

May 7, 1998

Mr. John E. Collingwood
Assistant Director
Office of Public and Congressional Affairs
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20530

Re: Completing the Review of JFK Assassination Records

Dear Mr. Collingwood:

Thank you again for your support of the efforts of the Assassination Records Review Board to complete its work. We are pleased to have secured the FBI's commitment to complete its responsibilities on its assassination records by the end of September 1998.

This letter will confirm that the Review Board and the FBI have agreed to the terms discussed at our April 9, 1998 meeting. *First*, the FBI will complete its processing of the "HSCA Subject" files in a manner that will allow the Review Board ample time to review *each page* of the files. *Second*, the Review Board will complete its review and designation of assassination records from the outstanding Requests for Additional Information no later than June 1, 1998, providing the FBI ample time to process the records. *Third*, the Review Board and the FBI will continue to work together to complete the "core and related" files. In order to accomplish this, the Review Board will provide the FBI with a list of outstanding "core and related" records by June 1. *Fourth*, with respect to miscellaneous categories of records that the FBI and the Review Board have identified, we will work together to complete processing in a timely manner.

The Review Board is working towards completing each of the items on the list of "Review Board Duties" that Carol Keeley prepared and delivered to us at our April 9 meeting (copy enclosed). We will write to Carol on or before June 1 updating her on the status of each of the twelve items listed on the first page of that list, and notify her of any assassination record determinations that arise out of our review of the files listed on pages two through eight of the list.

I also write today to raise with you an issue that we did not discuss in our meeting, but which I raised by phone with you yesterday. The Review Board is very concerned about the FBI's delay in transferring its "post-Board review" assassination records to the JFK Collection at the National Archives and Records Administration ("NARA"). In the summer of 1997, the Review Board and the FBI began work on HSCA Subject files. To date, the FBI and the Review Board have negotiated the terms for release of over 179,000 pages from these files. Of those 179,000 negotiated pages, the Review Board has voted on approximately 110,000 of the pages. However, as of mid-April 1998, the FBI had not transferred *any* of those pages to the JFK Collection. FBI staff members have told us that these records are held up in the FBI's "post-production" process.

Starting in October of 1997, the Review Board began to question the FBI about when it intended to transfer records from the HSCA Subject files to the JFK Collection. Each month, the FBI staff informed us that it would soon transfer records. In early 1998, the Review Board staff made arrangements with the FBI staff to require the FBI to transfer *all* of the negotiated files—over 110,000 pages—to the JFK Collection by April 6, 1998. The Review Board staff notified the Chief of the JFK Collection, Steve Tilley, of the anticipated transfer and he arranged for the transfer by notifying the public of the upcoming release. Mr. Tilley also reserved a separate room at NARA so that the public could view the released records. Unfortunately, the FBI did not deliver the promised records on April 6.

Although the FBI must have known that the 110,000-page transfer would not be ready as promised, no FBI staff member ever called to notify the Review Board that the transfer would be so small. In subsequent discussions between the Review Board staff and the FBI, the FBI then promised that it would prepare the records for transfer to the Collection by April 30. At the end of April, the Review Board staff learned (from a member of the press) that the FBI would release only 17,000 pages to the Collection. Once again, although the FBI staff must have known that only a small portion (10-20%) of the records would be transferred, the FBI did not notify the Review Board staff of the exact size of the transfer. The size of the final transfer was approximately 17,500 new pages, plus an additional 7,500 pages of "supplemental" releases.

The FBI staff has now informed us that its goal is to transfer the remaining "negotiated" pages to the JFK Collection by early June. Although we indeed hope that the Bureau will make this transfer of records, we remain concerned that the FBI once again will not be able to complete the work. In the seven months that the "post-production" process has been in operation, the FBI has transferred only 25,000 pages of records from the HSCA Subject files. For obvious reasons, we are skeptical about whether the FBI will be able to transfer an additional 85,000 pages to the JFK Collection in the next three weeks. The Review Board is eager to discuss with you at its next meeting the need to expeditiously transfer FBI records to the JFK Collection.

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Thank you again for your cooperation and your support for the work of the Review Board. We look forward to meeting you next Wednesday at 10:30 in our offices.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Carol Keeley