

Memorandum

April 12, 1996

TO: The Board

FROM: David G. Marwell
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Update

I wanted to get this off to you by the end of the week. I will prepare and send a draft agenda on Monday after the staff's pre-meeting meeting.

1. Appeals

A. CIA

The CIA would like to meet with the Board on Tuesday at 11:00 AM to provide information on two issues that were involved in documents from the last meeting.

B. FBI

The FBI informed us earlier in the week that they intend to proceed with their appeal (an earlier draft of which you have read). We met with FBI representatives today to give them some examples of where information that they are seeking to postpone has already been released. I believe that they were surprised by some of it. They will meet with Shapiro who will make the final decision about whether to proceed with the appeal.

White House Counsel

Jeremy and I met with Marvin Krislov's replacement, Steve Neuwirth and got the familiar message that it would be terrific if the Board and the FBI could "work things out." Although Neuwirth was somewhat distracted, I got the impression that he would be good person to work with.

C. Secret Service

The Secret Service announced that they are inclined to appeal several records from the last meeting on two grounds. We have sent them some already released Secret Service materials that should discourage them from appealing some of the records, but it is possible that they will appeal some documents, primarily on privacy grounds. Joan has been active in preparing materials for a possible response to an appeal.

2. Teams

A. CIA Team

Mary has been involved in lengthy and detailed discussions with CIA's Historical Review Group on specific Board decisions from the last meeting. CIA team as a whole has been rereviewing records from the last meeting, as well as those prepared for the last meeting but not yet voted on by the Board, to bring all of these records into conformity with the most recent Board guidelines. CIA team has now begun to review the last part of the Oswald file for consideration at the next Board meeting.

B. FBI Team

In addition to the routine preparation of notifications resulting from the last meeting and review of records for the upcoming meeting, Phil and his colleagues are collecting material and preparing for our response to the FBI appeal.

C. Military Team

The most important recent development occurred on March 26 when members of the military team procured from Suitland the microfilm records of the Pentagon Telecommunications Center for the years 1963-4. These records (nine cartons containing approximately 800 rolls of 16mm film) contain the messages sent or received by Pentagon agencies during that period.

Since these records go up to the Top Secret level, we are pleased to have gotten the cooperation of the Army's Center of Military History, which has is storing them in its secure vault and providing ARRB staff free access to them in a classified research area. Other recent developments include the initiation of a Research Project on the 112th MI Group (Dennis Quinn is in charge of this), which will include not only records searches on its activities (including any liaison with USSS) but eventually interviews with former unit members.

2. JFK Library

We have tentatively scheduled a week in June for a team of analysts to go to the JFK Library to review all of their relevant holdings.

3. Senate Intelligence Committee

We met with committee staff to discuss Church Committee records which we plan to begin reviewing soon. Interestingly, we learned of Senator Specter's enduring interest in the JFK case. At the meeting, I will brief you on an interesting development in this area.

4. New Orleans

There is not much to report on this front at this time. In keeping with the Judge's wishes, we

are trying to arrange a trip to New Orleans to inspect the records in question and to address the issue of whether copies would be adequate. The Judge suggested that an archivist be involved in the evaluation, and I have asked Bill whether he would be available. By Tuesday, I should have more information on this.

5. **Medical Issues**

A. Photographs

While I was getting my photograph taken at the Archives along with Jack during the last meeting, I discovered that the NARA photographer, Earl McDonald, had been a medical photographer at Bethesda in the 1970's. He had, in fact, been an assistant to John Stringer who took the photos at the Kennedy autopsy. We interviewed McDonald at some length, and were able to gain some insight into medical photography procedures and practices at Bethesda. Importantly, we learned some technical details which allowed us (later) to review the autopsy photographs in a somewhat different light. I'll fill you in on Tuesday. In addition, we conducted a telephone interview with John Stringer. We are now in the process of deciding whether we need to bring him to Washington for a more comprehensive on-the-record interview.

B. Forensic Consultant

We were extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to review the autopsy materials with Dr. Robert Kirschner, a world renown forensic pathologist, who graciously volunteered his time to assist us in understanding the evidence. Dr. Kirschner is the Director of the International Forensic Program of the Physicians for Human Rights. Kirschner has spent a great deal of time in places like Rwanda, Bosnia, El Salvador and therefore has considerable experience dealing with high-velocity gunshot wounds. His insights were extremely valuable.