

Report on meeting with Secret Service August 16, 1995, 2-4 PM

Attendees: W. Ralph Basham, Rob Keefe, John Machado, Don Persinette, Jane Vasaris(?) David Marwell, Jeremy Gunn, Joan Zimmerman, Phil Golrick

Ralph Basham began by stating that he did not understand what we were asking for in our August 7, 1995 letter. He said that the mission of the Secret Service is to protect the President, and he would not do anything to compromise that mission. He added that the Secret Service did not care for the tone of our letter since it implied that we did not think that they were being truthful. In particular, Basham took exception to the word "ominous" in our letter(ominous referred to the timing of the destruction of Accession 87-75-4). Basham stated that we were imposing requirements on the Secret Service that might compromise the mission of protection. David responded that the JFK Act applies to both our agencies and that we are not imposing anything on them.

Jeremy summarized JFK Act requirements. David pointed out that no assassination records should be destroyed. He asked Ralph Basham to assure us that the Secret Service would not dispose of any records for the period 1958-1969 until the Review Board had a chance to examine them first. After some discussion, Basham gave his word that the Secret Service would not dispose of any records for the 1958-1969 period until the Board has had a chance to see them. Basham added that they are now quite sensitive to the issue of destroying records and they do not need any more problems on that score.

Basham stated again that they did not understand why we said in our letter that there had been a violation of the JFK Act. Machado explained that he was following NARA destruction schedules. David pointed out to him that he had not considered the JFK Act of 1992 when he approved of the destruction of Boxes 1 and 6 of Accession 87-75-4 in January 1995. Jeremy summarized our perception of what had happened between his first request for these materials in January, 1995, and our learning of the disposal of these records in July, 1995. Machado explained that he had looked at HSCA materials in Latita's boxes but he had not found much correspondence between the Secret Service and the HSCA. As Machado spoke, it became clear that he had not read the JFK Act correctly. He did not realize that anything the HSCA had requested or examined was by definition an assassination record. Others chimed in at this point: Personette held up his hands and said, "Guilty." Jane said she was genuinely confused: how did we know how to find what the HSCA investigators had asked of the Secret Service? Basham said they want to comply, just tell them how. Phil explained that the HSCA investigators did not obtain photocopies of everything they requested and examined. Our Act defined everything that HSCA investigators looked at as an assassination record. Jane Vezeris asked us to show them how to get this information. She added that the Secret Service is not hiding anything: The assassination took place thirty years ago. Jeremy said he would send them information on how to determine what the HSCA looked at.

Basham and Personette insisted that the disposal of records in Accession 87-75-4 was an honest

mistake. They had acted in good faith and had not intended anything sinister. Basham expressed concern that we did not think them truthful and asked for an example. Jeremy mentioned that Director Bowron had assured the ARRB that the Secret Service had completed its review of assassination records when we knew they had not. Basham said that Bowron was relying on Machado and would never deliberately mislead us. David pointed out that we had been told repeatedly that the Secret Service was finished with its review. Machado then offered his view distinguishing between new documents and original documents: Material in the Archives at SS headquarters was new, i.e. not created at the time. That is why he claimed to have finished with the Secret Service review. He had finished with the original documents by December, 1992, when he had sent shift reports to NARA. (Machado stated that he had not taken any postponements on these documents.)

Our faces evidently betrayed skepticism since we were asked why we did not seem to believe this. Phil said that we knew, for example, that there were two boxes in the Secret Service Archives labeled "John F. Kennedy Assassination" at the same time we had been told that the Secret Service had completed its review. Rob Keefe asked Phil if he knew what was in the boxes. Machado stated that they only contained newspaper clippings. Joan started to say that these boxes did not contain newspaper clippings but rather quite substantive information about doctors' testimony, Secret Service agents' written reactions to the William Manchester manuscript, etc. but Rob Keefe interrupted to point at Phil. Keefe wanted Phil ("You, Phil, Last Name Unknown!") to tell him what was in the Archives boxes. Personette invited all concerned to take a time out.

The Secret Service has agreed to re-review 110 cubic feet of material at Centre Pointe with their new understanding of the definition of assassination record. Basham agreed personally that the ARRB will be able to review Secret Service materials after Machado has finished. Latita will begin sending referred material to NARA on September 1, 1995.