

September 30, 1997

The Honorable Dan Burton  
Chairman  
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight  
2185 Rayburn House Office Building  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Please consider this letter the Assassination Records Review Board's second monthly progress report, submission of which was required in 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.

The Board continues to process the remaining assassination records, primarily from the CIA and FBI, at a rate that is consistent with the schedule that was presented to the Committee in June 1997. I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with some additional information regarding the Board's progress since our last report.

At a September 17 closed meeting, the Board processed 1,716 CIA records and 1,211 FBI records for public release. The total of 2,927 records processed by the Board is more than any prior meeting. The system put in place by the Board to quicken the pace of records review in our last year is clearly showing very positive results.

The results of the Board's closed meeting on August 5 were not yet available at the time of our first report to the Committee, so I would like to apprise you of them now. The Board processed for public release 133 CIA and CIA-related House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) records, five FBI records and nine miscellaneous assassination records held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), for a total of 147 records. As you can see, there was a dramatic increase in the number of records processed by the Board between the August meeting and the

September meeting, largely due to the revision and streamlining of our review procedures.

Since our August report, the Board's FBI team has reviewed an additional 30,000 pages of records from the FBI's HSCA subject files. The files that we have been working on include those of several major organized crime figures. The Board is pleased with the progress that has been made on these important files because they are complicated in that the documents still contain outstanding issues that will have to be dealt with by the Board, such as the equities of other agencies, information generated by foreign governments and grand jury information.

The Board's review of records contained in the CIA's "Sequestered Collection" is also proceeding well. An initial survey of the Collection has been completed by the Board's CIA team. As a result of this survey, all folders have been prioritized according to relevance to the assassination. Our staff has finished approximately two-thirds of the folders that were given top priority status. The Board is confident that we are on schedule to meet the projected date of completion, January 31, 1998, for the top priority records in the Sequestered Collection. The Board has recently made additional efforts to ensure that the review of lower priority records also stays on schedule. We believe that the proposed timetable for processing these records, which has been discussed with the CIA, will form the foundation for an efficient, effective and timely review.

The Board is pleased to inform you that since January 1996, the Secret Service has placed 8,200 pages in the JFK Collection at NARA. These new records supplement the Secret Service's Official Case File, which that agency placed in the National Archives in 1979. This is a significant accomplishment, given the slow start made by that agency in complying with the JFK Act. Our staff has worked closely with the Secret Service in the last two years and we are seeing very positive results from our efforts.

As was described in our August report, the Board is continuing to focus attention on our federal agencies compliance program. We will advise you further of the status of the compliance statements of the various agencies as they are submitted to us in the coming months. In addition, the Board will keep you apprised of some anticipated donations to the JFK Collection from private donors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to advise you that Dr. David Marwell has resigned as Executive Director of the Board in order to take on important new responsibilities at the Holocaust Museum. The Board members appointed me to be the new Executive Director last week. I have

served as the Board's Associate Director for Research and Analysis since November 1994, and as General Counsel since January 1996. Please know that I am looking forward to working with you and your staff during the Board's last year as we seek to complete our mission and submit a final report to the Congress and the President.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to keep you informed of our progress on a monthly basis. Please do not hesitate to have a member of your staff contact me if you have any comments or questions. I can be reached at 724-0088, ext. 226.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn  
Executive Director