

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I want to bring to your attention a matter of great concern.

As you know, in passing the President John F. Kennedy Records Collection Act of 1992, Congress expected the Department of State to assist the Assassination Records Review Board in its effort to identify and secure assassination records held by foreign governments.

Although the Board has received assistance in transmitting several cables to relevant posts abroad, there have been at least three incidents where important responses have been significantly delayed:

- 95 MOSCOW 30705, dated September 25, 1995, was received January 23, 1996
- 95 MINSK 2594, dated September 20, 1995, was received January 23, 1996
- CONFIDENTIAL MINSK 980, dated April 25, 1996, was received June 28, 1996

Each of these delayed cables contained important information and requested action, yet they remained undelivered and unanswered for up to four months.

According to statute, the Board will end its operations on September 30, 1997. With the disgraceful delays in the delivery of the cables referenced above, *the Board has effectively lost six months* for a complex undertaking in what is already an extremely limited life. In addition, these delays send a signal to our contacts abroad to discount our claims of the urgent and important nature of our requests. Moreover, in the case of Minsk, it appears that the delay may have significantly compromised our ability to obtain the materials that Congress has charged us to pursue.

What is particularly perplexing is that the delay in the delivery of the last cable from Minsk occurred in spite of our repeated follow-ups with the Department. Having experienced the delay earlier in the year, we have been checking regularly to ensure that the same thing did not happen again.

It is difficult for me to convey the full measure of my frustration over the wasted time and lost opportunities.

Sincerely,

DGM