

SUBJECT: (Optional) CIA/FBI Briefing of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA)

FROM: Benjamin F. Pepper  
 Chief, SE/ORP

EXTENSION NO. 9131

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 DATE 17 May 1978

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE RECEIVED FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment)

NO.	TO	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS
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1.	C/SE	18 MAY 1978		(W)	1. Gabriel (G)
2.					2. Carpenter
3.	SA/DO/O	15/8		(S)	3. file HSCA
4.	MR BRECKINRIDGE				
5.	ADDO				
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7.	DDO				
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9.	OLC (Attn: Mr. Pete Palmer)				
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CLC #78-2076

17 May 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Soviet/East European Division  
 FROM : Benjamin F. Pepper  
 Chief, SE/ORP  
 SUBJECT : CIA/FBI Briefing of the House Select  
 Committee on Assassinations (HSCA)

1. On 16 May 1978 Mr. Ben Pepper, Chief, SE/ORP of CIA, and Messrs. Jim Adams and Jim Nolan of FBI Headquarters briefed HSCA Chairman Representative Louis Stokes, Representative Samuel Divine, the ranking Republican of HSCA, and Robert Blakey, Chief of the Staff of HSCA. Also present was Mr. Drew Clark of FBI Headquarters. This briefing was the third and last of three planned briefings aimed at limiting the proliferation of information which might be damaging to the security of ongoing FBI and CIA operations. (The first two briefings were of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Oversight Committee on Intelligence and have been reported on previously.) It had been agreed by the FBI and CIA, particularly in view of the interest aroused by Epstein's book "The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald" and questions regarding Nosenko's and FEDORA's bona fides, that these briefings were in order. By briefing selected members of the committee and staff, it was hoped that further inquiries into FEDORA and possibly other sensitive sources would be diminished.

2. In the course of our 75 minute briefing session the following points were made by CIA and FBI briefers:

a. Both agencies are firmly committed to the view that Nosenko is a bona fide defector. The point

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was made by Mr. Pepper that while Nosenko was considered bona fide, we did not believe that his access to information concerning Oswald was such that any firm judgment could be made on the basis of his information as to KGB involvement with Oswald. Presenting the most sinister hypothesis, namely, that Oswald had been dispatched as a KGB agent to assassinate Kennedy, Mr. Pepper pointed out that if such a decision had been made, someone the likes of Nosenko, a KGB captain in Moscow, would most likely not have been aware of the plan. Therefore, the question of Nosenko's bona fides was not really germane to the question of Oswald's status vis a vis the KGB. Blakey took issue with this point, stating that he was more interested in an alternative hypothesis, that is that the KGB had had some relationship with Oswald, but did not dispatch him to assassinate President Kennedy; therefore sent Nosenko out to provide evidence that no such relationship had existed. Blakey hypothesized further that this was done because the Soviets were deeply concerned with the possibility of nuclear war resulting from the Kennedy assassination.

b. Whereas Epstein's book highlights the importance of two apparent indications of FEDORA supporting Nosenko's "legend" (Nosenko's rank and the recall telegram) this is, in fact, not necessarily the case. A brief explanation was afforded those being briefed. It was also stressed that the points of concern raised by Epstein in response to reporting on Nosenko were relatively unimportant factors in the judgement relative to Nosenko's bona fides. Mr. Nolan offered to show Mr. Blakey the approximately 25 pages of FEDORA reporting on Nosenko but requested that this paper be viewed by only Mr. Blakey and at FBI Headquarters. Mr. Blakey took the position that this was unacceptable, that he had to have at least six additional members of his staff read this material. Representative Divine, who, by the way, is a former FBI Special Agent, was very supportive of Nolan's position and told Blakey that he thought the Bureau's reporting should only be seen by him, Blakey. Chairman

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Stokes, however, supported Blakey's position. The compromise that evolved was that Blakey will review the material and, if he then still feels that others on his staff should be made privy to this information, the matter will be negotiated further. (My view is that the Bureau will probably end up having to accede to Blakey's demands.)

c. Acknowledgement was also made that there was a difference of opinion between the FBI and CIA in respect to FEDORA's bona fides. It was admitted that FEDORA had been an FBI source who had been turned over to the CIA when he returned to the Soviet Union. Mention was made of the fact that the FBI questions his bona fides and the CIA believes him to be bona fide. We also stressed that the information appearing in Epstein's book and related articles was enough for the KGB to identify FEDORA with ease.

d. The monster plot was outlined with emphasis placed on the fact that the origin of this theory had been speculation of KGB defector Anatoliy Golitsyn. We pointed out that this theorizing, accepted at the time by many in the positions of authority both in the CIA and FBI, had led to conclusions that virtually every Soviet defector and source in-place after Golitsyn had subscribed to the thesis that the Sino-Soviet split was actually a KGB deception operation.

3. For the record it should be noted that Chairman Stokes seemed to be as interested in CIA's treatment of Nosenko while under interrogation as he was in Nosenko's bona fides. He told me that Nosenko had reported to the committee on the conditions he suffered and asked me if I could collaborate Nosenko's claims. I responded that, lacking the specifics of Nosenko's claims, I could not collaborate in any detail, but that I personally would be inclined to believe that Nosenko spoke the truth in this regard.

4. After the meeting was over Blakey took me aside and somewhat conspiratorily said he would like to speak with

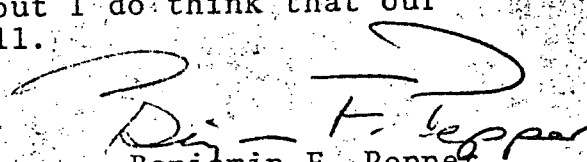
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Don Gregg and me alone concerning Nosenko. Plans were made to get together at CIA Headquarters at 0900 on 19 May.

5. General Comments: I believe that our briefings of the three Congressional committees were useful. If we had not given them, I believe knowledge of FEDORA and perhaps other sources would have proliferated uncontrollably. I am not suggesting that the course of action we pursued will succeed or that proliferation will not take place or that eventually there will not be a leak providing U.S. Government confirmation of FEDORA's agent status (it would be the last nail in his coffin), but I do think that our try was worthwhile. Time will tell.

  
Benjamin F. Pepper

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