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May 15, 1997

Request for Records Related to the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy DRAFT May 15, 1997

The Assassination Records Review Board hereby requests, from the Government of Cuba, information and records related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. As will be described below, the Review Board is willing, on a reciprocal basis, to provide related records to the Government of Cuba.

BACKGROUND

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy, more than thirty years ago, was a traumatic event for the people of the United States, the effect of which continues to this day. Although there have been two major Federal investigations of the assassination, the American public as a whole has remained skeptical of the conclusions reached by the government and has long wished to have access to government records related to the assassination. Despite the wishes of the people, most of the government's records related to the assassination have been classified and unavailable for public examination.

In response to strong public urging, the United States Congress enacted the "President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992," 44 U.S.C. § 2107 (Supp. V 1994) (JFK Act). Under the JFK Act, the U.S. government has taken unprecedented steps to locate and to declassify Federal records related to the assassination. The JFK Act also established the Assassination Records Review Board as an *independent* agency of the Federal government. The Review Board's mission is not only to oversee the process of declassification of Federal records, but to seek out records in the possession of private individuals, state and local governments, as well as foreign governments. Thus, as a part of its mandate, the Review Board is responsible for making appropriate contacts to foreign governments in order to request their assistance in collecting information relevant to the assassination. *See* Section 10(b)(2). The Review Board, through the assistance of the Secretary of State, has contacted the governments of Russia, Belarus, Mexico, France, Japan, and Great Britain.

The Review Board is now, through the good offices of the U.S. Department of State, seeking information and records related to the assassination of President Kennedy from the Government of Cuba.

BROAD SCOPE OF "ASSASSINATION RECORDS"

Due to the peculiar circumstances surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy, many issues have been raised that go far beyond a limited investigation into a murder. For example, the President's accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, received an early discharge from the Marine Corps, whereupon he departed for the Soviet Union. During his two year stay in the Soviet Union, he became of interest to the CIA, FBI, Office of Naval Intelligence, and the State Department, as well as the KGB. His whereabouts were investigated by, among others, the Swiss Federal Police acting on the request of the FBI. Upon his return to the United States, with a Russian wife, he engaged in activities that, at times, were pro-Castro and at other times anti-Castro. He attempted to infiltrate Cuban counterrevolutionary exile groups in New Orleans and perhaps Dallas. Less than two months before the assassination, he reportedly went to Mexico City and visited both the Soviet and Cuban embassies in that city. The CIA, which was conducting surveillance of both embassies, identified him as contacting the embassies. Accordingly, for the purposes of the JFK Act, all records related to these events are "assassination records" and come within the scope of the Review Board's declassification activities.

Other issues and records, of a broader nature, also come within the scope of the JFK Act. During the late 1970s, the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), chaired by Congressman Louis Stokes of Ohio, investigated many issues deemed to be related to the assassination of President Kennedy. The HSCA explored a wide range of issues that it perceived could reasonably relate to the assassination. The issues investigated by the HSCA included: (a) CIA operations against the embassies and consulates of the Soviet Union and of Cuba in Mexico City at the time of Lee Harvey Oswald's visit in 1963; (b) organized crime activities in Chicago, New Orleans, Miami, and Tampa; (c) assassination plots against President Fidel Castro Ruz; (d) attempts by President Kennedy to open a "backchannel" communication with Cuba through Ambassadors Carlos Lechuga and William Attwood; and (e) activities of Cuban counterrevolutionary groups in the United States in the early 1960s. As a part of its effort, members of the HSCA made two trips to Cuba and met with several Cuban officials, including President Castro.

The JFK Act defines as "assassination records" all records that were reviewed by the HSCA in the course of its investigation. Accordingly, there are now hundreds of thousands of records from many Federal agencies that come within the scope of the work of the Review Board. During the past two years, the Review Board has been working to declassify many records from the HSCA as well as the CIA, FBI, Secret Service, and other Federal agencies.

CUBAN RECORDS AND INFORMATION RELATED TO THE ASSASSINATION

The Review Board does not know what types of records or information that Cuba might have that could contribute to the documentary record of the assassination. By way of suggestion, it is anticipated that Cuba might possess information related to the following issues:

Lee Harvey Oswald

Any information on Lee Harvey Oswald's contacts with the Cuban consulate in Mexico City in 1963;

Communications between Cuba's Mexico City Embassy and Havana about the Oswald visit;

Communications between Cuban and Soviet diplomats in Mexico City regarding Oswald's visit.

Cuban Analysis of the Assassination

Information related to any investigation or inquiry related to the assassination by the Government of Cuba.

Information related to a visit to Cuba of an FBI informant codenamed SOLO. (SOLO alleges (see attached document) that President Castro informed him that the Government of Cuba investigated the assassination and concluded that more than one gunman was involved.)

Cuban Counterrevolutionary Exile Groups

Information on the activities of counterrevolutionary exile groups from 1959-64, including:

- Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE);
- Operation Alpha-66 (OAS or Alpha-66);
- Segundo Frente Nacional de Escambray (SNFE);
- Junta Revolucionaria Cubana (JURE or JRC);
- Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC);
- Frente Revolucionario Democratico (FRD); and
- Comandos-L.

U.S. Actions against Cuba and Assassination Plots Against President Castro (1959-64)

Information about Operation MONGOOSE or U.S. sponsorship of raids on Cuba.

Information about assassination attempts against President Castro.

U.S. RECORDS AND INFORMATION THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO CUBA

In the spirit of cooperation, the Review Board is willing to make available to the Government of Cuba declassified records that may be of interest to Cuba. A list of these documents is provided in the attached Appendix.

CONCLUSION

The Staff of the Review Board looks forward to discussing this request with representatives of the Government of Cuba and hopes that a mutually satisfactory arrangement can be made.

APPENDIX

to

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Reports

Lee Harvey Oswald, the CIA and Mexico City (Part I and Part II), Report written by the staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, 1978. (Describes CIA surveillance operations in Mexico City during Oswald's visit in 1963.)

Inspector General's Report on Plots to Assassinate Fidel Castro, Inspector General, Central Intelligence Agency, 1967 (Internal eyes only report requested by CIA Director.)

Cuban Counterrevolutionary Handbook (First Edition), Central Intelligence Agency (Miami Station/JMWAVE), 1962. (Reference Aid - Listing of Cuban Counterrevolutionary Groups)

Cuban Counterrevolutionary Handbook (Second Edition), Central Intelligence Agency (Miami Station/JMWAVE), 1964. (Reference Aid - Listing of Cuban Counterrevolutionary Groups)

Transcripts, Cables and Dispatches

CIA transcript of intercepted telephone call between Sylvia Duran and Soviet Embassy, September 27, 1963.

CIA transcript of intercepted telephone call between unidentified man from the Soviet Embassy and Sylvia Duran, September 27, 1963.

CIA transcript of intercepted telephone call between Sylvia Duran, unidentified American male and Soviet Embassy, September 28, 1963.

CIA transcript of intercepted telephone call between Oswald and Soviet Embassy (transcriber verifies that "Oswald" same as American from September 28 call), October 1, 1963.

CIA transcript of intercepted telephone call between unidentified man outside and Luisa Calderon, November 22, 1963.

CIA cable MEXI 7019, November 22, 1963: Mexico City Station has photographs of man who may be Oswald entering Cuban Embassy October 15.

CIA cable MEXI 7023, November 23, 1963: References transcript of intercepted telephone call from September 28, 1963.

CIA cable MEXI 7025, November 23, 1963: References transcripts of two intercepted telephone calls.

CIA cable MEXI 7034, November 23, 1963: Mexico City Station advises re-check of all photographs of visitors to Cuban Embassy.

CIA cable MEXI 7037, November 23, 1963: Chief of Mexico City Station advised that Sylvia Duran was arrested by Gobernacion.

CIA dispatch DIR84914, November 24, 1963: CIA Headquarters requests verbatim transcripts of Oswald interceptions.

CIA dispatch DIR84916, November 24 1963: Headquarters advises Mexico City that arrest of Duran could affect U.S. "freedom of action" regarding Cuban complicity in assassination.

CIA transcript of intercepted telephone call between Dorticos and Hernandez, November 26, 1963.

CIA cable MEXI 7014, November 27, 1963: information on telephone call between Dorticos and Hernandez regarding Duran matters.

CIA cable MEXI 7104, November 27, 1963: U.S. Ambassador Mann asks that information regarding the Dorticos/Hernandez conversation regarding Gilberto Alvarado be passed to Dean Rusk at State Department.

CIA dispatch DIR 85616, November 28, 1963: Headquarters reaction to Alvarado story.

CIA cable MEXI 7115, November 28, 1963: Details discussion in Cuban Embassy regarding Duran arrest and Oswald visit.

CIA cable MEXI 9332, May 6, 1964: Mexico City Station reports on normal working operations (e.g., hours open, security measures, location of entrances, etc.) of Cuban and Soviet Embassies in 1963 per Warren Commission request.

Technical and Operational Reports

CIA Mexico City Station summary of operational coverage of Cuban and Soviet Embassies, 1963.

CIA internal document (notes) on Mexico City Station support assets, 1963.

Progress Report for telephonic surveillance operation on the Cuban Embassy, August, September, November 1963. (HMMA 22536)

Monthly Operational Report on telephonic surveillance operation on the Cuban Embassy, November 1-30, 1963. (HMMA 22608)

Report (photographic logs) of surveillance on Cuban Embassy, September, October, and November, 1963.

Summary of intercepted calls made to the Cuban Embassy on November 22, 1963.

Most of the declassified records identified above were originally classified "Secret" or "Top Secret." Some of the records continue to contain redactions, although the vast bulk of the information will be released-in-full.

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