

July 24, 1997

via facsimile

Dr. David W. Mantik
69780 Stellar Avenue
Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

Dear Dr. Mantik:

Thank you very much for sending us a draft of your "Personal Observations at the National Archives" and we very much appreciate your giving us the chance to see it before the final edits. Although all of the article did not come through by e-mail, it appears that the majority of it did. Staff members have read the document and have found it quite interesting.

I would like to make the following observations. First, as I am sure you agree, the ARRB staff cannot generally put itself in the position of reviewing publications for accuracy. With regard to the observations in your article, we found some points that you made to be accurate and others -- in our judgment -- to be inaccurate. We don't believe, however, that we should comment on them because that would put us in the middle of a controversy in which we properly should be taking no part.

Second, I am concerned about your attributions to the ARRB. As a general rule, we try to avoid making any statements of fact regarding the subject matter of the assassination on which there may be controversy. On a few rare exceptions, such as on the Zapruder film, we have attempted to provide some observations that were made by staff members. Although I have a high degree of confidence in the particular staff member who has looked at this issue -- and although I have no reason whatsoever to disagree with his observations -- I believe that it is not advisable to attribute anything to the ARRB for two reasons. First, the ARRB itself -- the Board Members -- are the only ones who speak for the ARRB and they have made no comment about the issues of authenticity. Thus, strictly speaking, the ARRB has not commented on the issues. Second, the staff member who has looked at this issue might be wrong. By attributing something to a staff member, it gives an imprimatur that we ourselves do not wish to have made. We will become much more reluctant to provide informal assistance if we know that our honest, but fallible judgments, might then be memorialized in publications.

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That said, this is a free country where people are free to say what they will.

I hope this has been of some help, and again, I really appreciate your sending us the advance copy.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn, Esq.
General Counsel and
Associate Director for Research & Analysis