

## CIA ACTIVITIES AND THE WARREN COMMISSION INVESTIGATION

## SUMMARY

There is a need to investigate the role of the CIA and the FBI in the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy, and their relationships with Lee Harvey Oswald. Since several agencies had files on Oswald which can be checked against each other, a useful case study of CIA practices is possible. These records should shed light on the interception of mail to Russia, CIA concern about (and file-keeping on) domestic political activities, and other questionable activities.

Unresolved questions about the CIA and the assassination include CIA coverage of Oswald and maybe an impostor in Mexico City, reports that he was an informant, and a contact with a U.S. intelligence operative in Moscow. This memo summarizes the available record and suggests specific inquiries.

The CIA misled the FBI about the CIA file on Oswald, and may not have cooperated fully with the Warren Commission (as the FBI and the Defense Department did not). For example, the CIA may not have told the Commission about all their records on Oswald's wife or his activities in Mexico. This memo specifies documents and people who could clarify the Warren Commission's work with the CIA and their investigation of these matters.

The CIA may have investigated the assassination more thoroughly and longer than the Commission. The results of the CIA investigation, and possible actions against Warren Report critics, should be clarified for the public.

Previously unreported evidence presented here is relevant to the reports that a CIA attempt to kill Fidel Castro may have backfired against Kennedy. Oswald or an impersonator, in the company of anti-Castro Cubans, visited Cuban emigre Sylvia Odio in Dallas and was said to feel that Kennedy should have been shot. These men were apparently friends of Odio's father, who was imprisoned in Cuba because of his role in an assassination attempt against Castro. Even without knowledge of this fact, the Warren Commission staff considered the Odio incident very important and speculated that it might have reflected a conspiracy. The Commission's investigation was quite inadequate - for example, in not checking out reports of an Oswald look-alike in Dallas who was affiliated with the same anti-Castro group as Odio's father's co-conspirators against Castro. The CIA's role in this particular attempt against Castro, and in the dissemination of apparently false stories that Robert Kennedy feared that an attempt against Castro which he had authorized had backfired, must be examined fully.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

## A. FEDERAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES AND THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

Even before the disclosures of the last three months, there were ample reasons for an investigation of improper activities by the CIA and the FBI in the case of Lee Harvey Oswald, and of the extent of the cooperation between these agencies and the Warren Commission.

After the assassination, allegations were promptly made that Oswald had been an informant or employee of some intelligence agency (and that therefore the Secret Service had not been warned about him). Even though the Warren Commission took these reports very seriously, it failed to properly investigate either this specific charge or the exact nature of the relationships between Oswald and the CIA, the FBI, and military intelligence.

The bulk of the Commission's investigation was done through various federal agencies, notably the FBI. Thus these agencies were in large part responsible for the coverup of much of what the Commission was supposed to be reporting for the American people. It is clear, for example, that the FBI misled the Warren Commission about the extent of its files on Oswald, and also in other ways discouraged the Commission from examining the implications of some of the Bureau's intelligence-gathering methods - e.g., the interception of several of Oswald's letters to left-wing political groups. Hoover sidetracked the Commission's investigation of the allegation that Oswald had been an FBI informant, and went through semantic contortions to deny the fact that Jack Ruby had apparently been a Potential Criminal Informant for the FBI.

## B. THE UTILITY OF A STUDY OF THE RECORDS

The Oswald case provides an unusual opportunity to check the practices and records of one intelligence agency against the files kept by other agencies. A great deal of information has been published by the Warren Commission, made available in the National Archives, or preserved there but not released. This includes the purportedly complete files on Oswald of the CIA, the State Department, and the Defense Department (including the Office of Naval Intelligence), as well as a list of the FBI Headquarters file. There is, however, evidence that those files are not complete, and suggestions that sensitive or improper activities, domestic and foreign, were not fully recorded in the appropriate files. An analysis of the flow of records in this case could provide a "control" study useful in other cases. This would be particularly helpful if credible allegations of improper CIA activities are not supported by the records made available to the investigating committees.

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The available evidence on the FBI's relationship with, and files on, Oswald will be analyzed in a book I am writing. This memo concentrates on the CIA, with emphasis on specific questions relevant to domestic CIA activities, possible CIA nondisclosure to the Warren Commission, and possible links between the assassination and CIA attempts to kill Fidel Castro.

Copies of available documents which are cited can be obtained from me. Where possible, I have specified known but unavailable records which might be relevant.

I have deliberately excluded certain extremely implausible allegations for which the purported evidence is weak. Charges have even been made that the CIA or the FBI was responsible for the assassination. Despite the lack of evidence or logical support for many of these allegations, they are, I think, a matter of substantial public concern. A serious attempt to answer specific questions which have been raised seems appropriate. I am concerned that bad evidence tends to drive out good evidence; the necessary rebuttal of some of the wilder allegations must not become an excuse for avoiding more complicated, but more plausible, charges.

Consideration should be given to the possibility of disinformation being used by some intelligence agency to focus attention away from less sensational but more serious charges. Within the past year someone has gone to the trouble of putting together and making available to some Warren Report critics a false FBI document relating to purported connections between Jack Ruby and the federal government.<sup>1</sup> Also, statements have been made about a purported anti-Kennedy National Security Council memo which (if it exists at all) may well be the result of a disinformation effort.<sup>2</sup>

## II. THE CIA AND LEE HARVEY OSWALD

### A. QUESTIONS ABOUT DOMESTIC CIA INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

The first three of these questions may not be very significant in the assassination investigation, but they might lead to new information about the extent of certain questionable CIA activities.

#### 1. GOVERNMENT KNOWLEDGE OF LETTER SENT TO OSWALD IN RUSSIA

Did the CIA intercept a letter and money order which Oswald's mother sent to him shortly after he defected to Russia? If, as the record suggests, this did happen, why do the FBI and CIA files given to the Commission not fully reflect this?

The first known FBI report relating to Oswald starts with the statement that Mrs. Marguerite Oswald "is reported to have purchased 'foreign money transfer No. 142,699' at the First National Bank of Fort Worth, Texas, on 1/22/60 by means of which she sent the sum of \$25 to her son, Lee Harvey Oswald, in care of

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Hotel Metropole, Moscow, Russia.<sup>3</sup> The FBI told the Warren Commission that "we determined on January 25, 1960, that Mrs. Marguerite C. Oswald had transmitted the sum of \$25" to Oswald at the Metropole Hotel;<sup>4</sup> this prompted interviews of Mrs. Oswald and her other son.

It seems atypical that the contemporary FBI report gives no indication of the origin of that information; that omission may indicate a particularly sensitive source. The recently disclosed CIA project of "selective" interception of mail from the U.S. to Russia and China may have been involved. The CIA has claimed that this program was in operation in 1960 in only one city.<sup>5</sup>

It is also quite possible that the FBI got its information about this private transaction from the bank. The money order was purchased on a Friday, and the FBI learned of it on Monday - which seems a bit fast for a mail interception.

The CIA file on Oswald given to the Commission contains no information on this other than the FBI report.<sup>6</sup> The relevant FBI file was not given to or listed for the Commission.<sup>7</sup> The FBI should be asked specifically about their source for this report.

## 2. CIA ATTENTION TO OSWALD'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

In the summer of 1963, Oswald engaged in various legal political activities in New Orleans on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He distributed literature on the street several times, once being arrested after getting into a scuffle, and participated in a radio debate.

The FBI sent the CIA copies of six reports entitled "Lee Harvey Oswald" or "Funds Transmitted to Residents of Russia," including four after his return to the U.S. in 1962. This seems proper, since as a former resident of Russia he was of interest to the CIA. It may be more significant, in terms of the extent of CIA attention to domestic dissent, that the FBI also sent the CIA a report entitled "Fair Play for Cuba Committee - New Orleans Division." In fact, this report dealt only with Oswald and "A. J. Hidell," later determined to be his alias.<sup>8</sup>

An attempt should be made to understand the dissemination of that report inside the Agency - that is, to see whether it was processed not only as a report on Oswald but as a report on a politically active group. That might lead to a better understanding of the CIA's handling of such information on other groups.

It should be determined if any CIA personnel (employees or informants) were aware of Oswald's activities in New Orleans. The Warren Report says that the CIA "took note of his Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities in New Orleans."<sup>9</sup> There is no footnote for that statement; it may refer only to the presence of the FBI report on the FPCC in Oswald's CIA file, but that should be checked.

*of his  
deposition*

### 3. COMPUTERIZED FILE ENTRIES FOR OSWALD AND OTHERS

In the CIA file, the "CS copy" of the FBI report on the New Orleans FPCC is stamped "Index," and handwritten notations indicate that two of the names mentioned were indexed in a standardized (presumably computerized) form. One was Oswald; the other was Carlos Bringuier, an anti-Castro Cuban citizen living in New Orleans.<sup>10</sup>

Apparently these men were indexed to record their connections with the FPCC and the DRE (Revolutionary Student Directorate, possibly a CIA-supported group) respectively. This is in itself of no particular significance in connection with the assassination, but an explanation may shed some light on the CIA's file-building procedures.

### 4. THE 544 CAMP STREET CONNECTION

The most provocative link between Oswald's activities in New Orleans and the CIA is his use of the address 544 Camp Street on some of his pro-Castro literature. One office in that building had previously been occupied by one of the two principal offices of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, a front organization established by the CIA (reportedly through E. Howard Hunt) in connection with the Bay of Pigs invasion. It is apparently true, as the Warren Report noted,<sup>11</sup> that the CRC had left 544 Camp Street some time earlier, and that Oswald himself never actually rented an office there. However, at the time of the assassination, another office at 544 Camp was occupied by Cuy Banister, a former FBI agent who was still active in intelligence work, especially Cuban activities. The Banister connection was never pursued by the Warren Commission.

The 544 Camp connection was extensively publicized at the time of Jim Garrison's "investigation." Numerous reports surfaced of witnesses who could link Oswald with David Ferrie and others who hung around Banister's office. Unfortunately many of these reports come from sources who must be considered unreliable, and who might have had reasons of their own for exaggerating this link. The most promising source of hard evidence on this matter would be a close study of the pre-assassination FBI and CIA records.

From a document not given to the Warren Commission but released to me under the Freedom of Information Act, it can be firmly established that the FBI knew before the assassination about Oswald's use of 544 Camp Street as an address for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. This fact was not mentioned in the appropriate contemporaneous reports, and was apparently not checked out at the time, even though FBI field offices had been specifically asked to be on the alert for FPCC activities, and the FBI did check out other similar leads (such as the Post Office box on some of Oswald's literature, and the alias A. J. Hidell).

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After the assassination, the FBI hid from the Commission the fact that it had known about Oswald's use of 544 Camp Street earlier, and suppressed the link to Danister by giving his address (531 Lafayette Street) without indicating that it was the same corner building as 544 Camp Street. Even the limited amount of documentary evidence which has not been kept from the Warren Commission and the public strongly suggests that the FBI was keeping hands off Oswald's activities, quite plausibly because the Bureau believed that he was not in fact a pro-Castro activist but was working for Danister or for some official intelligence agency.

##### 5. ALLEGATIONS THAT OSWALD WAS A CIA INFORMANT

The Commission heard, and was concerned about, allegations that Oswald had been a CIA or FBI informant.<sup>12</sup> The Commission's rebuttal rested largely on affidavits provided by CIA Director John McCone and J. Edgar Hoover.<sup>13</sup> However, the members of the Commission had been told in secret session by Allen Dulles that the CIA would generally not admit someone had been an informant or agent, even under oath, except at the specific direction of the President.<sup>14</sup> This fact, which was apparently not passed on to the Commission's working staff, makes the CIA's pro forma denial totally worthless.

An attempt to resolve this matter now should include interrogation of the appropriate lower-level CIA personnel. One should also try to specify and evaluate the specific situations in which Oswald might have been approached by the CIA. One obvious possibility was on his return from Russia. From the existing record, he was not debriefed by the CIA, which in itself seems odd.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike another defector who returned at about the same time, Oswald was not questioned by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.<sup>16</sup> (Oswald was met on his return by a case worker for the Travelers Aid Society, who was also an official of an 'anti-Bolshevik' organization with strong intelligence connections.<sup>17</sup>) The extent of the CIA's routine coverage of people returning from Russia is not known, but it was extensive enough to net a photograph taken by a tourist in Minsk which (after the assassination) was found to show Oswald. The question is, therefore, not just whether the CIA ever contacted Oswald, but if not why not.

In 1962, Oswald prepared (and had typed) a manuscript about his life in Russia which was full of the kind of details which might logically be of interest to the CIA. The Warren Report's brief account avoids the evidence that Oswald did not keep all of the material which was typed for him.<sup>18</sup> Inquiries should be made to see if the CIA got any of it, perhaps under circumstances which would not have led to it being filed under his name.

Considerable publicity has been given to allegations that Oswald was a CIA informant for which there is no substantial direct evidence. It should be noted that it is considerably more likely that he had an informant relationship

with someone else, notably the FBI, but also perhaps military intelligence or some non-official intelligence organization. I have studied in detail how the FBI failed to adequately rebut the claim that Oswald was an informant, and how the Warren Commission responded to Hoover's obvious displeasure at being investigated by failing to press for satisfactory explanations.

For example, the FBI omitted from their original listing of Oswald's address book the name of one of the Bureau's Special Agents; the record strongly suggests that the FBI lied to conceal the fact that the relevant page of that listing was retyped. Also, the FBI submitted affidavits denying that Oswald was an informant from several agents, supposedly all of those who were in a position to recruit him or know of his service. Some of the affidavits were revised before being given to the Commission, allegedly with no material alteration of the substance, but the originals are withheld. Also, no affidavits were provided from the two New Orleans agents who had the most contact with the Oswald case.<sup>19</sup> An examination of the circumstances under which these affidavits were prepared might be productive. Another peculiar FBI explanation which the Commission never challenged was Hoover's statement that the FBI interview of Oswald when he was in custody after the assassination was not only to gather facts or admissions about the shooting, but was also aimed at obtaining "any information he might have been able to furnish of a security nature."<sup>20</sup> This cryptic language suggests that Oswald had been considered a potential source of internal security information. These examples are by no means the only or even the strongest indications that the FBI had something in their relationship with Oswald which they thought necessary to hide from the Warren Commission.

#### B. UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CIA AND THE ASSASSINATION

This section covers a number of questions about the intelligence agencies (primarily the CIA) and the assassination which were not satisfactorily resolved by the Warren Commission. (They are presented here in summary form. Further details and the available documentation, which comes largely from the Commission's records, can be provided by the author.) Whether or not these questions fall within the mandate of the Rockefeller and Church investigations, they do need to be answered. There is no doubt that a new investigation of the Kennedy assassination should explore these issues, among others. The focus here is on problems where a study of the documentary record is likely to be productive, so this memo goes into only a small fraction of the defects in the Commission's case against Lee Harvey Oswald.



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## 1. PHOTOGRAPHS OF POSSIBLE OSWALD IMPOSTOR IN MEXICO CITY

In October 1963 the CIA learned of Oswald's visit to the Russian Embassy in Mexico City. Several photographs were obtained, presumably from a Mexican police surveillance camera at the Embassy, of a still-unidentified Embassy visitor who does not physically resemble Oswald. This man was identified as Oswald in a CIA telegram to the FBI before the assassination. *he was not* The explanation of the mixup in identification, if that is what it was, was not released by the Warren Commission. Some CIA explanation, true or not, is presumably in the withheld documents at the Archives. It may also be that the unidentified man was an associate of Oswald, or an impostor.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. INTERCEPTED CONVERSATIONS BY OR ABOUT OSWALD IN MEXICO

An FBI report on Oswald in Mexico strongly suggests that the CIA intercepted at least two phone calls between the Cuban and Russian Embassies in which Oswald was discussed. During one phone call, Oswald was apparently on the phone himself.<sup>22</sup> The CIA also had detailed knowledge of Oswald's conversation with a guard at the Soviet Embassy, including the fact that he spoke broken Russian; this conversation may also have been bugged.<sup>23</sup> A recording of these calls would be important evidence as to whether an impostor was making some of these contacts on Oswald's behalf. The CIA has declined to tell me whether any such recorded conversations now exist, or to release any relevant records to me. *under the table from W.C.S.*

## 3. DID E. HOWARD HUNT KNOW OF OSWALD'S ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE ASSASSINATION?

It has been reported that E. Howard Hunt was the CIA's acting station chief in Mexico City during August and September 1963, which might overlap with Oswald's visit starting in late September.<sup>24</sup> Hunt has reportedly denied to the Rockefeller Commission that he met Oswald at that time.<sup>25</sup> It should be determined if Hunt had any knowledge of Oswald's activities, whether or not he met him. This requires an examination of contemporaneous CIA records relating to Oswald, and an understanding of the flow of communications within the CIA station. A number of the internal CIA communications were turned over to the Warren Commission (and are still withheld)<sup>26</sup>; however, they may not include all the information needed to determine who in the CIA station had substantial contact with the Oswald case.

## 4. THE HANDLING OF THE STORY OF "D"

An attempt should be made to understand what role CIA personnel might have played in building up, disseminating, and then denigrating a report that Oswald had received money to kill Kennedy from someone at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City.<sup>27</sup> The circumstances suggest that someone with intelligence connections was eager to push the idea that the Cuban government was behind the Kennedy assassination.

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The immediate source of the story was Gilberto Alvarado Ugarte, a Nicaraguan who said he was trying to get to Cuba on a penetration mission for the Nicaraguan Secret Service. After a few days he reportedly retracted his story, saying that he had made it up to get the U.S. to take action against Castro; then he withdrew this retraction. He ultimately took a lie detector test which showed he was lying; he then said that the lie detector must be correct. This kind of retraction suggests that Alvarado had told the story as an agent who later did not know whose orders to follow.

At first this story was treated with considerable respect. The CIA communications (which went to the White House as well as the FBI, the State Department, and the Secret Service) show that the agency was taking the allegation quite seriously. Alvarado was said to be of questionable reliability but not wholly discredited; the CIA described him as a "very serious person who speaks with conviction."<sup>28</sup>

It is known that President Johnson was concerned about a Castro plot when he set up the Warren Commission, and that he did not accept all the conclusions of the Warren Report; it has been reported that he specifically believed that the assassination was a retaliatory act by the Cuban Communists.<sup>29</sup> That is, the apparent effect of the story of "D" - which may have been intended - was to impress upon President Johnson (and thus ultimately on the Warren Commission) the potential threat of an international incident posed by the reports that Castro was behind the assassination, and (by extension) by any alternative to the lone-assassin hypothesis.

The Warren Report concluded that Alvarado was lying about having seen Oswald, but did not explore the possible implications of a planted false story. It is plausible that a major conscious or subconscious motivation for a coverup was a desire to avoid allegations of conspiracy such as this one which were thought to be untrue but which might lead to very serious problems. Some observers have recognized a pattern of anti-Castro allegations arising from intelligence-related sources, including Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis.<sup>30</sup>

##### 5. CORRELATION OF VARIOUS AGENCY FILES AND ACTIONS CONCERNING OSWALD

The files of the FBI, State, and Marines on Oswald before the assassination reflect various peculiar actions which might be explained not only by Oswald being an agent of the agency which was acting oddly, but by a belief that he was working for someone else. Such an evaluation, of course, would probably never be written down; it would be detectable only through resulting agency actions or omissions.

As far as I know, the Warren Commission never did the required kind of

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detailed comparative study of the intelligence agency files. Considerable attention was given to the most striking anomalies in the State Department file, notably the Department's efforts to facilitate Oswald's return from Russia, and the ease with which he got a new passport in late 1963. Even in the case of the State Department, however, the Commission did not get into all the major questions about the evaluation of Oswald. For example, the Commission examined the reasons why the Passport Office did not react to the CIA telegram about Oswald's visit to the Russian Embassy, but failed to explore the reaction of others, primarily the Office of Security, for whom the telegram was more relevant.

The relatively sparse CIA file does not reflect any such strikingly peculiar actions. However, close study of the CIA file by an expert might reveal if they did anything odd in the Oswald case. It is quite possible, for example, that someone in the CIA recognized that his defection and return might have been a mission for (e.g.) military intelligence, and that the Agency therefore kept away from his case, making no attempt to question him about his stay in Russia.

#### 6. POSSIBLE UNUSUAL CIA INTEREST IN DEFECTORS

In 1960, the year after Oswald's move to Russia, the CIA and the State Department exchanged some correspondence relating to defectors in general. The purpose of this study, which included compiling statistics and making lists of Americans who had defected, is not clear. Although this material was given to the Warren Commission, apparently no explanation was asked for or provided.

There have been rumors that Otto Otepka, who worked on this project and with Oswald's file while he was head of the State Department's Office of Security, was suspicious of the way the Oswald case was handled. He should be given the opportunity to present any relevant information he might have.

#### 7. POSSIBLE CIA CONTACT WITH OSWALD THROUGH ALEXIS DAVISON

Oswald's notebook contained the name and address of a Russian living in Atlanta who was identified as the mother of the U.S. Embassy Doctor, Alexis Davison. Davison had routinely examined Oswald's wife when the couple was preparing to return to the U.S. in 1962. Davison gave no persuasive explanation of why he gave his mother's address to the Oswalds, suggesting only an understanding that they could look her up if they happened to be in Atlanta. Davison told the Secret Service he did not remember the Oswalds, but later recalled the contact quite clearly for the FBI and said he did not recall giving his mother's address to any other people who were going back to the U.S.<sup>31</sup>

In December 1962, Davison was charged by the USSR with receiving information from the American spy Oleg Penkovsky. Evidently, in addition to his

official duties as a medical doctor and an Assistant Air Attaché, Davison was engaged in very sensitive intelligence work. It should be determined if he had any contact with Oswald in that capacity, or reported to any intelligence agency about him.

8. REPORT OF DALLAS CIA AGENT FAMILIAR WITH OSWALD

George DeMohrenschildt, a man with many hints of intelligence connections in his own background who helped the Oswald family in Dallas, testified that before doing so he asked one or more of his friends if that would be okay. One person whom he said he may have asked about Oswald was J. Walton Moore, who he thought was an FBI agent. <sup>32</sup> Moore was probably in fact with the CIA; he interviewed DeMohrenschildt at length in 1957 after his trip to Yugoslavia. He did have an office in a government building and was listed as an "employee, U.S. government;" the FBI told DeMohrenschildt that Moore was not with the FBI. <sup>33</sup>

The Warren Commission seems not to have been interested in this or other reports that the government had indicated that Oswald was not someone who had to be avoided. <sup>34</sup> An attempt should be made to identify Moore's employer, determine what he knew about Oswald, and what he may have told DeMohrenschildt or anyone else.

9. ALLEGED PRESENCE OF CIA AGENT AT PARKLAND HOSPITAL

Within an hour of the assassination, a CIA agent presented his credentials to a Secret Service agent at Parkland Hospital and said that he would be "available." It is not clear what he might have been expected to do. A short time later an unknown FBI agent had to be forcibly restrained from entering the emergency room. <sup>35</sup> Apparently the Commission did not investigate either of these occurrences. As far as I know the CIA was not asked what action they may have taken in Dallas or in Washington after Kennedy was shot or after Oswald was arrested.

10. QUESTIONABLE RECORDS OF OSWALD'S SECURITY CLEARANCE

One of the peculiarities in Oswald's military records which is suggestive of an intelligence connection has to do with his security clearance. The personnel file which was given to the Commission by the Marine Corps reflected only that Oswald had been given a Confidential clearance. However, persuasive testimony indicated that Oswald (like the other men in his unit) must have been cleared at least for Secret information. When the Commission staff asked about this discrepancy, the Marine Corps said, in effect, that if Oswald was doing Secret work then he must have had Secret clearance. <sup>36</sup> The Commission apparently did not press for a proper answer or otherwise resolve this problem.

*1 NB: This file is not being used by the Dept*

*? Malone placed contacts re: at dispo through 301 those for anything left by anything they could do.*

