

February 27, 1998

The Honorable Dan Burton
Chairman
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is the Assassination Records Review Board's seventh monthly progress report, as required by the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight report on H.R. 1553 (now P.L. 105-25), that extended the authorization of the Review Board until September 30, 1998.

At the February 17 closed meeting, the Board processed for public release more than 1,200 FBI records, nearly 800 CIA records, and approximately 600 records from other agencies. Although the 2,600 document total is less than other recent months, it has more to do with administrative processing than any actual drop in document review. The devotion of administrative resources to other projects precluded final processing for many documents that otherwise would have been counted for this month. As is demonstrated by some positive numbers below, the type of progress required for the Board to complete its work is occurring.

Once again, the CIA surpassed its previous highest monthly total of records made available for Review Board action. The Board's position remains essentially the same with regard to CIA progress: we believe that the pace must continue to increase, but the numbers demonstrate that the agency continues to move in the right direction.

We are pleased to report that since our January report, the Board's FBI team has reviewed an additional 29,000 pages of records from the FBI's House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) files. This monthly total, an increase of 9,000 pages over January, puts the FBI review of records back into the range that the Board had stated was required for our work to be completed in a timely manner.

The Review Board's military records team continues to review several thousand pages of military records from the early 1960's that the Review Board has designated as assassination records and determined will enrich the historical record surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. At a joint declassification session in early February that involved representatives from several federal agencies, approximately 1,500 pages of Army records were processed. They will be opened in full after the necessary administrative steps are taken.

I would also like to take this opportunity to provide you with another update on the Board's federal compliance program. We have recently received the Declaration of Compliance with the JFK Act from the Library of Congress. The Library identified the following restricted holdings regarding the assassination: (1) Nelson Rockefeller's set of Rockefeller Commission records; (2) Daniel Patrick Moynihan's papers; and (3) Church Committee papers of H. Liebengood, a former aide to Senator Howard Baker. The Board is in the process of obtaining the consent of the respective donors to release these papers (or relevant portions thereof) to the public. In addition, the Board has been advised that the Treasury Department has recently sent additional assassination records (approximately 200 documents, 500 pages) to the JFK Collection at the National Archives and Records Administration. These files relate to the Department's work with the Church Committee and the HSCA. The Final Declaration of Compliance will be submitted within one week. I expect that the Board will be able to report additional compliance developments with other agencies next month.

As I know you are aware, the Review Board has the mandate under the JFK Act to seek assassination records from foreign governments. Yesterday, we were informally advised by the State Department that, in response to a request made by Review Board Chairman John R. Tunheim, the first item on the agenda for Vice President Gore's March 9-12 meeting with Russian President Cheyromyrdin will be the Board's interest in acquiring Russian records related to the assassination of President Kennedy. The Board considers this a significant development and we are hopeful that this dialogue will lead to assassination records being turned over to us by the Russians.

Thank you for your continuing support and interest in the work of the Board. Please have a member of your staff call me at 724-0088, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Dan Burton
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T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director