

Assassination Records Review Board Final Determination Notification

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Status of Document: Open in Full

After consultation with appropriate Federal agencies, the Review Board determined that the attached record from the House Select Committee on Assassinations may now be opened in full -- as referenced in the Federal Register notice for the Board's 12/13/95 meeting.

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

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HEARINGS

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Before The

John F. Kennedy Subcommittee

of the

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY

Washington, D.C.

July 27, 1978

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ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY

Thursday, July 27, 1978

U. S. House of Representatives,
John F. Kennedy Subcommittee of
Select Committee On Assassinations,
Washington, D. C.

Deposition of:

JAMES C. MICHAEL

called for examination by staff for the subcommittee, pursuant to notice, in the offices of House Annex II, Room 3370, Second and D. Streets, Southwest, Washington, D. C. beginning at 12:00 noon, before Albert Joseph LaFrance, a Notary Public in and for the District of Columbia, when were presnt on behalf of the respective parties:

For the Subcommittee:

KENNETH KLEIN, ESQ., Staff Counsel

For the Deponent:

(There was no representation by counsel)

TESTIMONY OF JAMES C. MICHAEL

1 Mr. Klein. Sir, could you state your name for the record,
2
3 please?

4 Mr. Michael. James C. Michael.

5 Mr. Klein. Is that name a registered alias?

6 Mr. Michael. Yes sir, it is.

7 Mr. Klein. The time is 12:02, the date is July 27, 1978.
8 My name is Kenneth Klein. As you can see, our stenographer is
9 present, and he is taking down everything that is being said.
10 We are presently in the office of the House Select Committee on
11 Assassinations.

12 Mr. Michael, is this statement being voluntarily given by
13 you?

14 Mr. Michael. Yes, it is.

15 Mr. Klein. Is it true that you are not here under subpoena?

16 Mr. Michael. That is correct.

17 Mr. Klein. Are you aware that you have the right to
18 counsel present should you desire?

19 Mr. Michael. I am.

20 Mr. Klein. Have you been given a copy of our Committee
21 Rules and the House Resolution 222, 433 and 760?

22 Mr. Michael. Yes, I have.

23 Mr. Klein. Have you had an opportunity to read the rules
24 and resolutions?

25 Mr. Michael. Yes, I have.

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Mr. Klein. Do you understand them all?

4 Mr. Michael. I believe so.

3 Mr. Klein. The record of this deposition is going to be
4 transcribed by the reporter. When it is transcribed, you will
5 be sent the original and asked to sign and verify it.

6 Mr. Klein. Are you an employe of the Central Intelligence
7 Agency?

8 Mr. Michael. Yes, I am

9 Mr. Klein. How long have you been employed there?

10 Mr. Michael. Since January 1956.

11 Mr. Klein. I would like to direct your attention to July
12 of 1964. At that time you were employed by the Central
13 Intelligence Agency?

14 Mr. Michael. Yes, I was.

15 Mr. Klein. At that time di you have occasion to speak to
16 Yuri Nosenko?

17 Mr. Michael. Yes, I did.

18 Mr. Klein. What was the nature of the conversations that
19 you had with Mr. Nosenko?

20 Mr. Michael. I was one of the officers who was assigned
21 to debrief Mr. Nosenko on his career in the KGB.

22 Mr. Klein. How many officers were assigned to the debrief-
23 ing?

24 Mr. Michael. At that time it was mostly two of us.

25 Mr. Klein. When did you first begin the debriefing of

Mr. Nosenko?

2 Mr. Michael. I don't know the exact date. That it was
3 in April or May of 1964.

4 Mr. Klein. At the time you began debriefing him was he
5 already in what we would call solitary confinement or hostile
6 interrogations?

7 Mr. Michael. At that time I would say that he was in
8 confinement. The nature of the talks with him at that time was
9 more debriefings than interrogation. Certainly there was
10 interrogation involved in the debriefing but it was not a
11 hostile interrogation.

12 Mr. Klein. What division were you in at the time you began
13 speaking to Mr. Nosenko? What division of the CIA, that is?

14 Mr. Michael. I was in what was then called the Soviet-
15 Russian Division.

16 Mr. Klein. Who was the Chief of that Division?

17 Mr. Michael. The Chief of the Division at that time was
18 Mr. David E. Murphy.

19 Mr. Klein. How long had you been in that Division at
20 that time?

21 Mr. Michael. I had been in that division in headquarters
22 for slightly over one year.

23 Mr. Klein. Prior to your interviews with Mr. Nosenko had
24 you debriefed any other KGB defectors?

25 Mr. Michael. I do not believe that I had debriefed any

KGB defectors prior to that time.

3 Mr. Klein. Prior to the interview with Nosenko had you
4 when involved in any investigations of any KGB defectors?
5 Investigations into their bona fides?

6 Mr. Michael. I don't recall that I was involved in any
7 investigation of KGB defectors. I had been involved in the
8 investigation of one Polish intelligence officer defector.

9 Mr. Klein. At the time that you began debriefing Mr.
10 Nosenko would it be fair to consider you at that time an expert
11 on the KGB?

12 Mr. Michael. No, I don't think so.

13 Mr. Klein. At that time when you began debriefing Mr.
14 Nosenko had you read files or done any research in order to
15 increase your knowledge about Lee Harvey Oswald?

16 Mr. Michael. I cannot specifically recall having read
17 any files pertaining to Lee Harvey Oswald. Certainly I had
18 read and heard a lot about him in the newspapers, television,
19 and radio. I may have had the opportunity to read some previous
20 debriefings of Nosenko concerning Oswald but I am not sure of
21 that.

22 Mr. Klein. Did you at any time read FBI interview with
23 Nosenko pertaining to Oswald prior to your interviews with
24 Nosenko?

25 Mr. Michael. I am not sure. I may have.

Mr. Klein. I believe you said that your first meeting

with Nosenko occurred in April or May 1964?

Mr. Michael. That would be about right.

Mr. Klein. Where did you meet him for the first time?

Mr. Michael. In the house in which he was being kept at the time.

Mr. Klein. In what general geographical area was that?

Mr. Michael. It was in the general Washington, D. C. area, suburban Washington.

Mr. Klein. Did you continue to meet him at that address?

Mr. Michael. Yes.

Mr. Klein. How long a period did you spend debriefing Nosenko?

Mr. Michael. I am not sure exactly. I think that period continued until about the end of 1964 or possibly early 1965.

Mr. Klein. During that period beginning April or May 1964 and end of 1964, the beginning of 1965, approximately how many times a week did you meet with Nosenko?

Mr. Michael. When I was working with him regularly I would meet him two or three times a week. There may have been periods during that time that I did not see him for some weeks at a stretch but I can't recall.

Mr. Klein. When you would meet with him during that period approximately how long would each individual session last?

Mr. Michael. I would estimate it probably averaged three hours.

Mr. Klein. Would anybody else be present?

Mr. Michael. There was not normally anyone present in the
3 room with us.

Mr. Klein. Were all of these sessions tape recorded?

Mr. Michael. To the best of my knowledge they were all
5 tape recorded.
6

Mr. Klein. Was Nosenko aware of the fact they were tape
7 recorded?
8

Mr. Michael. I don't recall ever telling him specifically
9 that the sessions were being recorded but I think it was probably
10 evident to him from some of the detailed repetitions of things
11 that he said earlier that they probably had been recorded.
12

Mr. Klein. Was his physical appearance, his physical
13 condition, constant during the period that you were debriefing
14 him?
15

Mr. Michael. Yes, I would say his physical appearance
16 was quite consistent at all times.
17

Mr. Klein. Was his mental condition, to the best of your
18 knowledge, constant during the period you debriefed him?
19

Mr. Michael. It seem to me to be so. I had no reason to
20 think there was anything particularly unusual at any time.
21

Mr. Klein. Concerning the physical appearance, at any
22 time did he appear to have been beaten when you were debriefing
23 him or during that period?
24

Mr. Michael. No, I never saw him at any time that he
25 appeared to have been beaten.

Mr. Klein. Did he ever complain to you or state to you that he had been physically abused in any manner?

3 Mr. Michael. To the best of my recollection, no.

4 Mr. Klein. Did he always appear to understand what you
5 would say to him during your sessions with him?

6 Mr. Michael. Essentially he understood quite well. If he
7 did not understand he would indicate that he had not under-
8 stood.

9 Mr. Klein. Did he speak coherently during those sessions?

10 Mr. Michael. Yes, very much so.

11 Mr. Klein. Would it be fair to describe him as coopera-
12 tive during those sessions.

13 Mr. Michael. Yes, it would.

14 Mr. Klein. Did he ever appear to be drugged during any of
15 the sessions you had with him?

16 Mr. Michael. No, he did not.

17 Mr. Klein. Did he ever complain of being drugged?

18 Mr. Michael. I don't believe he ever complained to me
19 about ever having been drugged.

20 Mr. Klein. Do you have any knowledge of his complaining
21 to anybody else about being drugged?

22 Mr. Michael. Well, I have heard recent comments.

23 Mr. Klein. I mean at the time did anything occur which
24 lead you to believe that he was telling the officials at that
25 point that he was being drugged, back in 1964?

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1 Mr. Michael. My recollection is that he had explained or
 2 stated that he thought he was being drugged in some fashion
 3 on some occasions but I can't recall that this ever happened
 4 as early as the period around July 1964 when I was talking to
 5 him about Oswald. It may have been sometime later. But as I
 6 say, I have no recollection that he ever raised this directly
 7 to me.

8 Mr. Klein. To your knowledge, he never raised it with
 9 anybody until after the questioning relating to Oswald in July
 10 1964?

11 Mr. Michael. I could not say that precisely because I
 12 do not recall it precisely.

13 Mr. Klein. To your knowledge, was he drugged at any time
 14 while you were speaking to him?

15 Mr. Michael. No, he was not. Not to my knowledge.

16 Mr. Klein. Did he ever exhibit any what we might call
 17 symptoms of being drugged when you were debriefing him?

18 Mr. Michael. No, he never exhibited any symptoms that I
 19 would relate to his having been drugged.

20 Mr. Klein. Do you believe that he was hostile to you while
 21 you were debriefing him?

22 Mr. Michael. To me personally?

23 Mr. Klein. Yes.

24 Mr. Michael. No, I don't think he was hostile to me.

25 Mr. Klein. Did he always answer questions that you asked

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2 him to the best of his ability, so far as you could tell?

3 Mr. Michael. I don't recall that he ever refused to answer
4 any question. He would certainly, on some occasions, indicate
5 that he had no knowledge of the matter about which I was
6 questioning him, but where he claimed to have knowledge it
7 was his normal practice to answer readily and rather completely.

8 Mr. Klein. I show you this document from CIA folder which
9 states "H.S.C.A. Requests-25 July 1978" and in parentheses
10 it has a name which I won't say on the record. Then it says
11 "Deposition-27/7/78." Showing you this report which says
12 "Memorandum for the record. Subject: Followup Report on
13 the Oswald Case. Source: AE Donor, Date of Interview 3 July
14 1964."

15 It says on the bottom page 46 of 120. Looking at pages 46
16 through 68, looking at the typed questions and answers do you
17 recall being present at this particular debriefing session on
18 3 July 1964?

19 Mr. Michael. Yes. I can't recall that it took place on
20 3 July but the material in these typewritten pages is very
21 familiar to me and I believe that it is an interview that I
22 conducted with Nosenko.

23 Mr. Klein. In the report where there are questions
24 preceded by a "Q" would the "Q" be for questioner and would
25 that be you?

Mr. Michael. Yes, the Q is for the question and I was the

questioner.

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Mr. Klein. Where it says "A" for the answer would the person giving those answers be Yuri Nosenko?

Mr. Michael. Yes, exactly.

Mr. Klein. Calling your attention to the page 63, there on the page on the top of the page is 18 since the page is part of a newly created file -- there is a name at the end of the report. Is that your true name?

Mr. Michael. Yes, it is.

Mr. Klein. Under it it says "S. R./CIA/KGB. What does that stand for?

Mr. Michael. It stands for Sovie Russian Division, Counter Intelligence Group, KGB Branch.

Mr. Klein. That is what branch and group you were in at that time?

Mr. Michael. The unit to which I was assigned at that time.

Mr. Klein. Calling your attention to a second document, I should state that I am not having these documents marked at this time because they are not my documents, they are CIA documents, that is why I am not doing that.

The document states: "Memornadum for the record, subject followup report on the Oswald case, source A. E. Donor, date of interview 27 July 1964" and with the new numbering system, that is the numbering system of the binder which this report is

1 a part of, it begins on page 22 and goes through page 39.

2 Looking at pages 22 through 39 of the report that I have just
3 described do you recognize that report?

4 Mr. Michael. Yes, I do. I believe that this is another
5 report of an interview conducted by me with Nosenko.

6 Mr. Klein. Does this report contain questions and answers
7 with you being the questioner and Nosenko being the person
8 answering the questions?

9 Mr. Michael. Yes, that is correct.

10 Mr. Klein. Looking at page 39 of this report there is a
11 name at the end of the report. Is that your name?

12 Mr. Michael. Yes, that is my name. I would point out
13 in this case as in the case of the previous document we looked
14 at that it is my name typewritten, it is not my signature.

15 Mr. Klein. Again, it says SR/CI/KGB.

16 Mr. Michael. That is the same unit.

17 Mr. Klein. Do you at any time recall the fact that you
18 questioned Mr. Nosenko about Lee Harvey Hoswald in 1964?

19 Mr. Michael. Yes, I do.

20 Mr. Klein. You have seen tow question and answer tran-
21 scriptions here today. One dated July 3rd and one dated July 27.
22 To the best of your recollection, did you have any other
23 question and answer sessions with Mr. Nosenko on the subject of
24 Oswald?

25 Mr. Michael. To the best of my recollection the report

1 that we looked at of the interview of 3 July 1964 was the first
2 substantive discussion or debriefing that I had with Nosenko
3 concerning Oswald. I recall the instance of the interview of
4 27 July 1964 which was the subject of the second report we
5 reviewed. I could not say with certainty that I did not
6 discuss Oswald with Nosenko on other occasions. I do not,
7 however, recall specifically any other detailed or in-depth
8 interviews with him on that topic.

9 Mr. Klein. Would it be fair to say that to the best of
10 your recollection July 1964, that period of time was the only
11 time that you discussed Oswald with Nosenki. say July, August,
12 somewhere in that area?

13 Mr. Michael. That is the only time that I recall this
14 type of detailed discussion with him. It is possible that on
15 future occasions when we were together that I could have been
16 given followup questions, specific questions, to ask him or
17 that mention of Oswald may have come into discussion of some
18 other topic.

19 Mr. Klein. But you have no recollection of any other long
20 debriefing sessions about Oswald?

21 Mr. Michael. No, I do not.

22 Mr. Klein. Did you write and devise the questions that
23 you asked Nosenko about Oswald?

24 Mr. Michael. No, I certainly did not prepare all of the
25 questions that I asked Nosenko about Oswald. My recollection

1 is that I was given a debriefing guide or outline containing a
2 series of questions about Oswald. The procedure then would
3 have been for me to work from that outline, asking the questions
4 that were included in the outline and adding other questions
5 that would occur to me as being pertinent while the interview
6 was being conducted.

7 The purpose here of course was to try to ensure that each
8 area or each question was covered as thoroughly as I could
9 cover it.

10 Mr. Klein. Once a session was completed, did you have any
11 control over whether you would be devoting time at another
12 session to, say, the questioning of Oswald the second time or
13 the third time?

14 Mr. Michael. No, I would not have any any real control
15 over this. After each of my debriefing sessions with him, I
16 would return to my office and spend part or all of the follow-
17 ing day typing up a report based on the previous day's debrief-
18 ing. This report would be submitted to my superiors and they
19 would determine whether or not further followup debriefing was
20 required on any given topic.

21 Mr. Klein. To your knowledge, which of your superiors
22 were directly in charge of the debriefing of Nosenko?

23 Mr. Michael. From my position it certainly appeared that
24 the individual primarily in charge of organizing and conducting
25 the debriefing of Nosenko was Mr. Bagley.

Mr. Klein. Did he ever specifically, to your knowledge, discuss the Oswald questions and answers with you?

3 Mr. Michael. I cannot specifically recall discussing the
4 questions and answers concerning Oswald with Mr. Bagley. But
5 on the other hand, it certainly would have been a very likely
6 thing to have happened.

7 Mr. Klein. To your knowledge, was there any followup
8 investigation done based on what Nosenko told you about Oswald?

9 Mr. Michael. I am not aware of any particular followup
10 investigations that were conducted on the basis of my debriefing
11 of Nosenko on Oswald.

12 Mr. Klein. You stated that Nosenko's physical and mental
13 condition appeared constant throughout your debriefings. To
14 the best of your recollection would the description that you
15 have given earlier in the statement about his physical and
16 mental conditions hold true for these two July sessions which
17 dealt with the subject of Lee Harvey Oswald?

18 Mr. Michael. Yes, definitely.

19 Mr. Klein. You do not recall his at any time appearing
20 drugged when he spoke about Oswald?

21 Mr. Michael. No, not at all.

22 Mr. Klein. To the best of your recollection he was
23 cooperative and friendly when he spoke about Oswald?

24 Mr. Michael. He was quite alert and responsive.

25 Mr. Klein. Did Nosenko know that you were from the CIA

When you spoke with him?

Mr. Michael. I am sure he did.

3 Mr. Klein. On your July 27, 1964 report you state in the
4 first paragraph that you had Nosenko, whom you referred to as
5 the source in the report, read paragraph by paragraph the report
6 from the July 3, 1964 interview. Do you recall his doing this?
7 Do you have a recollection at this time of his seeing that report
8 and reading it paragraph by paragraph?

9 Mr. Michael. I can't say that I really have a clear
10 recollection of sitting with him while he read the earlier
11 report paragraph by paragraph. In reading the 27 July 1964
12 report however, in the portion of that report which pertains
13 to his reading the paragraphs and offering comments or correc-
14 tions on certain elements of the earlier report, that portion
15 I do recall as a conversation or discussion that I had with
16 Nosenko. It would certainly appear therefore that he had
17 been reading the earlier report when he made those remarks.

18 Mr. Klein. Is it fair to say that that first paragraph
19 of the 27 July 1964 report indicates that although you might
20 not recollect it at this time, you did in fact give Nosenko
21 a copy of the July 3rd report and he did read it paragraph by
22 paragraph?

23 Mr. Michael. Yes, it certainly does indicate that and I
24 would certainly accept that that is the way it was done. The
25 July 3rd report, to go back to that, as we have here would

1 appear to be a transcript tape report of that 3 July 1964
2 session. I do not recall making a transcript from the tape.
3 Therefore, I would think that this report reflects either a
4 report written by me based only on my detailed handwritten
5 notes and my personal recollection of the interview or it is a
6 transcript prepared by someone else from the tape recording of
7 that meeting.

8 Mr. Klein. After you ceased your debriefing sessions with
9 Nosenko in late 1964 or early 1965, did you ever have occasion
10 to debrief him again?

11 Mr. Michael. No, I never debriefed him after he was moved
12 from the sight here in the suburban Washington area.

13 Mr. Klein. The two reports I have shown you, July 3,
14 1964 and July 27, 1964, to the best of your recollection have
15 you read them before, meaning back in 1964?

16 Mr. Michael. Yes, I am quite certain that I did in those
17 days. Although it is 14 years ago, there are many specific
18 elements in those reports that are quite clear to me as I
19 recall them from that time.

20 Mr. Klein. Do you have any questions at this point that
21 you would want to ask for anything you would like to state?

22 Mr. Michael. No, I do not.

23 Mr. Klein. I have one last question for you. To the
24 best of your recollection and to the best of your knowledge,
25 would you describe what treatment Nosenko received subsequent

to April of 1964 at which time he was confined?

2 Mr. Michael. During that period, Nosenko was confined
3 most of the time, as I recall, to a single room in a house.
4 He did not have freedom to wander the house or the adjoining
5 area. But he was well fed and to the best of my knowledge,
6 was never physically beaten or administered any drugs.

7 Mr. Klein. It is now 1:11 p.m. I would like to thank
8 you very much for giving us this deposition.

9 As I stated earlier, you will receive the original to make
10 corrections and verify its accuracy.

11 (Whereupon, at 1:11 p.m., the deposition was concluded.)
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I have read the foregoing pages
1 through 18, inclusive, which
contain a correct transcript of
the answers made by me to the
questions therein recorded.
Signature is subject to correc-
tions.

Deponent's signature

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

1 I, Alfred Joseph LaFrance, the officer before whom the
2 foregoing deposition was taken, do hereby certify that the
3 witness whose testimony appears in the foregoing deposition
4 was duly sworn by me; that the testimony of said witness was
5 taken by me in stenotype to the best of my ability and there-
6 after reduced to typewriting under my direction, that said
7 deposition is a true record of the testimony given by said
8 witness; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed
9 by any of the parties to the action in which this deposition
10 was taken; and further that I am not a relative or employee of
11 any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor
12 financially or other wise interested in the outcome of the
13 action.
14

15
16 Notary Public in and for
the District of Columbia

17
18 My Commission expires November 14, 1980
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