

Assassination Records Review Board
600 E Street NW ▪ Second Floor ▪ Washington, DC 20530

MEMORANDUM

April 11, 1995

TO: *The Board*

FROM: *David G. Marwell*
Executive Director

SUBJECT: *May Experts Conference*

Jeremy has prepared the following report on the status of the "Experts Conference." As you can see, we have modified the concept and have come up with a plan that promises to be more manageable. We hope that this conference will be the first of three, and will be followed by one that concentrates on the contribution that the scholarly community can offer, and one that focuses on record-keeping in federal agencies.

Summary

A one-day Experts Conference is scheduled for May 16, 1995, immediately preceding a two-day Board Meeting. The conference will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the ARRB and will continue through dinner that night. Some of the experts may be asked to testify at a public Board

Hearing on the morning of May 17.

Agenda

The conference will consist of a one day, intense working session to: (a) identify the location of records relating to the assassination, and (b) examine documents for leads with respect to additional records. Although the exact agenda has not been set, the following is a rough sketch for a proposed agenda:

8:30-9:00 Welcome

9:00-11:00 Military and NSA (including, *e.g.*, 112th MIG)

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-12:45 CIA (especially OS; CI/SIG)

12:45-1:00 Break and set-up for working lunch

1:00-1:45 Working lunch (CIA and military continued discussion)

1:45-2:00 Break

2:00-3:45 FBI and Justice

3:45-4:00 Break

4:00-5:45 Other agency records including: INS, BATF, DEA, and state, local, and private records

5:45-7:00 Break

7:00 Dinner discussion at local restaurant

Selection of the Experts

The six experts were selected following two general criteria: knowledge of assassination records and balance of viewpoints. Each of the experts was told that our goal is not to have a discussion of theories about the assassination, but to identify records relating to the assassination. The six experts are:

David Slawson. Mr. Slawson was a staff counsel to the Warren Commission and currently is a law professor at the University of Southern California. Mr. Slawson worked principally on the foreign dimensions of the assassination for the Warren Commission and he is expected to identify any records that were not examined by the Commission that he believes should be included in the record.

Robert Blakey. Mr. Blakey was Chief Counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations and currently is a law professor at Notre Dame. He oversaw the entire investigation on behalf of the HSCA. Mr. Blakey will help identify those records that the HSCA should have seen but was not shown or did not have time to examine. He particularly believes that FBI surveillance from lower-level organized crime figures in New Orleans and Dallas should be examined.

Paul Hoch. Mr. Hoch, who is a computer science professor at U.C. Berkeley, has been one of the most serious and sober researchers of the assassination for almost thirty years. He is not identified with any particular theory and is widely respected for his integrity and judgment.

David Lifton. Mr. Lifton is one of the most prominent authors in the assassination research community. He is the author of the best-seller *Best Evidence* and now has in proofs his biography of Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Lifton is one of the most knowledgeable authorities on medical records and the biography of Oswald.

John Newman. Dr. Newman is already known to the Board. He

retired as a Major in the army and he worked for several years as an analyst at NSA. He is the author of *JFK and Vietnam* and is about to publish a book on the government's pre-assassination records on Oswald. He is now in the beginning stages of a book on JFK and Cuba. He is probably more familiar with the content of the JFK collection at the Archives than any other person.

Jim Lesar. Mr. Lesar also is known to the Board. He is the Director of the Assassination Archives in Washington and has been involved with numerous FOIA request on assassination records and other governmental documents.

Rationale for limited scope of conference

The conference originally was foreseen as including a much larger group of experts and continuing for two (or possibly more) days. The scope was reduced for the following reasons:

First, there was uncertainty as to how effectively the conference would work with a large group of people. Because the intent is to have a focused and productive working session, it was feared that the number of people might prove to be more of a distraction than of assistance.

Second, there was concern about the cost of the larger conference. This factor weighed heavily in light of the first concern -- that the productivity would not necessarily increase with the number of participants.

Third, it was believed that to the extent that the first conference proved to be useful and cost-effective, an additional conference or conferences could be held involving other types of experts.

Future experts conferences

Should the decision be made to hold one or more additional conferences, it would be desirable to include persons who, although perhaps not knowledgeable about assassination records, are knowledgeable about other aspects of government records. The two particular types of persons whose expertise would be of particular value are former government employees in the relevant agencies and academics with expertise in the use of government records.

The following are persons who would be strong candidates for invitation to such a future conference: Ernest May (Professor at Harvard); Athan Theoharis (Professor at Marquette?); David Garrow (Professor at William and Mary); Jeffrey Ritchelson (independent researcher and expert on U.S. intelligence community); Peter Kornbluh (National Security Archives); Al Goldberg (Defense Department Historian and historian for the Warren Commission); Russell Holmes (keeper of the sequestered collection at CIA); Peter Grose (biographer of Allen Dulles). Additional suggestions would be most welcome.