cornwell and Harold Leap. He was shown the CIA omnibus release letter and stated that he understood it to release him from any secrecy agreement that he may have signed during the course of his employment with the CIA.

Mr. Zambenardi stated that he was first assigned to Mexico City in 1959 as a technician with State Department cover. He stated that during his tenure in Mexico City he worked inside the U.S. Embassy. He worked as a general technician and was available to work on any operation that had need of a technician. He did state that he worked in the Embassy as a photographic lab technician. He retired in 1964 or 1965 and his duties were the same through the whole period that he was in Mexico City.

Mr. Zambenardi stated that he was aware that the CIA station was running/photographic surveillance operations aimed at the Soviet and Cuban diplomatic compounds in Mexico City. He said that he was directly involved with the photographic surveillance of the Cuban compound and that he had at least minimal contact, indirectly, with the Soviet surveillance.

Interviewer Signature

Dan Hardway

(more)

Typed Signature

dan hardway

Date transcribed

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Mr. Zambenardi said that he had set up the surveillance cameras in the photographic base which covered the Cuban compound. He was only consulted once regarding the Soviet compound surveillance. He was not sure when this occurred but at one time he took angles of the front gate of the Soviet embassy.

Mr. Zambenardi said that for a short while after the operation was set up he had been responsible for liaison with the agents who manned the base, a Cuban exile and his mother who actually lived in the apartment. After the agents' training was completed and the base was running smoothly Zambenardi no longer had any responsibility for picking up the production from the photo base. After this time his only contact with the base concerned technical matters. He stated that the liaison function would have been assumed by the case officer who was responsible for the operation. His memory was vague about who the case officer was but thought that it was either Jack LNU or Tom Haslet.

Mr. Zambenardi said that the base tried to get full daylight coverage of the target but that it was very difficult to do so. He stated that both the Cuban exile, and the Cuban exile's mother, who manned the base were trained to run the surveillance. He stated that at the inception of the operation that the agents covered the Embassy entrance with a manually operated camera. He could not remember exactly what kind of camera had been used but thought that it had been an Exacta or a Leica. He stated that it would not contradict his memory if the camera was a Pentax. The camera was set up on a tripod and was equipped with a balscope. At this time the agents were trying to cover both gates with the emphasis

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on the Embassy gate. It was difficult to provide continuous coverage of one gate, let alone two. In an attempt to cover both gates and to get more complete coverage, an impulse camera was installed in the base. The impulse camera was set up to cover the Consulate entrance. The agents continued to cover the Embassy entrance with the manual camera. Mr. Zambenardi was almost positive that the impulse camera was installed six months after the base was set up. He remembers this because he set up the camera and was certain that it occurred not too long after he set up the base. Mr. Zambenardi could not remember whether the impulse and manual cameras were in the same room but thought that they were in separate rooms. He was certain that they were in the same apartment. The Cuban exile agent was trained in maintenance and basic servicing of the impulse camera. Mr. Zambenardi said that we could accurately ascertain the time that the impulse camera was installed by checking the monthly reports that he routinely filed with headquarters.

Mr. Zambenardi stated that the agents who operated the manual camera kept a log of people entering and leaving the Embassy. He said that the impulse camera had a built in clock and the time was registered on each picture taken. He said that each picture taken by this camera had a clock pictured in one corner of the photograph and that this clock depicted the time that the photograph was taken. This would be on each negative produced by the camera.

Mr. Zambenardi said that the time that the impulse camera was installed could also be ascertained by checking the shipping manifests which should still be on record. He said that the impulse camera operated from a triggering device attached to a spotting scope. The camera

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was triggered by changes in light intensity. The spotting scope was trained on a very narrow area of the door latch of the Cuban Consulate entrance. The camera itself covered a much broader field than the spotting scope. The camera was set up so as to make sure that a person triggering the camera by passing between the spotting scope and its target would be pictured from the waist up. Mr. Zambernardi stated that the camera was finicky and that there was a lot of false triggering.

Mr. Zambernardi stated that the operator serviced his own cameras, and developed the film and made contact prints in the base.

Mr. Zambernardi stated that the objective of the operation was to get identifiable photographs of all visitors to the compound.

Mr. Zambernardi stated that the operation was generally efficient. He said that the impulse camera was usually reliable and provided good daylight hour coverage with some minor interruptions for weak batteries, etc. He said that the manual coverage was usually good but that one had to take into account human error when considering the manual coverage. He pointed out that it was hard for a person to maintain constant attention in such a sedentary job. Mr. Zambernardi was sure that the impulse camera provided constant daylight coverage because he set it up.

Mr. Zambernardi was never involved, to his knowledge, in any of the wiretap operations. He does remember that he did do some delivery work. He remembers that he did make deliveries to a Russian translator but that this duty only lasted a couple of months. He said that he never asked what he was delivering. He pointed out the CIA's compartmentation of knowledge and said that if he had needed to

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know someone would have told him and, otherwise, he just accepted that it was none of his business. He does not recall anyone at the station that used the name "Rudy".

Mr. Zambernardi said that he often printed photographs in his lab in the Embassy.

Mr. Zambernardi stated that Winn Scott was satisfied with the Cuban compound photographic surveillance, as far as he knows. Scott never complained to him about it. Scott was meticulous and had a great interest in technical operations.

Mr. Zambernardi said that Ann Goodpasture reviewed all of the surveillance photographs and appeared to be Scott's "right hand man" in some respects but not necessarily overall.

Mr. Zambernardi recognized the name Tom Keenan as being someone who was in the station in Mexico but he said that he never worked with him. He said that the one thing he remembers is that Keenan was always erasing tapes; that he had a machine in the Embassy for this purpose and that Keenan was always doing it.

Mr. Zambernardi stated that the name Lee Harvey Oswald did not come to his attention prior to 22 November 1963.

He said that it was not unusual, during the short time that he worked delivering tapes to the Tarasoffs, that he would be requested to deliver a message to the Tarasoffs to give priority to a particular tape.

Mr. Zambernardi said that he has no knowledge of the means of coordination between the photo and wiretap bases but thinks that there must have been some method of communication on the basis of logic.

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Mr. Zambenardi stated that his monthly reports were routinely dispatched to Headquarters.

Mr. Zambenardi said that he does not know if a photo of Oswald was ever taken in Mexico City and that no one has ever discussed it with him. He does remember that he did make some blow-ups after (right after) the assassination but that they were handled as routine and he made no special note of them. He said that he often made 30 or 40 blowups a week.

Mr. Zambenardi said that the only way it was possible for the photo operations to miss ten shots at Oswald was:

- 1) if he visited after dark;
- 2) his visits were on a Saturday or Sunday (He was not certain but thought that there may have been Saturday morning coverage.);
- 3) if the case officer had given the agents the day he visited off; and
- 4) the impulse camera was not working.

Mr. Zambenardi stated that he believed that all the cameras involved in surveillance of the Soviet compound were manual cameras.

Mr. Zambenardi said that Ann Goodpasture was definitely not the case officer for the Cuban photo operation. He was not sure of who it was. When the name Robert Shaw was mentioned to him he said that he could have been the CO but that he just was not sure.

Mr. Zambenardi said that his pseudonym was Gregory D. Parnuth.

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