

Classification:

SECRET

1 of 9 pages

(This form is to be used for material extracted
from CIA—controlled documents.)

INTERVIEW OF THOMAS CASASIN
AUGUST 17, 1978
AMERICAN EMBASSY/ PARIS, FRANCE

By Surell Brady

Casasin stated that he retired from the Central Intelligence Agency in 1973. At the time of the assassination of President Kennedy in November, 1963 he was stationed in Paris; he was working in the area of Soviet operations, but had no official cover. He arrived in Paris in September, 1962.

He stated that in September, 1960 he was assigned ²⁴ defense cover as Branch 6 Chief. He worked for two years in Section 6.

Casasin said that during his assignment in Paris he had not infrequent contact with the CIA station in Paris. He estimated that the contact occurred every two and a half weeks. The contact was made on the outside by telephoning a person with official cover. He said he never made written contact with the station.

Casasin explained that the function of Section 6 was operations in support of the Soviet Russia Division of the CIA. He said the work consisted of amassing information in support of the SR Division; he characterized that work as classical espionage work against the USSR. He said it involved penetration for the purpose of espionage and included cartography, demography, sociology, and experts in the fields of science and political science. He stated that the section was in a "down" phase when he entered and that it consisted of only 20-25 persons.

Casasin worked in Japan from February 1955 to June 1960. He served as Chief of the Soviet Base of the North Asia Command. He said his unit was attached to the Far Eastern Command of the Armed Forces. He explained that his unit was one of four bases: Soviet, Japan, North Korea and Red China. Each of those geographical areas was a target. The Soviet base in which he worked was therefore targeted against the Soviet Union. He was assigned head of that base in 1955.

He said the operations out of the Soviet base included espionage. The covert operations consisted of psychological warfare and radio transmission to internal Soviet audiences. He said the espionage also included spying against Soviet naval and industrial targets in Soviet ports, using mainly Japanese operatives who had access to the ports.

Casasin said that his base had extremely limited work with the

Classification:

SECRET

RETURN TO CIA
Background Use Only
Do Not Reproduce

2000367

Classified by derivation:

10143-10227

Vmc

Classification: SECRET

(This form is to be used for material extracted
from CIA—controlled documents.)

military. He said it consisted primarily of briefing the military on items of mutual interest. He said the CIA had tried to work with clandestine units of the military, including the Army (he said the Navy had no clandestine units), but it was the opinion of the CIA that the military had too low a degree of professionalism for the successful operation of clandestine projects. Casasin stated that during this time the military said it was actually running operations, but it was never confirmed by the CIA and they found no evidence of such military operations.

Casasin identified two military intelligence personnel in the area when he was stationed in Japan: Captain Perez, OSI, and John B. Stanley, Army head.

Casasin said, however, that the Navy did provide some operational support for his base. It consisted of providing cover for persons running operations against the Soviets.

Casasin said he cannot recall any specific information that the military was using American military personnel in any of its operations. He said, however, that there ^{was} occasional rumors that an American serviceman was trafficking with suspected foreign subversives. He said the individual intelligence agencies would have handled any such cases. He stated that he never heard any concrete information of American contact with the Soviets.

Casasin could not recall the name of the Chief of the North Asia Command in 1955; he believed the man was a retired vice admiral and that his last name began with the letter "O." Harry Little succeeded that person in 1957.

Casasin said that most of his communications during that time from Japan went back to headquarters. He explained that the North Asia Command at that time was tied up with the situation of Korea and Japan.

Casasin said that he does not know who had the oversight responsibility or authority for the U-2 program. He cited that as an example of how well compartmentalized their work was. He said he never learned who was in charge of the U-2 program out of Japan. He said that he assumed it was some type of paramilitary operation. He said the North Asia base ran no paramilitary operations and that most such smaller units usually did not.

Casasin said he does not recall any discussions concerning the possible use of American defectors to penetrate the Soviets. He said one reason for no interest in such use was probably that the First

Classification: SECRET

2000356

Classified by derivation: _____

YAC

Classification: SECRET

(This form is to be used for material extracted from CIA—controlled documents.)

Chief Directorate of the KGB would suspect any such American from the beginning as being CIA connected. He said the CIA at that point knew a lot about the KGB and its thinking because they had had experience with displaced persons from the communist bloc.

Casasin explained further that American intelligence interests were much more short range than the type of slow, long-range project of working an American defector into some sensitive or intelligence-productive position within the Soviet Union. He said that was simply not the American way of conducting intelligence and that that thinking precluded such programs.

Casasin said lessening of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union from such things as the Spirit of Camp David did allow some shallow penetration. This consisted primarily of using short-term tourists and foreigners on legitimate business within the Soviet Union. But he said these projects had no direct or obvious effects on our intelligence gathering against the Soviet Union.

I referred Casasin to CIA Document 435-173-A, which is a memo dated 25 November 1963 from Thomas B. Casasin to Walter P. Haltigan on Mr. Lee Harvey Oswald. Casasin says he does remember the memo. I asked him to explain the cover memo dated 12 December 1963 by Robert G. Lamprell to Chiefs of SR and WH re: GPFLOR-LEE Harvey Oswald.

3 Casasin explained that Lamprell (whose real name was **William Robert Sinclair**) he died of cancer a few years ago) was one of Casasin's contacts in Paris. He said that Lamprell was the Senior Officer in the Soviet Office in the Paris Station, and served as the second in command. Casasin said that Walter Haltigan (whose real name was **James Flint**) was his normal contact in Paris. He surmised that his memo was sent out by Lamprell because Haltigan might not have been available. He does not know the reason for the delay between the date of his memo, 25 November, and the transmission by Lamprell, 12 December.

Casasin said he recalls that he wrote the memo spontaneously when he heard a news cast about Oswald after the assassination. He recognized Oswald when he heard the news information that Oswald had lived in Minsk in the Soviet Union and had married a foreigner. He remembered those details from State Department information he had seen.

Casasin explained the cryptonym REDWOOD as clandestine operations; the Chief of the SR Division was responsible for that project. He explained that was separate from the REDCAP program, which was operation against Soviets outside of the USSR.

Casasin explained the relationship of the Counterintelligence

Classification: SECRET

20-0367

Classified by derivation: _____

(2/mc)

Classification: SECRET

7 of 9 pages

(This form is to be used for material extracted
from CIA—controlled documents.)

ultimately was of only marginal interest to the agency.

Casasin said it was normal to not make a check for a 201 file on a person like Oswald, meaning that it was not unusual that he did not check for Oswald's 201. He said this was especially not unusual since they had made the decision not to use Oswald. It's possible that a colleague of Casasin's might have checked, but Casasin said he doesn't recall any such check.

Casasin said his subordinates in the Branch 6 were Balaban, a man named Richard, last name possibly [Wink] and Charles Cox who was the liaison with the Technical Supports Division (i.e., concealment devices). He said deputies in the branch were David Chachavadze (in 1960 for three or four months), A.T. Stewart (possibly Averill); Stewart stayed on in the branch and Casasin believe he could be of more help in remembering details about the branch; also, Becky Balaban, who is married to Rudolf Balaban.

Casasin said that the purpose of a 201 is to indicate that a request had been made for provisional operational approval. He said the file would indicate operational interest and would then refer one to the specific office with the interest in the individual. He said he doesn't know what actual criteria for opening 201's. He said also that after initial interest was shown in an individual by the opening of a 201, the number might remain with the individual without the person actually being developed as an asset.

Casasin mentioned that agency people were assigned to the military base at Atsugi.

Casasin referred again to the "Harvey Story" reference in his memo. He stated that "Whatever I meant by Harvey had nothing to do with him (Oswald)."

I showed Casasin the Personality (201) File Request form from Oswald's 201 file. He said he had never seen it before and did not know there actually existed a 201 file on Oswald. Referring to the source of the form, CI/SIG, Casasin said CI stood for Counterintelligence. He said he thought SIG stood for Signal Intelligence, but he was not sure. He said that notation would mean that NSA or the military had picked up Oswald's name in some type of transmission. He asked if Oswald had access to any type of radio transmissions. He said he thought the 201 section of the Registry Office could answer questions about the notations on the form.

Referring to the "AG" notation in the Other Identification

Classification: SECRET

2000375

Classified by derivation: _____

2/20