

Assassination Records Review Board

600 E Street NW ▪ 2nd Floor ▪ Washington, DC 20530

June xx, 1995

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Dear X:

I would like to take this opportunity to report to you on the progress of the Assassination Records Review Board because you were a key (sponsor/cosponsor/supporter) of The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (ARCA).

As I know you are aware, the Review Board is an independent federal agency created by ARCA, appointed by President Clinton and confirmed by the United States Senate to oversee the review and release of records related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The members of the Review Board were sworn in on April 11, 1994. Since that time, the Board has received its fiscal year 1995 funding, established its offices, built a staff, conducted several public hearings, promulgated definition guidance on what constitutes an "assassination record," and most importantly, recently issued its first order to release records under ARCA.

The Review Board operates out of offices located at 600 E Street,

NW, with a current staff of 22 persons, including the executive director, senior staff, analysts and support staff. The office is in full operation with analysts regularly reviewing agency assassination records and preparing them for release determinations by the Board. On June 7, 1995, the Board voted to publicly release x agency records. Following the vote and consistent with ARCA, the agency and the President were notified of the Board's determination. The President has 30 days from the date of the Board's decision to disclose or postpone the record. A copy of the Board's determination, as published in the Federal Register in compliance with ARCA, is attached.

An important step for the Board's was finalizing the definition guidance on an "assassination record" which was published in the Federal Register on

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x date. Our goal in promulgating the definition guidance was to follow the congressional intent that the definition be broad and go beyond the records of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations. With the definition guidance finalized, federal agencies have clear guidance on what records they are responsible for producing to ensure that the American public has a complete record of the assassination. The Review Board received strong input from the research community and several government agencies in drafting the definition guidance at two public hearings, and through written comments received during a 30-day comment period which followed the publication in the Federal Register of an initial draft definition guidance.

The Board has also sought to fulfill the Congressional intent to operate in an open and accessible manner by conducting public meetings and hearings in Washington and throughout the country. In addition to conducting almost all of its Washington meetings in public, except when dealing with classified information, the Board has held public hearings in Dallas, Boston and New Orleans. These hearings give members of the public, who would not otherwise see the Board operating, the opportunity to testify about the existence and location of assassination records.

During the course of its existence the Review Board will ensure that all assassination records are identified, secured, and to the extent possible, released to the JFK Collection at the National Archives. At a time when the federal government faces serious fiscal concerns, the structure established by ARCA will achieve Congress' cost effectiveness goal by eliminating the need for processing of Freedom of Information Act requests and the costly litigation that often accompanies them. In addition, with ARCA's stated presumption that all assassination records will be publicly disclosed, the cost of federal agencies keeping hundreds of thousand of documents unnecessarily classified will be eliminated. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, the Board will not only make available records that may clarify the facts surrounding the assassination, but along the way, will have the opportunity to reverse the trend of mistrust in government and to redefine the meaning of, and the need for, secrecy in government.

On behalf of the Review Board, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of our efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any comments, questions or suggestions for us. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

*John R. Tunheim
Chair*