

February 10, 1998

D R A F T

Final version drafted by Tunheim  
and sent from his office

The Honorable Patrick F. Kennedy  
Acting Under Secretary for Management  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW, Room 7207  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Assassination Records Review Board Follow-Up Issues for Russia and Belarus

Dear Mr. Kennedy:

I would like to thank you again for taking the time to come to our offices. We appreciate your candid discussion of the issues confronting the Board. We are also very pleased that you are taking additional steps to ensure that all reasonable steps to obtain foreign records are being taken.

We received a copy of the January 23, 1997 Briefing Memorandum on the Review Board's communications with Russia and Belarus that was sent to you by Nina Noring. I have now had the chance to review the memorandum with Judge Tunheim and David Marwell, who, along with Dean Kermit Hall, represented the Board on its visits to Moscow and Minsk. They have suggested a few additional thoughts that I believe may be of assistance to you. I have also taken the liberty of making a few suggestions as to what we think might further the discussions with Russia and Belarus respectively.

## Russia

### *a. Status and Background*

It appears to us that the Russian story on the extent of its assassination-related records has, to some extent, changed over time. In 1964, Ambassador Dobrynin provided some records to the State Department, which were published as appendices to the Warren Report. In 1964, the Soviets implied that they possessed no additional records on Oswald or the assassination. The Soviets did not inform the United States at that time that the KGB in Minsk had several volumes of surveillance

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material on Oswald that had been collected during the latter's stay in Belarus. (See discussion of Belarusian records below.)

During the 1996 trip to Moscow, Review Board representatives met with three different entities: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS), and the State Archives Services (SAS).

At the MFA, the Review Board *did* meet with the person who is responsible for the MFA archives, Mr. Lebedev. Following the Review Board's trip to Moscow in 1996, 17 pages of additional records were provided to the State Department and were then forwarded to the Review Board in December of that year. The Russians told the Review Board that the KGB files on Oswald are now in Minsk and that the Government of Belarus should be contacted regarding their status.

In the meeting with the FIS, the Review Board met with Mr. Bellazoroff (phon.), who stated—to our knowledge for the first time—that the KGB had conducted an investigation after the assassination. From this acknowledgment, it would appear to be highly likely that records exist from this investigation.

The officials from the SAS were not prepared to discuss issues related to the Kennedy assassination inasmuch as they had mistakenly believed they would be meeting with officials from the National Archives to discuss World War II records.

*b. Requested action*

We believe that it is likely that the following three types of records may well exist in Russia today: *first*, records from the Soviet Council of Ministers or Politburo regarding the assassination and the appropriate Soviet response; *second*, records from the post-assassination KGB investigation that was acknowledged by Mr. Bellazaroff; and *third*, a copy of the Minsk KGB file on Oswald.

We ask State to make high-level contacts with Russian officials to advise that this issue is important and that active steps should be taken and would be appreciated by the American people. We believe it would be appropriate to put this issue on the Gore-Chernomyrdin agenda.

**Belarus**

*a. Status*

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The Soviet KGB collected at least six volumes of records on Lee Harvey Oswald during his stay in the Soviet Union. In 1996, officials from the Belarusian Committee for State Security (KGB) showed to Review Board representatives the original files. Under circumstances that are not entirely clear to us, the author Norman Mailer had earlier been provided access to some or all of these Minsk-KGB files and he included translations of many of the documents for inclusion in his book *Oswald's Tale*. The Review Board requested that copies of these files be provided. The Review Board received a pledge of full cooperation from the Deputy Chairman, the highest ranking individual with whom we dealt. No copies of any of the documents were provided at that time.

Following the meeting, U.S. Ambassador Yalowitz and U.S. officials at the U.S. Embassy (including Ms. Anne Carlson) requested that copies of the records be provided to the Review Board and offered to pay a reasonable sum for the costs of photocopying. These requests were renewed by the Embassy during the summer of 1997. No response has been received by the Government of Belarus.

***b. Requested action***

The Review Board understand that relations with Belarus are difficult. We would ask that the American Embassy continue to approach the Belarusian government and seek its cooperation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn  
Executive Director

cc: Nina Noring

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; clearly someone higher up in the government must order the records to be turned over; Jack question: Should this matter be approached through high levels at State or through Vice President Gore at his next meeting (also raised by Patrick Kennedy when at Board meeting)? Cuba. Oswald.

We *do* have reason to believe that there are additional Russian records on the assassination.

Russian Foreign Intelligence Service  
Russian Federal Security Service

We dealt with an official at the U.S. embassy in Minsk, named John Boris; instructions were faxed to him to negotiate on ARRB behalf on June 19, 1997; **(NINA SHOULD GET A COPY OF THIS FAX)**

Jack recollection is that we may have paid for the translation of our message that contained 4 or 5 different options to get movement on the records (such as we would pay for the cost of copying the records); In addition there was discussion of ARRB assisting with the publication of the records by contacting U.S. publishers

Ambassador Yalowitz met with ARRB people and was told by KGB successors that US would get what Mailer got.. He said he would follow-up. We heard nothing back from him. he is apparently in training during the next three months. I have left phone messages at his residence, but he has not returned my calls. Perhaps someone from State could contact him.

Jack's notes reflect the following chronology:

June 11, 1997, Boris had called Jack back regarding various options to be offered

June 17, 1997 David was working on the fax

June 23, 1997 Jack made several changes to Minsk cable

July 1, 1997, Embassy in Minsk is having a difficult time getting a reply from the KGB because of summer vacations

David departure follows; not clear what follow-up was done

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Anne Carson, attaché in Minsk was another contact

Y left July 97

offer to Belarusians same access as Mailer

small amount of money for copying

Offer was made e

Officer at Embassy

Anne Carson, USemassy  
Political Officer  
Action officer

Belarus Desk off  
Dan Turnbull  
202-647-6764