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Subject: Newsday Story on FBI Appeal; Sunday, May 19, 1996
(C) 1996 Newsday Inc. All rights reserved.00040513 Clinton ruling requested on JFK reports Newsday (IND) -
Sunday May 19, 1996 By: Michael Dorman. SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT. Michael Dorman, a free-lance writer, covered John F. Kennedy's assassination for Newsday. His books include "The Secret Service Story." Edition: NASSAU AND SUFFOLK Section: NEWS Page: A19 Word Count: 436MEMO: MEMO: PD:TEXT: President Bill Clinton has been asked for the first time to rule on a dispute over the release of documents dealing with the investigation of John F. Kennedy's assassination. The dispute pits the FBI against the U.S. Assassination Records Review Board, the agency responsible for screening assassination documents and releasing those that do not threaten national security. Although the FBI recently turned over more than 16,000 pages of Kennedy assassination documents to the National Archives after screening by the review board, it balked at releasing the full texts of 13 other reports. The bureau contends the documents will reveal secret intelligence sources and methods, so it asked the review board to postpone release of the 13 documents. But the board ruled that "the public interest in the information outweighs the evidence that the FBI offered in support of postponing release of the information." It ordered the documents released. Under the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act, which established the review board, the president is designated as the sole arbiter of such disputes. The FBI thus appealed to Clinton to overturn the board's ruling. Only once before has there been such an appeal, also by the FBI, but it was resolved before it reached Clinton. That controversy centered on five FBI documents describing Lee Harvey Oswald's life in the Soviet Union during a brief period ending in 1961, two years before he was accused of killing Kennedy. The FBI objected to the documents' release on the ground that they contained confidential information obtained from the Swiss government. When the review board agreed to keep secret the name of a Swiss citizen named in the report, the dispute was resolved. The documents at the heart of the current controversy were all prepared by the FBI during the month following the assassination. They include reports on such subjects as Oswald's correspondence with his mother while in the Soviet Union, his activities after leaving there, his finances, and his political and purportedly subversive activities. There are also reports on Oswald's convicted killer, Jack Ruby, dealing with gambling, his arrest record and financial affairs. Expurgated copies of the documents in dispute are already in the National Archives. The controversy concerns whether they should be replaced with the full documents - containing symbols and other data that may compromise FBI sources and methods. In the past, "sources and methods" have sometimes been shown to mean wiretaps and other electronic intelligence devices. Under the law, the president must provide a written justification if he overturns a review board decision. Officials said
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