

MEMORANDUM

March 13, 2017

TO: Laura Denk, Executive Director

FROM: Robert J. Skwirot

SUBJECT: Review Board Staff Check of Duplicate Identification Procedures Employed by the CIA While Processing JFK Assassination Records.

In May of 1997, David Marwell, then Executive Director of the ARRB, entered into an agreement with CIA that permitted the CIA to identify duplicates of records that had already been reviewed by the Review Board and process those records after the Review Board closed, if necessary. Prior to this agreement, the Review Board processed each copy of a document. There were, in some extreme cases, as many as 20 exact duplicates of the same record. The agreement reached in 1997 demands that the CIA review the duplicates according to the most open version of the record. In most cases this would be the copy of the record that the Board reviewed. In records where the CIA inadvertently released information in their 1994-1994 review, that release would be applied to all other copies of the record. This arrangement has permitted the CIA and the Review Board to apply their limited resources to the review of unique records .

I visited the CIA on September 19, 1998 to make a final verification that the duplicate identification procedures that the CIA has applied over the last year and a half have identified true duplicates.

The procedure is as follows. A CIA analyst searches CIA's JFK database by date, keywords, or document number and may find a list of likely matches for a record. The analyst then views all of the electronic data on the possible match and compares it to the information in the record in front of him or her. If a match is found, the record is yellow banded and returned to the files, tagged to indicate its duplicate in the collection.

While at CIA, I did a random physical search of the collection to determine if records identified by the CIA as duplicates were indeed true duplicates of the record acted upon by the Board. Every record I chose matched the record that CIA had identified as its duplicate. Even the more difficult matches were correct. For example, one record of 15 pages was tagged as a duplicate of a 67 page record on which the Board had voted previously. The smaller record was an excerpt of the larger record. It should be noted that the CIA analyst described this sort of duplicate identification,

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indicating that there are checks in place that defend against the possibility that a larger record will be marked as a duplicate of a smaller record that had been acted upon by the Board. Another difficult match found in this search was a document which appears fifteen times in the collection. In one of these copies, the CIA inadvertently released information in 1993. This fact was indicated on copies of the record in the file. Barry Harrelson assured me that all copies of this record will be reconciled with the most open version.

Since actual physical comparisons of the records were not done, the possibility exists that a few records may contain marginalia that does not appear on the copies of records reviewed by the Board.

However, this random survey has not uncovered any problems of this sort. The process appears to be sufficiently well conceived to severely limit the possibility of false duplicates. The CIA has agreed to process all duplicates by September 30, 1999.