

June 9, 1997

Stewart F. Aly  
Associate Deputy General Counsel  
Office of General Counsel  
Department of Defense  
1600 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1600

Mr. Edmund McBride  
Chief, Information Management Division  
Joint Secretariat  
Joint Staff  
The Pentagon, Room 2B917  
Washington, DC 20318-0400

Re: Proposal for a Multi-Agency Declassification Review of Selected Papers of JCS Chairmen Lemnitzer, Taylor and Wheeler, and Selected JCS Central Files under the JFK Act

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Gentlemen:

The Assassination Records Review Board would like to make arrangements with you to declassify approximately 147 records previously flagged by the Joint Staff from both the JCS Central Files, and the papers of JCS Chairmen Lemnitzer, Taylor and Wheeler. The files date principally from the period 1961-64. The records were flagged during searches directed by Mr. Edmund McBride (Chief, Information Management Division, Joint Staff) at the request of the ARRB staff. With one exception, ARRB staff feels that all records flagged by Mr. McBride's working group are relevant to the historical understanding or context of the assassination of President Kennedy. A description of the records, which primarily pertain to U.S. activities related to Cuba, or to Vietnam policy, is attached hereto. We have identified what appear to us to be equities of numerous military entities in these papers, as well as equities of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, the National Security Council, and others.

### *Deadlines*

Due to the volume of the records, and the Review Board's current sunset date of September 30, 1997, it is important that we proceed expeditiously in our review of the records.<sup>1</sup> *We have slated these*

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<sup>1</sup>The Review Board is seeking from Congress a one-year, one-time extension to September 30, 1998. Congressman Dan Burton is sponsoring a bill to extend the life of the Review Board. Should the Review Board receive the proposed extension, we may be able to revisit the schedule proposed below.

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*papers for review by the Board at its August 5-6, 1997 meeting.* The Review Board staff is prepared to assist you in making arrangements for a prompt and efficient review of these selected papers of Joint Chiefs Lemnitzer, Taylor, and Wheeler, and the Joint Staff Central Files.<sup>2</sup>

### *Preliminary Review of Papers of JCS Chairmen and Joint Staff Central Files*

The Review Board staff has conducted an initial review of the records and has tentatively reached the following conclusions: *first*, the records are very similar in subject matter to many other records that already are a part of the JFK Collection; *second*, although the vast majority of the records technically remain classified, there is little remaining sensitivity due to the passage of time and to the release of much of the information in other contexts; and *third*, these papers contain equities of numerous military and non-military agencies, which, under the standard referral process, would be very difficult and time-consuming. Thus, the logistical problem in declassifying the records is not the continued sensitivity of the records, but the number of agencies that will need to review their own equities in the records. For this reason, and for the short time-line on which we are now operating, we believe that there is an urgent need to make acceptable arrangements for the review and referral of records.

### *Proposal*

In order to expedite the process and make it more efficient, we would like to propose an alternate arrangement for declassification of records that we previously have found effective. We suggest the holding of a multi-agency concurrent review of these papers of the three aforementioned JCS Chairmen and the JCS Central Files. We would like to schedule a single session at our offices, on or before July 23, 1997, where all agencies with equities in these JCS/Joint Staff papers be concurrently present for a declassification review. At such a session, agencies would be able to review their own equities in the records, declassify them, and simply hand them across the table to other agencies for their review. It has been our own experience that sessions of this sort greatly simplify the review

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<sup>2</sup>The Joint Staff's Initial Statement of Compliance to the Review Board, dated February 6, 1997, identified in detail the process by which these records were located--namely, which files were searched, and who participated in the searches. Mr. Edmund McBride, Chief of the Joint Staff Information Management Division, indicated in this statement that the Joint Staff was standing by to expeditiously process these records for declassification in collaboration with other agencies when the ARRB was ready. ARRB staff has only recently completed its initial review of these records, which constitute selectively flagged folders within 40 boxes of JCS and Joint Staff records.

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process by giving agencies the opportunity to speak with each other and quickly to resolve questions.

Because these papers will need to be reviewed by the Board at its August 5-6 meeting, we believe that an arrangement such as is proposed above will provide all agencies with a full opportunity to identify their equities in the records and to make determinations regarding the need for continued classification. If the Joint Staff and the Department of Defense are agreeable to such an arrangement, the Review Board will take the responsibility for contacting all non-military agencies with equities in the records while the Joint Staff and DoD make arrangements for all appropriate military entities to be present.

We are, of course, very willing to consider other ideas or suggestions that you might have. However, because the clock is ticking, it is important that we promptly develop a plan that will provide all agencies with equities in these Joint Staff/JCS papers to have an opportunity to review and declassify their equities.

I look forward to discussing this issue with you.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn  
General Counsel

Attachment

cc: Steven D. Tilley, NARA  
J. Barry Harrelson, CIA  
Nina Noring, State  
William Leary, NSC