

November 22, 1996

## MEMORANDUM

To: Tim Wray  
cc: Jeremy Gunn, Doug Horne  
From: Christopher Barger  
Subj: Prouty interview  
File No: 4.0.2 Prouty

### INTERVIEW SUMMARY

**ARRB Interview with L. Fletcher Prouty**

**September 24, 1996**

**Summary prepared fall 1996 by Christopher Barger**

On September 24, 1996, members of the ARRB staff interviewed L. Fletcher Prouty, an author and retired Air Force colonel, in the ARRB offices. Tim Wray was the lead questioner; also present were Jeremy Gunn, Christopher Barger, and Joan Zimmerman. The interview lasted approximately two hours and was recorded on audio cassettes. Prouty was cordial and cooperative, and the atmosphere was relaxed.

In his various writings, Mr. Prouty has advanced several claims or theories about the assassination of President Kennedy. In many cases he has asserted that his conclusions are based on special, firsthand knowledge that he gained through his own experiences as an Air Force officer assigned to duties in the Pentagon as military liaison for CIA clandestine operations from 1956 to 1964. According to Oliver Stone, Mr. Prouty and his claims are the basis for the anonymous "X" character played by Donald Sutherland in Stone's film JFK.

The purposes of the ARRB interview with Prouty were:

- (1) To determine precisely what firsthand knowledge Mr. Prouty has regarding the assassination;
- (2) To determine the extent to which his various allegations or statements regarding the assassination are based on his own personal knowledge or experience;
- (3) Should he disavow factual knowledge from his own experience, to determine whether he is aware of other factual data that could tend to prove or disprove his allegations;

(4) To ascertain whether Mr. Prouty has in his possession any original documents or other records that might be valuable to the JFK Assassination Records Collection at the National Archives;

(5) To seek Mr. Prouty's advice on where the ARRB might look for additional records relating to the assassination;

(6) To seek Mr. Prouty's advice on other individuals whom the ARRB might contact in order to confirm or deny his statements and theories.

Staff members had high hopes of having new leads to follow upon the completion of the interview. However, as the attached transcript shows, we encountered several difficulties in the course of this interview. In some cases, Prouty's statements to us directly contradicted his previously written work.

[Example: Prouty has written about the 316th INTC Detachment out of Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. He claimed in his book that *"I called a member of that army unit later. I was told that the commander 'had offered the services of his unit for protection duties for the entire trip through Texas,' that he was 'point blank and categorically refused by the Secret Service,' and that there were hot words between the two agencies."* [Prouty, JFK, p. 294]. In his statements to us, Prouty says that he did not make the call, but was called, and by a man who he had never been in contact with before: see pages 23, 27, and several other points during the interview.]

In other cases, Prouty would spontaneously make a potentially explosive statement to us that would gain our attention. But when we would press him on it, it would become clear that he had no personal knowledge to back up these claims, but rather was basing them merely on his own personal beliefs; beliefs that he formed on the basis of having read stories in the New York Times. [See ARRB interview, page 17-18]

Due to the inexact and sometimes contradictory nature of many of his comments and allegations, it is difficult to discern whether ARRB could expect to gain anything by following up on any of Prouty's statements. Most of the obvious follow-up from this interview revolves around attempting to confirm or refute parts of Prouty's stories. This does not seem to be within the jurisdiction of our organization. For our purposes, only the following is recommended:

(1) That we ask the CIA about any files compiled by one Michael Mitchell relating to military support and cover stories; if these records exist, we should request them.

(2) review the files of former CIA General Counsel Larry Houston for any items pertaining to issues of military cover or Cuban operations.

In addition, the following actions might possibly be of interest for the ARRB to undertake. No recommendation is suggested; rather, they are submitted for consideration.

(1) Contact former Congressman Pete Abele of Ohio (if he is still alive) in order to attempt to confirm the Antarctica story.

(2) Look up and try to contact former Navy captain Jake Bowell in order to both confirm/refute the details about Prouty's Pentagon office, and also attempt to glean more information on this general subject area.

### **SUMMARY**

To repeat, Prouty's statements to us are of an inexact and sometimes directly contradictory nature. It is not believed that too much of ARRB time and resources should be expended in pursuing these leads. It should be sufficient that we interviewed Prouty and did our best to obtain leads and information from him. This matter is now considered closed to the satisfaction of this analyst.