

Memorandum

To: Jack Tunheim

From: Tom Samoluk

Date: April 29, 1996

Re: Update Talking Points

I. Introduction

This memorandum contains suggested talking points for the interview. Several of them are basic ones which we have used in the past. Updated talking points have been added to reflect the Board's recent activities. I have provided information (news releases and news clips) about recent document releases. This information is attached for your quick reference.

II. Basic Talking Points

1. The ARRB is an independent federal panel, consisting of five private citizens.
2. The Board's mandate is to identify and secure the Kennedy assassination records.
3. It is up to the Board to determine which records are to be made public immediately and which ones will have postponed release dates.
4. The purpose of the law and the Board's work is to provide a full record to the American public, make it available at the National Archives, and allow interested parties to draw their own conclusions about what happened in Dallas 32 years ago.
5. The Board is not re-investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Our focus is collecting assassination records.
6. The Congress created the Board to have an independent, cost-effective and accountable process for the review and release of these documents.
7. The reality is that there continues to be an intense, unabated interest in the assassination, as reflected in the number of books and documentaries that are still being done. Requests from the public for federal records were showing no sign of slowing and federal agencies were continuing to devote enormous resources to the task of responding to these requests and litigating many of the requests. That costs money. It also costs money to unnecessarily keep records classified. In fact,

The Washington Post reported that the federal government spends an estimated \$16 billion a year to maintain a system of secrecy. The Review Board will get as many records out in the public domain as possible in the next couple of years. In the long run, the Review Board will have saved a lot of money and resources.

III. Recent Activities of the Review Board

1. The Review Board is deeply into the process of reviewing and releasing previously classified information. The Board has voted to release more than 1,200 documents, either in full or in part. We meet regularly in Washington. The focus to date has been primarily on CIA and FBI documents.

These decisions by the Board involve difficult issues related to informants and intelligences sources and methods. They are sensitive issues and are important because of their relevancy to many other documents which the Board will be reviewing in the future.

2. Since July 1995, the Review Board has been releasing CIA documents, many of which had previously been available only in redacted form. These documents relate primarily to Lee Harvey Oswald's visit to Mexico City only weeks before the assassination. Most are now available to the American public in full. Some have a few redactions, but substantive information related to the assassination has been released.

[As an example, you could cite the CIA document which is the subject of the attached Associated Press story (**Attachment #1**) regarding the possible existence of another copy of an "intercept" of an Oswald telephone conversation with the Soviet embassy in Mexico City, which was discovered after the assassination. This is a good example of the Review Board and the JFK Act "in action" with the Board exercising its authority to release the substance of the relevant section of the document, while still protecting the actual text because of the sensitive information it contained about sources and methods. This is an important revelation because of all of the controversy surrounding Oswald's visit to Mexico City and theories that there was an imposter or that Oswald was accompanied by someone in Mexico City. Although we cannot say more, it is worth noting that the Board is pursuing the possible existence of another copy of the "intercept." Note: This article was not provided to the radio station to limit the number of pages we sent to them and because it was older than some of the other examples, but it is still worth mentioning.]

3. The Board has also been releasing FBI documents that are of great interest.

[An example of new information released by the Board in an FBI document is the Homer Echevarria memorandum which is the subject of the attached Associated Press story (**Attachment #2**). The Echevarria/Chicago anti-Castro lead was one that the Secret Service thought ought to have been followed by the FBI in 1963. However, the FBI did nothing. In the HSCA final report, the Committee agreed with the Secret Service and expressed deep concern that the FBI did not follow the Echevarria lead. In the document released by the Board, the public learns for the first time that

Homer Echevarria's father was an FBI informant.]

[The release of the FBI/Swiss documents which is discussed in the attached news release (**Attachment #3**) and Reuters story (**Attachment #4**) demonstrate a number of points which are worth making:

a. An important addition to the historical record has been made. It is important because there has been a lot written about Oswald's' pre-assassination travels.

b. The records were aggressively pursued by Review Board.

c. The FBI had initially taken an aggressive stance by appealing to the President and the Board had to deal with that for the first time with this group of documents

d. The importance of having an independent body to pursue openness is demonstrated with this group of documents.

e. The records show the lengths that the FBI was going to three years before the assassination to find out what Oswald was doing and whether or not someone was posing as Oswald. He had the government's attention even at this point, three years before the assassination.

f. The American public now gets to see what has been withheld for 35 years.

g. In many instances blacked out documents lead to speculation. In this instance, we now know that the FBI was protecting a relationship with a foreign government.

h. The process worked. The Review Board got the records out and now the American public and historians can make their own judgments about how these documents fit into the assassination puzzle.]

4. As mentioned earlier, the Board has agreed with the CIA and the FBI that some information relating to sensitive intelligence sources and methods should not be publicly released at this time. We are exercising careful independent judgment, just as the Congress had envisioned. Consistent with the law, we are balancing the need to protect still sensitive government information versus the public's right to know.

5. It is worth noting that the Board has held public hearing on identifying and locating assassination records in New Orleans, Washington, Dallas and Boston to allow for public input and assist the Board in fulfilling its mandate. In connection with our last public hearing in New Orleans, the Review Board obtained a significant number of original records related to the assassination investigation and prosecution of Clay Shaw by District Attorney Jim Garrison. We are continuing to pursue additional records which should be in the Collection at the National Archives.

6. New Orleans District Attorney Harry Connick told the Board last summer that he would donate to the JFK Collection the remaining Garrison files in his office. However, after the Review Board received an unsolicited delivery of grand jury transcripts from the Garrison investigation and refused Connick's demand to return them, the District Attorney has balked at turning over any records. The Board has now subpoenaed the Garrison-era records still held in his office. The grand jury records that were sent to the Board have not been processed yet and are not part of the JFK Collection yet. The Board wants to ensure that the legal status of the records is clear before anything is done with them. We hope to resolve these matters without lengthy litigation.

[The Washington Post article (**Attachment #5**) discusses the Raymond and Angelico contempt actions pursued by Connick. We have avoided commenting on this situation because it does not directly involve the Board. However, we have commented that the grand jury records are an important part of the historical record which we think should be part of the JFK Collection.

(**Attachment #6**) is our news release on our subpoena for the records that Connick has in his office. (**Attachment #7**) is the Reuters story on the court hearing. As you are aware, we are currently making arrangements to go to New Orleans and survey the documents to make a judgment as to whether or not we will require the originals.]

7. The Garrison and Wegmann collections, received from the respective families, were released last week. These are the first private collections placed in the JFK Collection by the Review Board. (**Attachment #8**) is our news release on the collections. (**Attachment #9**) is the Associated Press story (from the Hartford Courant) on the release of the collections.

IV. "Broader Implication" Talking Points

The following points may help put the Board in some context:

1. The Act which created the Review Board has given the American public an extraordinary and unprecedented opportunity to gain insight into its government and recent history.
2. The Board has the opportunity not only to make publicly available records that may clarify the facts surrounding the assassination, but also, along the way, the opportunity to redefine the meaning of, and need for, secrecy in government.
3. Hopefully, the unprecedented powers given to an independent panel of citizens will help to restore a measure of confidence in government.
4. The controversy surrounding the Kennedy assassination is unlikely to disappear even after the Board's work is completed. But, the American public will know that no information about the assassination is being hidden by the government. Perhaps we will see a way

for government business to be conducted more effectively -- and more openly -- in the future.

V. Other Topics For Possible Listener Questions

1. Medical Evidence

If asked about the medical evidence, I suggest that you can say that the Board has devoted some resources to this area. Without going into detail, you can say that the Board has deposed people who were involved in the medical evidence and we are pursuing whether or not additional medical records exist.

2. Photographic Record

If a question is asked about the photographic record, you can tell the audience that in November 1995, the Review Board announced that we were interested in acquiring for the JFK Collection original films and photographs, as well as other records, relevant to the events surrounding the actual assassination on November 22, 1963. The Board staff has initiated contact with several photographers who were known to have recorded events before, after or during the shooting in Dealey Plaza. We will have more to say about our efforts in the coming months. In addition, we hope that photographers who may have recorded relevant events, but whose photographs or films were never made public, will contact the Review Board.

3. Richard Case Nagell

The Review Board had hoped to interview Richard Case Nagell, an individual whose name is familiar to many researchers and has been associated by some with the Kennedy assassination. Unfortunately, Nagell died last November, before we were able to make contact with him. However, the Review Board did act quickly to establish contact with his family and issue a subpoena for any records which he may have possessed that were relevant to the assassination. As many of you are aware, Nagell claimed to possess records that would have been important to the historical record. A Review Board staff person reviewed Nagell's possessions with members of the family. No records, photographs, tapes or any other material relevant to the assassination which Mr. Nagell reportedly possessed were found. The Board appreciates the cooperation it received from Nagell's family, as well as their pledge of continued cooperation if there are any developments in the future.