

Testimony of Steve Osborn

Dallas, Texas -- November 18, 1994 Hearing

MR. MARWELL: Mr. Steve Osborn.

CHAIRMAN TUNHEIM: Good afternoon, Mr. Osborn.

MR. OSBORN: Good afternoon.

I, too, appreciate the opportunity to address the Board today and appreciate the time you are spending going to the public for information. One of the theories of the assassination revolves around the possibility that there may have been some involvement by persons with experience in the U.S. intelligence community.

In my study and research of the assassination I have discovered and investigated supporting information of the presence of an intelligence unit of the U.S. Army having been present and on assignment in Dealey Plaza just before, during and immediately after the assassination. To the best of my knowledge, information on this unit has not been released publicly.

In 1992, as the fury of the public resulted in the proposed legislation which created your Board, I came across an individual who claimed to have been very near Dealey Plaza during the assassination. Now, as a researcher, you can understand that this immediately caught my attention, and I began to question this gentleman about the experience.

Now before I tell you the entire story, I want you to know that I had a difficult time believing his story the more and more I thought about it. Even though I had personal experience with some of the devices and the techniques that this group used, I was still very skeptical, as you may be also. But with further investigation I convinced myself that it technically could have been accomplished, and I think you will be similarly so impressed about the possibility when we are finished.

The gentleman I spoke with proceeded to tell me he was in the Army Station in Fort Hood, in Clean, Texas. On the day of the assassination his group, a communications group, was assigned the task of observing and videotaping the presidential motorcade as it moved through the Plaza. This unit had no similar assignment in any other Texas city during the President's visit, and they were only to tape that portion of the motorcade as it proceeded through Dealey Plaza.

Now if this event actually occurred, if it actually happened, it makes their activity highly suspicious and adds new questions to the assassination, particularly with reference to the possible foreknowledge of the assassination of intelligence personnel.

In my conversations with this gentleman, I asked questions of a technical nature trying to discover how their assignment was accomplished. After discovering that the camera signals were transported by wireless means back to the control studio, which was actually a semi-tractor-trailer, I found myself doubting that this type of equipment was available in 1963.

I knew that ham radio operators have been sending television signals easily for a number of years, and I had also participated in that hobby. I also knew that videotaping was still in its infant years in 1963. I started to research available equipment to see if this story had any possibility of being true.

I have another handout that I would like to give you. Now that we know that equipment existed in 1963, and I can tell you a little bit about the equipment, if you would like, in the question and answer, I can relate his entire story, the following information was obtained over approximately three separate conversations with this individual. I had extracted a verbal consent to get his story on videotape, like any good researcher would, but

when the time came for doing so, his attitude on the matter had completely reversed and I am only left today with the recollection, you know, the notes that I had taken from the conversation and the subsequent information by my independent investigation.

This military communications group had several cameras stationed around the Plaza. The signals from the cameras were sent back to a semi-tractor-trailer acting as a mobile studio parked a short distance from the Plaza. Each camera had a preview monitor and videotape machine associated with it inside the trailer recording the view of each camera. There was no sound recorded in this assignment.

Each videotape position had a single person responsible for its proper operation. Each position these men occupied was shielded from the others so that they could only see the preview for their individual camera. Each man saw the assassination occur from a different perspective of their monitors.

About 15 minutes after the assassination, a group of men appeared who identified themselves as FBI agents. These agents seized all the equipment used to videotape the motorcade. Each man was put on a bus which had been summoned to the scene and they were all driven back to their base. Upon their arrival, they were simply told to forget it.

Finding that there was equipment available in 1963 that would do this made it easier for me to accept the story I have just related to you. Several things have made me believe that this group was an intelligence unit.

First, the gentleman would not give me the name of his unit.

Secondly, this individual advised me that his 201 file was inaccessible.

Thirdly, he offered his opinion as pertaining to the reason his group was sent there, which would probably have been in line with the responsibility of an intelligence unit.

Fourth, having reflected on his story and what I have what I have additionally discovered, I am impressed that he realizes that he probably said more things to me than he should have revealed. At one point, he mentioned to me that he was allowed by a letter from the military to discuss some things in relation to his duties on the day of the assassination, but I believe he probably went further than he was allowed.

All these things collectively make me believe that this unit in Dealey Plaza was an intelligence unit. Still, one important step in my investigation was to find some additional evidence that the event occurred. You should know that there is some possible photographic evidence of this communication group being in Dealey Plaza that day, and I would be happy to provide you with further information on that if time allows at the end of my presentation.

Some requested things I would like to see the Board do, obviously what was recorded on this videotapes would be of invaluable aid to a serious study of the assassination, as well as cast more suspicion on the intelligence community. An attempt should be made by the Board to locate the tapes and request that another government agency attempt to get the exact electrical format determined and a video machine constructed to bring their images to view. Duplication to modern day formats would then make the tapes available publicly.

So far as locating the videotapes are concerned, the Dallas Field Office of the FBI and the Bureau Headquarters may have information or be in possession of the tapes. If there remains an estate of the late J. Edgar Hoover, they may have some information or be in possession of the tapes themselves.

If the men who seized the tapes were not real FBI agents, then CIA, military intelligence and other splinter groups of the intelligence community should be checked. Also, I would inquire of Mr. E. Howard Hunt, if he is still alive, as to his knowledge of the tapes and their subsequent disposition. There exists a possibility that he may even have them in his possession.

Regarding locations where you might find documents supporting this activity, I would suggest beginning with the records at Fort Hood. I would not be familiar with other depositories of documents, and you will probably have to use some of your existing source to hopefully lead you in the correct directions.

There seems to be a problem of gag orders that I would like to address also, and the fact that this individual I had interviewed had received notification that he did not have to continue to keep certain things confidential is further indication that there continue to be individuals who continue are under an obligation of confidentiality.

I believe this brings up an interesting problem for the Board. There appear to have been several instances of this happening to individuals required by military order or other Executive Branch order not to discuss any details of what they know of the assassination or its subsequent investigations, perhaps even the Board members itself have been required to sign promises of confidentiality.

Since these individuals do not have the permission of disclosure, many have not written of their experiences or granted interviews to members of the media or the research community to record their recollection. This will give history an incomplete record of this tragic event as well as making this information unavailable to the Board for review and release.

Therefore, I believe and propose that the Board consider asking the President of the United States as Commander and Chief to rescind any and all standing orders issued from any Department or part of the U.S. Government requiring the confidentiality of the information retained by these individuals, whether that knowledge is in written or memory form. If our government is really serious about full disclosure of all facts surrounding the assassination, he will rescind these orders, prevent them from being renewed and allow a complete compilation of personal records and recollections. This will allow the Review Board to further fulfill and properly perform its congressionally mandated task.

Additionally, as distasteful and wild as the thought is that the American intelligence community could be involved in such an event, I hope the Board will keep an open mind as you sift through the records. Your work may be the last official attempt to bring to the light of day this dark deed, so it is vital for you to question everything you find.

Remember, if any intelligence personnel were involved, it is their profession and they are very adept at covering up any evidence of their involvement in any activity. I mean, would we as citizens expect anything else of them? In any operation that U.S. intelligence personnel are involved in, we the citizens would expect them to be able to complete their missions with expert precision. We would expect that they would be able to cover up their involvement as an agency and our involvement as a nation if the nature of the task so dictated. We would expect them to have thought of every possible snag in an operation and work to make their mission completely successful.

I have spoken with individuals involved in intelligence work or who have known persons who were, and they have indicated that the intelligence community could basically do anything they wanted, and we have had some recent indications of that, of this, in the form of millions of dollars spent on building projects unknown to Congress.

Be this right or wrong, we as citizens should have a great amount of respect for and suspicion of the power that these individuals and agencies wield in our world. Please keep this in mind as you ponder the information brought to your attention in whatever form it is presented.

Finally, I would like to make a comment in relation to the Board's mandate. One of the problems that certain individuals in our government have had with the idea of releasing all the assassination records is that to do so may compromise methods employed by the various intelligence agencies in their covert activities. At first glance, we may take this to mean that it may make it difficult for them to use these techniques in the future if they are made known to the general public, but I would encourage the Board to consider that it may be that many of these covert methods were used to carry out the assassination of President Kennedy, whether by Americans or some other government.

I have found considerable circumstantial evidence of more than a few intelligence techniques used in the assassination that may not be generally known. But if this assassination was accomplished by Americans from the intelligence community, they have not only betrayed the citizenry of this country by taking from them their President, but they have betrayed their agencies and the U.S. public by making it necessary to uncover and publicly expose their methods in order to bring satisfaction to the American people in this matter. This betrayal of their agencies alone makes them no better than Mr. Ames of recent history.

I again thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN TUNHEIM: Thank you very much.

Questions?

Go ahead, Dr. Joyce.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Osborn, in your testimony you indicated that information you had gathered from a subsequent independent investigation helped you in forming your conclusion that there was an intelligence unit in Dealey Plaza. Is there any documentary information that you have been able to acquire as part of your subsequent investigation?

MR. OSBORN: I have not made any attempts at that because I believe the story so thoroughly. I felt that if I were to make any attempts to confirm any of this or search for the tapes that those things might be destroyed, because these tapes -- if you would like to discuss the photographic evidence, there is one that would probably show a shooter behind the stockade fence, so I did not want these materials because of something that I did to end up disappearing. However, your mandate and your sources are much better than anything that I could ever do.

DR. HALL: Mr. Chairman, with that in mind, I would like to pose to you a set of questions, if I may, and you can cut me off if I get too long-winded here, as I am sure you will. Who are you?

MR. OSBORN: I am a citizen of the United States. I have not had any type of military experience, so I probably approach this a little bit differently as a citizen that would like to know what my government has been up to or persons within my government have been up to, why I can't know, why it has been hushed up so much.

I have been researching for approximately the last 15 years, not quite, and have mostly focused my investigation on identifying the man who fired the fatal head shot. These other things have just come about because of various digging and this is one of the things that I hope to use to be able to further identify that individual.

DR. HALL: I am wondering, Mr. Chairman, for the record, we could ask Mr. Osborn to provide us with a biographical statement, if that would be acceptable to you.

Can you provide us with the name of the individual with whom you spoke?

MR. OSBORN: Because I feel that he may have violated military orders, I believe that he thought that he had originally been saying things he could, and then the way that he froze up -- in fact, I have had several individuals that have done that, I feel that he may be guilty of some sort of violation. If the President were to rescind all those orders, I would be happy to provide his name. At this point, because of the way that he did not really want to be involved any more in the discussions, I feel incumbent upon myself for his personal privacy not to reveal that.

DR. HALL: Did he ever provide to you any written information or did you take any notes arising out of your conversations with this individual?

MR. OSBORN: The only thing that I really did was, from the conversations that we had, I prepared a list of questions, because I do have a technical background, I have been in electronics since I was 14, ham radio, and

television, and most recently personal communications, and so I was very interested in the technical aspects of this because I doubted in my senses that this could be done in 1963.

If you would look at the cameras, this is a fully transistorized camera. It comes with a backpack transmitter so that you don't have to have a cable going back to a videotape recorder, and this device was available in 1962 by a company that regularly supplied the military with all kinds of camera equipment and, as I also indicated, there is some photographic evidence that exists that may possibly show one of these individuals. If you would like a summation of that, I am prepared to do that.

DR. HALL: If you will document it, that would be helpful.

You also indicate on page 5 that he had mentioned to you that he was allowed by a letter from the military to discuss some things in relation to his duties on the day of the assassination. Now it would obviously be in the interest of the Board, since you purport that a connection exists between this individual, the military establishment, and the assassination, to be able to know the name of that individual so that it would be possible to try to secure whatever copy of a letter may have existed that would have been written to him by the military.

MR. OSBORN: I will -- what I will do, sir, is, I will probably seek some counsel on that to ensure that I, myself, do not get into a situation here that may make me liable for something, and I will be glad to consider that for you.

I was going to, let me go on record saying, I was going to ask that individual for that document in the videotaped session, but because he cut everything off, I was not able to actually view that document. So I had to just go from my recollection as I made my notes as to what the individual had.

DR. HALL: One final question for you, if I may, Mr. Osborn, would your view be that this Commission or this Board, rather, excuse me, should undertake to disclose the names, identities of both living as well as deceased informants, agents, and intelligence operatives of the United States Government?

MR. OSBORN: That certainly is a gray area, and the problem with dealing -- if we are dealing with the intelligence community here in this time, they certainly have at their disposal, shall we say, executive privilege, and the rules are a little bit different when dealing with these type of people because they can claim national security.

I think national security a lot of times can mean more than one thing. It can mean security of our nation from its people being held in arms over something that the government or people within the government have done, so I think they really use the term national security quite widely, and I would fully expect that if there were individuals from the intelligence community involved that they would do everything in their power, like I had mentioned before, they are very adept at covering up. So that is a gray area because we don't know if these persons were really involved, and they may be saying that these are operatives that we can't afford to let their names go. So we have to -- it is going to have to be analyzed.

I used to think that it would be nice to have been a member of this Board, after hearing what is going on today, I think I am kind of glad it is you.

DR. HALL: Would it be fair to say that any effort to pursue the line of inquiry that you have set out would turn directly on an evidentiary and documentary basis on being able to know the name of the individual, and inasmuch as you have indicated that that person is known to you by name, there is some responsibility here, I would think, to be able to assist the Board in this matter in a significant way.

DR. GRAFF: I would like to ask this question with respect to the letter that this young man received saying what he could say about his activities. Was this a cover that he was being given, was this a story that was being laid upon him so that he would have an answer when people asked what are you doing?

MR. OSBORN: I don't believe so. I believe this had been received by him a number of years later.

DR. GRAFF: I see, I misunderstood that.

MR. OSBORN: Yes, this was a number of years later that these things were no longer -- that certain things, and I never got into the exact details. I just assumed that the things that he was telling me were things that I could know. So I am sorry, I am not clear exactly what that letter said, or if it even still exists.

DR. GRAFF: I see.

CHAIRMAN TUNHEIM: Anything further?

[No response.]

CHAIRMAN TUNHEIM: Thank you, Mr. Osborn.

The public hearing will stand in recess until promptly the hour of 2:00 p.m., and we will return and reconvene at that time.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:45 p.m., the hearing was recessed, to reconvene at 2:00 p.m., this same day.]

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