

MEMORANDUM

To: David Marwell
From: Jeremy Gunn and Phil Golrick
Date: March 6, 1995
Re: Secret Service Briefing Paper

Background on the Secret Service

The Secret Service was originally created in 1865 as a Department of Treasury police force assigned to investigate the counterfeiting of currency. After the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, and as one of the few federal agencies with any law enforcement experience, the Secret Service additionally was charged with the responsibility of protecting the President of the United States.

In November, 1963, there were 552 employees in the Secret Service. Of this number, 36 special agents were detailed to presidential security. There were also several agent-drivers and other agents detailed to President Kennedy's family and home in Hyannisport. On the trip to Dallas, there were 26 special agents in the entourage. A copy of an organizational chart from the early 1960s is attached.

Warren Commission Findings

The Warren Commission's most severe criticism of the Secret Service dealt with the latter's methods for gathering intelligence on potential threats to the President. It also identified several specific shortcomings in the Secret Service's planning for, and performance during, President Kennedy's trip to Dallas.

In 1963, the division of the Secret Service responsible for intelligence regarding threats to the President was the Protective Research Section (PRS). Due to limited resources, the PRS largely depended on information provided by state and local law-enforcement agencies and by other federal agencies (chiefly the FBI). The Warren Commission found that the PRS's intelligence-gathering arrangements in 1963 were "seriously deficient." Its requests for information from other agencies, as well as its internal procedures, unduly focused on overt -- often "crank" -- threats to the President, to the near-exclusion of other indications of danger. The failure of the Secret Service to develop practical, specific criteria for persons posing a threat to the President, and insufficient liaison between the Secret Service and the FBI, led to the failure to identify Lee Harvey Oswald as a threat during the President's trip to Dallas.

The Warren Commission found that other aspects of Secret Service protection during the Dallas trip were "in most respects . . . well conceived and ably executed." In particular, "the Secret Service agents in the motorcade who were immediately responsible for the President's safety reacted promptly at the time the shots were fired." Despite this favorable finding, the Warren Commission nevertheless identified several "shortcomings" of the Secret Service's protection of President Kennedy in his trip to Dallas, including: failure to provide supervision of, and written instructions for, the special agent in charge of advance work; failure specifically to communicate and document expectations for local law

enforcement; failure to inspect buildings along the motorcade route; and drinking by special agents in the early morning hours of November 22, in violation of Secret Service regulations.

Findings of the House Select Committee on Assassinations

The House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) generally agreed with the conclusions of the Warren Commission. Although the HSCA found that most agents reacted quickly after the shots were fired, it also concluded that they were inadequately prepared for an attack by a concealed sniper. The HSCA noted that Special Agent Greer, who was driving the presidential vehicle, failed to accelerate the vehicle immediately after shots were fired. In addition, it found that the Secret Service had not adequately analyzed and disseminated information already in its possession regarding significant threats to the President during his trip to Miami and proposed trip to Chicago in November 1963. "Consequently, [the information] was not put to use with respect either to a protective investigation or to physical protection of President Kennedy in advance of the trip to Dallas." Because these threats in Chicago and Miami involved the use of high-powered rifles, the HSCA believed that relaying this information to the special agents responsible for the Dallas trip may have prompted greater attention to securing multi-story buildings along the motorcade route. The HSCA drew particular attention to the fact that a former Marine named Thomas Arthur Vallee, who had a history of mental illness, was arrested on November 2, 1963, in Chicago in conjunction with threats made in anticipation of the President's visit there. At the time of

his arrest, Vallee had in his possession a high powered rifle and 3,000 rounds of ammunition. Vallee was released shortly thereafter and the Dallas team was not notified of his potential threat to the President.

Secret Service Compliance with the JFK Act

According to the National Archives, the Secret Service deposited some assassination-related documents to the Archives shortly after the HSCA disbanded. These documents are now available to the public, with some redactions and withholdings, as part of the JFK Collection. These documents include the agents' after-action reports from Dallas. The Secret Service additionally released to the public a few documents in 1993, but apparently none of these documents was originally created by the Secret Service.

The Analysis and Review staff has reviewed the publicly available Secret Service documents in the JFK Collection. All of these documents appear to have been produced from the Secret Service's "official case file" on the assassination of President Kennedy. Moreover, they all appear to have been produced from the headquarters file, although the reports clearly suggest that there are (or were) additional pertinent records in many Secret Service field offices. The Review Board staff will pursue the present existence and location of corresponding field office files.

Furthermore, it is evident that the Secret Service possessed many assassination records that did not become part of the "official case file."

For example, the HSCA requested from the Secret Service information concerning threats against President Kennedy, documentation concerning other presidential trips, and training and operations manuals regarding presidential protection. A review of correspondence between the HSCA and the Secret Service suggests that the Secret Service provided much of the requested information to the HSCA, while responding that the rest was not "currently maintained" or "presently located" in its files. Pursuant to ARCA, the Archives in 1993 referred more than **400** documents from the HSCA files to the Secret Service for its review. The National Archives advises Analysis and Review staff members that, to date, the Secret Service has not reviewed and returned any of these materials. It also appears that no records of disciplinary proceedings or agent evaluations have been turned over, despite the fact that several agents were found to have been drinking at a bar in Fort Worth into the early morning of November 22.

The Analysis and Review staff has reviewed the Legislative Archives's documentation of referrals to the Secret Service. It appears that, although some of the referred documents have already been published in the HSCA appendices or released as part of the "official case file" in the JFK Collection, many other referred documents have not been made public. The Review Board staff expects to discuss the need to respond to these referrals with appropriate agency personnel.

Members of the Analysis and Review staff have also examined documentation of transfer of Secret Service records to the Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland in order to identify transfers potentially involving assassination records. A portion of the documents so identified

have been retrieved and preliminarily reviewed. It appears that some of these documents may be responsive to ARCA requirements.

In conclusion, it appears that the Secret Service has failed not only to conduct a thorough search of its records as required by the Act, but also even to review a good percentage of those records identified by others and referred to the Secret Service.