

June 30, 1998

BY FACSIMILE & FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mr. Taylor W. Lawrence
Staff Director
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
211 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6475

Re: Public Release of Church Committee Records Pursuant to the
JFK Assassination Records Collection Act, 44 U.S.C. § 2107

Dear Mr. Lawrence:

I would like to thank you and Jim Wolfe for having taken the appropriate steps to forward to us the Church Committee testimony that we requested. Although we earlier had some concerns that the necessary steps might not be taken, we are extremely pleased that you have been able to accomplish this very important task. We continue to declassify transcripts and forward them to the JFK Collection at the National Archives.¹ We believe that the inclusion of these important records into the JFK Collection constitutes a significant contribution to history.

I would like to raise again with you an issue that has been of significant concern to us for some time. We previously have suggested that we believe it would be prudent, from both of our perspectives, to permit the Review Board staff to conduct a "due-diligence" survey of the Church Committee files secured at the National Archives. *See, e.g.*, Sept. 19, 1997 Letter from J. Gunn to T. Lawrence. We have conducted such reviews of the records of the CIA, FBI, NSA, Secret Service, NSC, PFIAB, and other agencies. In each case, we have identified highly relevant documents that had not been caught in the agency's own review. Because the Church Committee undertook probes of several issues coming within our mandate, we believe it would be well worth the time that it would take for us to review these important records.

¹Some transcripts have not been located or cannot be accounted for by SSCI, and we understand that SSCI will submit a final report regarding the status of obtaining those transcripts we had identified (*see* Sept. 19, 1997 Letter from J. Gunn to T. Lawrence).

Mr. Taylor Lawrence
June 30, 1998
Page 2

We appreciate the fact that the staff of the SSCI surveyed hundreds of boxes of its records after passage of the JFK Act and identified approximately 40 boxes that were ultimately placed in the JFK Collection at the National Archives and thereby made available to the public. The Church Committee records, along with records of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations (“HSCA”), are among the most important records to be publicly released under the JFK Act. Yet, original records of the Church Committee, although ranking among the highest in public importance, have remained completely inaccessible to the staffs of the Review Board and the National Archives. Furthermore, we have always been concerned that originals of many key transcripts cited in the Church Committee’s report on the JFK assassination have never been located (although microfilm copies exist for many of them). *See* February 10, 1998 Letter from J. Gunn to T. Lawrence. That a large body of the underlying materials for the JFK assassination report have not been located as part of the original, hard copy files also underscores the need for an independent review.

Based upon our brief survey of the files, we estimate that three Review Board staff members would be able to conduct a high-quality survey of the Church Committee records in three to five days. With your consent, we would be willing to undertake all of the necessary coordination and communication with the National Archives and Records Administration. Conducting such a survey is well within the powers that Congress gave to the Review Board.² As part of this inspection, we also request access to the original SSCI logbook for the 1975-76 period, as well as any executive session transcripts of the Church Committee deliberations.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director

²The JFK Act provides that the “Review Board shall have the authority to . . . direct a Government office to make available to the Review Board . . . additional information, records, or testimony . . . which the Review Board has reason to believe is required to fulfill its functions and responsibilities under” the JFK Act. 44 U.S.C. § 2107(7)(j)(C). The JFK Act specifically defined “Government office” to include the SSCI. *See* 44 U.S.C. § 2107(3)(5)(B).