

Proposed Cable to Minsk

REF: (A) CONFIDENTIAL MINSK 1416 and previous (B) Tunheim - Boris TELCONS, JUNE 10-11, 1997.

1. The Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) apologizes for the delayed response to REFTEL which was received by the ARRB on June 6, 1997. The ARRB appreciates the work of the Embassy and notes especially the cordial and productive discussions between ARRB Chair, Judge Tunheim and DCM (REF B).
2. Consistent with Post's recommendation, the ARRB requests that the translated questions be delivered to the Belarusian KGB with the suggestion that, in lieu of answering the questions, the KGB provide copies of the documents.

The following points may be made in making the suggestion:

--The ARRB is an independent agency of the United States. The Board was appointed by the President and has been given broad powers and responsibility to identify, locate, secure, and make available all records related to the assassination of President Kennedy. The U.S. Congress specifically instructed the ARRB to seek out and obtain records from the former Soviet Union.

--The ARRB is gratified that the KGB understands the significance of its records relating to Lee Harvey Oswald and appreciates the steps that have been taken to maintain and protect the records.

--As promised during the meetings held in Minsk in October of 1996, the ARRB is providing copies of all documents that it has concerning Oswald's stay in the former Soviet Union. It should be noted that many of these documents were previously classified and are now open through the efforts of the ARRB. In addition, as was discussed during the October meeting, the ARRB is providing a comprehensive list of questions relating to Oswald's residence and activity in the former Soviet Union.

--The ARRB respectfully requests that the KGB reexamine the question of providing the ARRB with copies of the records that it maintains on Oswald.

--The ARRB understands the KGB's concerns about the release of information that may still be sensitive today even after more than three decades. Concerns about the protection of personal privacy and intelligence sources and methods should not in the view of the ARRB determine a decision about providing copies of the documents. The legislation that established the ARRB envisioned that certain information would be kept from public release and provides for the redaction of released records. The ARRB is certain that all reasonable concerns on the part of the KGB regarding still sensitive information could be met by the appropriate redaction of copies of the records.

--Furthermore, the ARRB is convinced that many of the concerns about the release of information are now less relevant when one considers how much is already known and on the public record. It should be noted that author Norman Mailer obtained a reported 4000 pages of material from the KGB.

--Should the KGB's motives be in any way commercial, it should be stressed that the ARRB represents perhaps the only reasonable outlet available to them.

--The ARRB believes that it is in the interest of the KGB to release as much information as possible since full disclosure is the best insurance against wild speculation about the possible role played by the KGB in the assassination.

3. The ARRB is prepared to assist the KGB in the preparation of copies of the records and would like to explore different options including the following:

--The ARRB is prepared to reimburse the KGB for the costs involved in the preparation and copying of the records. This reimbursement could come in the form of a lump sum payment for time and materials. Although the ARRB believes it would be unwise to offer a specific sum particularly at the start of discussions, the Embassy should be aware that the ARRB is prepared to pay in the order of 5,000 dollars to cover the KGB's costs. It should be stressed to the KGB that no money would be paid until copies are received.

--The ARRB is prepared to provide a copier and supplies as well as a staff member to do the photocopying.

--During the October meeting, the KGB raised the possibility of a publishing project for the English-speaking market. The ARRB is prepared to assist the KGB in this endeavor by helping to locate an interested publisher and by providing editorial support.

4. Although it now appears that the ARRB may very well be extended for an additional year (through the end of September 1998), the ARRB is anxious that an approach be made to the KGB as soon as possible. In order to prevent a delay in the ARRB's receipt of any response, post is requested to alert the ARRB by phone (202-724-0088) or Fax (202-724-0457) that a cable has been transmitted.