

October 28, 1997

Mr. David W. Carey  
Executive Director  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, DC 20505

Re: Completing the Review of JFK Assassination Records

Dear Mr. Carey:

I would like to congratulate you on your new appointment at the Agency and wish you the very best of success in the difficult challenges that lie ahead.

As you probably are aware, the Assassination Records Review Board has been mandated by Congress and the President to oversee the declassification and transfer to the National Archives of all records related to the assassination of President Kennedy. During the past three years we have received excellent cooperation from CIA in regard to the processing of the relevant Agency records. From our perspective, this is due in significant part to the work of John Pereira, Chief of the Historical Review Group, and

J. Barry Harrelson, who has shouldered the extremely complicated, burdensome, and frequently thankless task of overseeing the project. Both of them have proved to be superb representatives of the Agency. We also very much appreciated receiving a strong message of support from your predecessor, Nora Slatkin, who advised us in a meeting on October 16, 1996, of her full support for the project and her willingness to commit the necessary Agency resources to complete the project.

Because the Review Board is now in the final twelve months of its statutory tenure, I thought it would be appropriate to advise you of our goals for the upcoming year. It is our wish to be able to state in our Final Report to the President and to Congress that CIA has made all reasonable attempts to locate, review, and declassify all available records on the Kennedy assassination. We would like the Review Board to be able to assure the American people that the Agency has been fully cooperative in this enormous and difficult task, and that the Agency no longer retains any "secret" files on the assassination. In addition, we are obligated to keep Congress informed, on a monthly basis, of the status of our work and any difficulties that would interfere with our ability to achieve our objective.

Although many important strides have been made to further our goals, we nevertheless perceive that the pace of review and declassification of Agency records will need to be accelerated in order for us

Mr. David W. Carey  
October 23, 1997  
Page 2

to succeed. We must keep in mind that the goal includes reviewing, processing, and transferring to the custody of the National Archives *all* identified assassination records by September 1, 1998. (We do not perceive that duplicate copies of such records need be transferred by September 1.) Many time-consuming difficulties inherent in this project have been overcome, and we perceive that the pace of review is accelerating. Nevertheless, we wanted to signal to you our concern that, unless the pace of review increases further, we may not be on target to satisfy what I hope to be our common objective.

It is our firm intention to complete our task within the congressionally mandated time limit. If CIA is unable to pre-review and process its records consistent with completion of this task, the Review Board will vote to release-in-full all relevant CIA records and mandate that custody be transferred to the National Archives in a timely way. We sincerely hope that it will not be necessary for the Board to make wholesale decisions on unreviewed records and we will be pleased to work with the Agency to see that such a step is unnecessary. But we are prepared to make such decisions to the extent they are required to fulfill our own responsibilities. Although it is our perception that CIA may wish to devote additional human resources to this project, we of course leave such decisions to the sound judgment of knowledgeable CIA officials.

We therefore strongly urge the Agency to take all appropriate steps to complete its review of records in an orderly and systematic manner. To the extent that the Agency is able to satisfy appropriate deadlines, there will be no need for us to resort to any unfortunate -- but potentially necessary -- measures to complete our own obligations to Congress, the President, and the American people.

If you would find it helpful, the Review Board members and I would be pleased to discuss these issues with you or others at the Agency.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn  
Executive Director

cc: Assassination Records Review Board