
C. Records on Vietnam

4. Presidential Library Collections

Overview: During most of President Kennedy's time in office, Vietnam was mainly back-burner trouble for the White House, a problem which began to heat up shortly before Kennedy's death, and then went on to consume the Johnson presidency. The perceived change in Vietnam policy between these two presidents has provided another source of fodder for conspiracies. In response to concerns expressed by the assassination research community that the Vietnam question had not been adequately addressed by past investigations, the Review Board extended its search of both the Kennedy and Johnson presidential library materials to include records on Vietnam. The Review Board was primarily interested in obtaining records that could have indicated any changes in President Kennedy's plans regarding military involvement in Vietnam and any shift or continuity of policy at the beginning of President Johnson's administration.

JFK Library. The JFK Library identified a small number of Vietnam-related documents in its National Security Files, estimated at less than one percent of all records that the Library released under the JFK Act. Most of these records came from the period of August through November of 1963, when events in Vietnam began to heat up and caught the attention of the administration.

Additional information pertaining to Vietnam was also released in the presidential recordings for the same period. While the JFK Library had previously opened the tapes under mandatory review, it also sent copies to the JFK Collection.

LBJ Library. In response to the public interest in learning more about any shift in policy between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the Review Board extended its search at the LBJ Library include Vietnam materials from the transitional period. During their visit to the LBJ Library in March, 1997, two members of The Review Board staff and a NARA representative reviewed a vast collection of National Security Files and White House Office Files. It came as no surprise that the search for relevant Vietnam-related material at the LBJ Library proved to be far more fruitful than the same effort that was conducted for Cuba records. Most of the additional assassination records identified at the LBJ Library from the transitional period between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations concerned Vietnam. Some of these records indicate that Vietnam, rather than Cuba, was quickly becoming a priority for President Johnson's White House.
