

August 22, 1997

BY FACSIMILE & FIRST-CLASS MAIL

Ms. Sharon Lighton
Records Officer
General Services Administration
Eighteenth and F Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20405

Re: General Services Administration Compliance with the JFK Assassination Records
Collection Act, 44 U.S.C. § 2107

Dear Ms. Lighton:

I would like to thank you for meeting with Doug Horne and me on July 3 to discuss the commencement of the General Services Administration's ("GSA") search for assassination records pursuant to the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, 44 U.S.C. § 2107 (Supp. 1997) ("JFK Act").

At the meeting, we reviewed with you the need for GSA to conduct record searches under the JFK Act.¹ Accordingly, we are writing to memorialize our request that GSA undertake to identify and locate any records relating to the assassination of President Kennedy that may be within its possession, custody or control, including records relating to the disposition of evidence reviewed by the Warren Commission and records relating to the handling of autopsy photographs and x-rays. GSA may have records, from the period 1964 to 1984, relating to the activities of the National

¹ It is our understanding that the National Archives and Records Service was under GSA from 1949 to 1984. *See* Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, § 104, 63 Stat. 381. In 1984, the National Archives and Records Administration ("NARA") was created as an independent agency no longer under GSA. *See* 44 U.S.C. § 2101 *et seq.*

Archives in handling Warren Commission materials and other evidence on the assassination.² In particular, we request that GSA locate and review for assassination-related materials the following categories of records, to the extent reasonably available to GSA:

1. Records of the Administrator or Deputy Administrator for GSA for the period 1964-84, including any chronological, subject, work, or "soft" files.³
2. Records for the Office of General Counsel of GSA for the period 1964-84, including any chronological, subject, work, or "soft" files.⁴
3. Any files relating to President Kennedy's assassination, or relating to the subsequent investigations, that may have resided with GSA's Office of Inspector General, Office of Chief Information Officer, Office of Public Affairs, or Office of Congressional & Inter-Governmental Affairs, for the period 1964-84.
4. Records for the Archivist of the United States for the period 1964-84, including any chronological, subject, work, or "soft" files.⁵

² In November 1964, the Warren Commission records were transferred to the National Archives. See Jan. 24, 1967 Report of the Archivist to the Assistant Administrator (Attachment A hereto).

³ In 1966, Lawson B. Knott, Jr., Administrator for GSA, was involved in certain issues involving the disposition of assassination-related evidence. Mr. Knott signed on behalf of the U.S. Government the agreement providing for the Kennedy family's donation of autopsy and other materials to the National Archives. See Oct. 29, 1966 Letter Agreement executed by Mr. Knott and Mr. Burke Marshall (Attachment B hereto); see also Febr. 13, 1969 Memorandum of Thomas J. Kelley (Attachment C hereto).

⁴ In 1969, then GSA General Counsel Harry R. Van Cleve, Jr., was involved in a meeting to discuss the transfer of autopsy materials to the National Archives. See Attachment C hereto. Also present from GSA were James B. Rhoads, then Archivist for the United States, and Byron E. Harding, Associate General Counsel for GSA. *Id.*

⁵ In 1966, then Archivist for the United States Robert Bahmer participated in obtaining the transfer of certain autopsy materials from the Kennedy family to the National Archives. See Sept. 6, 1977 Letter from Trudy H. Peterson to the HSCA (Attachment D hereto). In 1977, GSA disclosed to

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the HSCA the existence of an "Archivist's Day File" dating back to the 1960's. *See* Oct. 19, 1977
Letter from Trudy H. Peterson to the HSCA (Attachment E hereto).

5. Records for the Assistant Archivist for Presidential Libraries for the period 1964-84, including any chronological, subject, work, or "soft" files.⁶
6. Records of Marion Johnson relating to the assassination, including the disposition of Warren Commission evidence.⁷
7. Records for the Assistant to the Deputy Archivist of the United States, Trudy H. Peterson, that relate to her communications or work with the House Select Committee on Assassinations ("HSCA").
8. Any administrative files or other records relating to the disposition, handling, transfer, or retention of documents or other evidence considered by the Warren Commission.⁸
9. All records and information relating to the disposition, handling, transfer, or retention of photographs and x-rays in connection with President Kennedy's autopsy.
10. All records and information relating to the disposition, handling, transfer or retention of President Kennedy's casket.⁹

⁶ Between 1964-68, Herman Kahn was Assistant Archivist for Presidential Libraries. He was involved in issues relating to the transfer of autopsy materials to the National Archives, as well as issues pertaining to storage of Robert F. Kennedy materials. See Attachment D hereto.

⁷ In 1966, it was reported that Marion Johnson was the National Archives official who was "handling the records of the Warren Commission." Febr. 11, 1966 Memorandum (Attachment F hereto).

⁸ In 1977, GSA provided the HSCA with a written list of its "administrative files relating to Warren Commission and Kennedy autopsy materials." See Attachment E hereto. The Review Board requests that those files be made available for review.

⁹ Records indicate that GSA had custody of the casket that was used to transport President Kennedy's body from Dallas back to Washington, D.C. See, e.g., Sept. 13, 1965 Letter from Congressman Earle Cabell to Attorney General Katzenbach (Attachment G hereto). It is unclear, however, whether the casket was ultimately destroyed. See June 30, 1970 Memorandum of Transfer of Kennedy Autopsy Material, prepared by Marion Johnson, indicating that GSA "had under consideration the question of destroying" the casket (Attachment H hereto).

11. Any administrative files or other records relating to the disposition, handling, transfer, or retention of any other records or materials from Robert F. Kennedy, or the Kennedy family.¹⁰
12. Any administrative files or records relating to the disposition, handling, transfer, or retention of records from President Kennedy's administration, including any records identifying materials forwarded to the Kennedy Library in Boston.
13. Any administrative files or other records relating to the disposition, handling, transfer, or retention of records from President Johnson's administration, including any records identifying materials forwarded to the Johnson Library in Austin.
14. Any administrative files or other records relating to the assassination of President Kennedy, including records regarding the disposition of any documents or other materials relating to the assassination.
15. GSA correspondence with the Church Committee in 1975-76 and with the House Select Committee on Assassinations in the 1977-78 period.¹¹

¹⁰ *See, e.g.*, Oct. 11, 1977 Memorandum from William W. Moss to Ms. Peterson Re Transfer of RFK Materials (Attachment I hereto) and Oct. 5, 1971 Letter from John F. Stewart to Edward Martin (Attachment J hereto).

¹¹ You indicated that GSA does maintain Congressional correspondence files.

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In the course of our meeting, you provided us with certain information regarding the existence of GSA Administrator files at NARA.¹² We will pursue those leads, but request that you independently attempt to locate the additional records that we have requested. In addition, we may wish to inspect the SF-135 forms that you maintain for GSA records sent to storage.

Thank you for your cooperation with our work.

Sincerely,

Ronald G. Haron
Assistant General Counsel

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Steven D. Tilley, Chief,
JFK Assassination Records Collection, NARA
(w/enclosures)

¹² You have identified for us the GSA's Administrator's subject files for January 1965-December 1967 (accession no. 70-A-2833) and for January 1969-December 1969 (accession no. 71-A-4938), which are at NARA. In addition, you have identified some files of the Assistant Administrator from 1949-1969 (accession no. 70-A-7010).