

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.

Let me begin by thanking you for sending a letter to the Clerk of the House, the Honorable Robin H. Carle, requesting that the Clerk's Office secure authorization for the Review Board to inspect certain Congressional Committee files for assassination records. The Clerk's Office now has written to the appropriate committees to secure their permission for us to inspect Committee records. We have received your own Committee's authorization to inspect its records. We are now awaiting the Judiciary Committee's authorization regarding its records.

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 modestly reduced from recent months, we believe that the count reflects issues related to the status of administrative processing of records rather than a drop in the overall pace of document review. As is demonstrated by the numbers below, the progress needed for completing our work is continuing.

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. Chairman Tunheim and I met this month with the

The Honorable Dan Burton
February 27, 1998
Page 2

new management team at CIA that will be responsible for completing the review. They are continuing to reallocate resources and to make additional staff available to ensure that the work will be completed on time.

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.

Our 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. In early February, we held a joint declassification session that involved representatives from several Federal agencies. We were able to review approximately 1,500 pages of Army records. They will be opened in full after the necessary administrative steps are completed. I also have the pleasure of reporting that today 390 records from the Pentagon Telecommunications Center were transferred from the Review Board to NARA.

I would also like to take this opportunity to provide you with another update on our compliance program. We have recently received the Declaration of Compliance 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) Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's papers (which contain records on the assassination from the time of his service as the Assistant Secretary of Labor); and (3) the 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 the relevant portions of their records. 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 NARA. These files relate to the Department's work with the Church Committee and the HSCA. 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 Prime Minister Viktor

The Honorable Dan Burton
February 27, 1998
Page 3

Chernomyrdin will be 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 Russian Federation.

I regret to report that a valued member of our staff, Deputy Director Tom Samoluk, will be leaving us on March 6 to return to his home in Boston, Massachusetts. We have very much appreciated Dan Moll's and Jeff Schaffner's work with him and Tom's presence will be greatly missed.

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,

T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director