

July 24, 1996

David M. Cohen
Director, Commercial Litigation Branch
Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Preliminary Analysis of the Legal Status of the Camera Original Zapruder Film under the JFK
Assassination Records Collection Act

Dear Mr. Cohen:

I am writing in response to your letter dated June 25, 1996, which poses some questions pertaining to the legal status of the camera original motion picture film of the assassination of President Kennedy taken by Abraham Zapruder ("Zapruder film").¹ Your comments were very helpful to us as we considered issues surrounding the legal status of the film under The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, 44 U.S.C. § 2107 (Supp. V 1994) ("JFK Act" or "Act"). This letter constitutes my preliminary analysis of the relevant legal issues from my perspective as the General Counsel to the Assassination Records Review Board. The letter does not purport to reach any final legal conclusions, nor does it purport to represent any decision of the Review Board.

¹The discussion below refers solely to this one camera original film and not to any duplicates, copies, internegatives, interpositives, or any other versions of the film.

David M. Cohen
July 24, 1996
Page 2

It is our understanding that the original Zapruder film has been continuously stored at the National Archives and Records Administration ("Archives") since at least 1978. We understand that LMH Company claims to own the film, and that it delivered the film to the Archives in conjunction with an (unsigned) storage agreement dated July 10, 1978, between LMH Company (through its representative, Henry G. Zapruder) and James W. Moore of the Archives ("Storage agreement"). We further understand that, in a letter dated October 18, 1994, LMH Company, through its attorney, demanded return of the film under the Storage agreement, but that the Archives has not returned the film pending resolution of its legal status under the JFK Act.²

The principal issue addressed here is whether the JFK Act, which became law on October 26, 1992, affected the legal status of the Zapruder film and whether the Act now imposes upon the Archives any obligations that might supersede the terms of the Storage agreement or any other deposit agreement between the Archives and LMH Company. It is our understanding that the Archives wishes to comply fully with its responsibilities under all applicable law, but that it is uncertain as to what its responsibilities might be. Specifically, the Archives is uncertain as to whether the Zapruder film should be transferred to the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection ("JFK Collection") at the Archives or whether the film should be returned to LMH Company under the terms of the Storage agreement.

Although the questions raised by you and by the Archives might be formulated in several different ways, I believe that the pertinent question should be posed as follows:

Does the Assassination Records Review Board have the authority to determine that, under the JFK Act, the Archives is required to transfer the Zapruder film to the JFK Collection notwithstanding any prior agreements between the Archives and the LMH Company?

The preliminary answer to this question is that, as a matter of law, the Review Board does have the authority to make such a determination. However, it does not necessarily follow that the Zapruder film must be transferred to the JFK Collection, because the Review Board retains, in its sole discretion, the authority to accept a copy of an assassination record in lieu of the original. *See* 36 CFR § 1400.6(c).

²*For the purposes of this letter only*, we are presuming that the assumptions that we make in this paragraph are factually accurate. We would be interested in learning of any additional information that you might possess that might alter or clarify any of these assumptions.

Part I: The Operative Provisions of the JFK Act

The two operative provisions of the JFK Act affecting the Archives' handling of the Zapruder film are as follows:

Not later than 300 days after the date of enactment of this Act, each Government office shall review, identify and organize each *assassination record* in its *custody or possession* for disclosure to the public, review by the Review Board, and transmission to the Archivist [for inclusion in the JFK Collection.]

Sect. 5(c)(1) (emphasis added).

Assassination records which are *in the possession* of the National Archives on the date of enactment of this Act, and which have been publicly available in their entirety without redaction, shall be made available in the [JFK] Collection without any additional review by the Review Board or another authorized office under this Act . . .

Sect. 5(d)(B)(3) (emphasis added).

Section 5(d) identifies duties that are imposed specifically on the Archives, while Section 5(c) refers to the Archives' obligations by virtue of the fact that it is a "Government office." (The JFK Act explicitly provides that: "'Government office' means any office of the Federal Government that has *possession or control* of *assassination records, including . . . the National Archives* as custodian of assassination records that it has obtained or possesses . . ." Sect. 3(5)(D) (emphasis added)).

The applicable sections of the JFK Act thus provide that government offices generally (Sect. 5(c)), and the Archives specifically (Sect. 5(d)), are required to identify "assassination records" that are in their "possession," "custody," or "control," and that government offices must thereupon transfer those assassination records to the JFK Collection at the Archives. Thus, to the extent that the JFK Act presumes that the Zapruder film is an "assassination record" and that the Archives has "custody," "possession," or "control" of the film, then the Archives presumptively should transfer the film to the JFK Collection.

A. The Zapruder film as an “assassination record” within the meaning of the JFK Act.

There are at least three reasons for identifying the Zapruder film as an “assassination record” within the meaning of the Act: *first*, it appears to be an “assassination record” within any common-sense meaning of the term; *second*, the Act effectively defines the film as such; and *third*, the Review Board has the authority, under its regulations, of so designating the film.

First, there is no question that, in a common sense meaning of the term, the Zapruder film is an “assassination record.” The film depicts, better than any other record, the immediate events surrounding the fatal shots to President Kennedy. No film or document related to the assassination has been more carefully scrutinized for its evidentiary value than the Zapruder film.

Second, beyond the common sense meaning of the term, the JFK Act and the rules promulgated thereunder would seem to provide that the film is an “assassination record.” The Act broadly defines “assassination record” as

a record that is related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, that was created or made available for use by, obtained by, or otherwise came into the possession of [the Warren Commission].

Sect. 3(2)(A). The Zapruder film clearly was made available for use by the Warren Commission as its own records reveal. “On February 25, Mr. Herbert Orth . . . *provided the original of the Zapruder film for review by the [Warren] Commission* representatives”³ Indeed, Warren Commission assistant counsel Wesley J. Liebeler acknowledged directly to Abraham Zapruder that “your film has been one of the most helpful things to the work of the [Warren] Commission”⁴

Third, under the Review Board’s regulations, it has the authority to designate records as “assassination records.” Section 7(n) of the JFK Act expressly grants the Review Board the authority to issue

³*Hearings Before the President’s Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*, Volume V at 138, June 4, 1964 (testimony of Lyndal L. Shaneyfelt) (emphasis added).

⁴*Hearings Before the President’s Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*, Volume VII at 576, July 22, 1964 (testimony of Abraham Zapruder).

interpretive regulations. Pursuant to this authority, the Review Board issued regulations regarding the definition of "assassination record" that not only underscore the literal statutory definition (*see* 36 CFR § 1400.1(b)(1)), but additionally provide that the Board may reasonably designate additional records for inclusion within the Collection. *See* 36 CFR § 1400.8. Although the Review Board has taken no steps specifically to designate the Zapruder film as an "assassination record," such a designation is clearly within its power and authority.

Therefore, whether as a matter of common sense, or of the statutory definition, or through a future Review Board designation, the Zapruder film may easily be construed to be an "assassination record" within the meaning of the JFK Act.

B. The Zapruder film as being in the "possession," "custody," or "control" of the Archives.

Once it is determined that the Zapruder film is an "assassination record" under the JFK Act, it must then be determined whether the Archives had "possession," "custody," or "control" of the film at the time the law came into effect in 1992. *See* pages 1-2 above. The important question regarding these three terms is whether they necessarily mean that, in order for the operative provisions of the Act to be triggered, the Archives was required to "own" the film (*i.e.*, have legal title), or whether it was sufficient for the Archives merely to "store" or to "hold" the film. If the Archives was required to have had an ownership interest in the film, then the Act might not come into play. If, however, the fact that the Archives was storing the film in 1992 is sufficient to satisfy at least one of the three terms at issue, then the film would, in the ordinary course, need to be processed under the JFK Act.

The Act itself does not define the terms "possession," "custody," or "control."⁵ Under controlling Federal law, however, the Review Board would be entitled to substantial deference in its interpretation of these terms, provided that its interpretation is reasonable. *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837 (1984). Federal courts routinely defer to a Federal agency's interpretation of vague or ambiguous terms in statutes it was created to administer. During its last term, the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed this long-standing rule.

It is our practice to defer to the reasonable judgments of agencies with regard to the meaning of ambiguous terms in statutes that they are charged with administering. . . .

⁵The three terms are used in other sections of the Act as well. *See* Sects. 3(2), 3(5), 5(f), and 9(a).

We accord deference to agencies under *Chevron* . . . because of a presumption that Congress, when it left ambiguity in a statute meant for implementation by an agency, understood that the ambiguity would be resolved, first and foremost, by the agency, and desired the agency (rather than the courts) to possess whatever degree of discretion the ambiguity allows.

Smiley v. Citibank (South Dakota), 116 S. Ct. 1730, 1732-1733 (1996) (citing *Chevron*, 467 U.S. at 842-845). Thus, to the extent the terms “possession,” “custody,” and “control” are susceptible of meaning “holding” rather than “owning,” the Review Board’s reasonable interpretation of these terms would be entitled to great deference.

Dictionary definitions of “custody” and “possession” suggest that the words may properly be used to refer to the control or physical holding of property without requiring any ownership of the property at issue. *Black’s Law Dictionary*, for example, defines custody as including the

care and control of a thing or person. The keeping, guarding, care, watch, inspection, preservation or security of a thing Immediate charge and control, and not the final absolute control of ownership, implying responsibility for the protection and preservation of the thing in custody.

Black’s Law Dictionary at 384 (6th ed.), West Publishing Co. (St. Paul, Minn. 1990). *Black’s* also defines possession as “[h]aving control over a thing with the intent to have and to exercise such control.” *Id.* at 1163. Other dictionary definitions of “custody” and “possession” support usages that are broad in scope and do not require an actual ownership interest.⁶

Moreover, the Act elsewhere uses the term “custody” to signify not ownership, but the physical

⁶Dictionary definitions of “custody” include: “Care, supervision, and control exerted by one in charge.” *American Heritage Dictionary* (3d ed.) at 462, Houghton Mifflin Co. (New York 1992); “immediate charge and control exercised by a person or an authority.” *Webster’s Seventh New College Dictionary* at 205, G&C Merriam Co. (Springfield, Mass. 1972).

Dictionary definitions of “possession” include: “Actual holding or occupancy with or without rightful ownership.” *American Heritage Dictionary* (3d ed.) at 1413, Houghton Mifflin Co. (New York 1992); “the act of having or taking into control; control or occupancy of property without regard to ownership.” *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* at 663, G&C Merriam Co. (Springfield, Mass. 1972).

disposition or the physical holding of assassination records. For example, Section 5(f) of the Act, entitled, "*Custody of Postponed Assassination Records*," provides that "[a]n assassination record the public disclosure of which has been postponed shall, pending transmission to the Archivist, be *held* . . . by the originating body . . ." (emphasis added). Section 9(a)(1) even equates "custody" with the short-term holding of records pending review and transfer to the Archives.

Pending the outcome of the Review Board's review activity, a Government office shall retain *custody* of its assassination records for purposes of preservation, security, and efficiency, unless -- the Review Board requires the *physical transfer* of records for reasons of conducting an independent and impartial review

(emphasis added). These sections cannot reasonably be construed to suggest that agencies maintain any meaningful ownership interest in the records that are about to be transferred to the Archives. Rather, "custody" simply refers to the fact that the records are, like the Zapruder film, in the current safekeeping of a Federal agency.

The legislative history of the JFK Act further suggests that the operative concept is not government "ownership of" or "title to" records, but the mere "holding of" records by the government. The House Report states that "the purpose of this legislation [is] to provide for the full release of all Federal Government-held assassination materials . . ." H.R. Report No. 625, 102nd Cong., 2d Sess., at 20 (1992). The House Report goes on to state that the "[B]oard would have the authority to examine any material held by a federal agency or the Congress that the [B]oard determines is related to the assassination of President Kennedy." *Id.* at 25 (statement of James L. Blum). The Senate Report echoes the House in this regard, stating that "[g]overnment offices *holding* assassination records are required to begin organizing and reviewing such records upon enactment . . ." Senate Report No. 328, 102nd Cong., 2d Sess., at 18 (1992) (emphasis added).

LMH Company itself, through its attorney, has admitted that the "United States has *possession* of the [Zapruder] Film." Letter from James Lorin Silverberg to Christopher M. Runkel, Esq. (Oct. 18, 1994) at 1 (emphasis added). This admission effectively precludes LMH from later arguing that the film is not in the "possession," "custody," or "control" of a government office under this analysis of the Act, despite its alleged ownership interest. Therefore, by our preliminary analysis, the Zapruder film would appear to be an "assassination record" that reasonably can be construed to have been in the "possession," "custody," or "control" of the Archives for almost twenty years.⁷

⁷Section 11(a) of the JFK Act states that the Act "take[s] precedence over any other law . . .

[or] judicial decision construing such law” For this reason, judicial decisions interpreting the Freedom of Information Act are of limited value in construing the JFK Act. Nonetheless, we note that the Court’s decision in *Kissinger v. Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press*, 445 U.S. 136 (1980), is not inconsistent with our analysis of “possession,” “custody,” and “control.” In *Kissinger*, the Court held that transcripts of Kissinger’s telephone conversations made while he was an advisor to the President and later physically transferred to his office at the State Department were not under the control of the State Department and, therefore, were not “agency records” merely because of their physical location. *Kissinger*, 445 U.S. at 157. However, unlike *Kissinger*, where the records “were not used by the [State] Department for any purpose,” the Zapruder film was used by the Warren Commission and is currently in the custody of the Archives. *Id.* To make the Zapruder case more analogous to *Kissinger*, one would need to consider an “assassination record” never used by the Archives that is personally owned by an Archives’ employee who may have placed the record on his bookshelf or on the wall of her office.

Part II: Whether the term "Government records" imposes any additional limitation on transferring records to the JFK Collection.

Part I discusses the two statutory preconditions for a record to be transferred to the JFK Collection: that it be an "assassination record" and that it be in the "possession," "custody," or "control" of a government agency. We note in your June 25 letter that you essentially raise the question whether there is yet an additional third requirement, that the record be a "government record." See June 25 letter at 6. For the following three reasons, we believe that there is no additional statutory requirement that a record be a "government record" in order to trigger the operative provisions of the JFK Act.

First, the JFK Act does not explicitly state that an "assassination record" must be a government record in order to trigger the agency's obligations under the law. Neither the operative provisions of the statute cited above, nor any other relevant provisions of the Act, establish any such express requirement.⁸ The provisions of the statute cited in your June 25 letter regarding "government records" are confined largely to two clauses in the introductory "findings and declarations" in Section 2 of the Act.⁹ We are aware of no case law and no canon of statutory construction holding that such

⁸Key functional components of the Act specifically refer to assassination records. For example, Section 5(c)(1) of the Act directs that "each Government office shall review, identify and organize each *assassination record* in its custody or possession" (emphasis added). Section 5(c)(2) of the Act requires that "a Government office shall-- (A) determine which of its records are *assassination records*" (emphasis added). Section 5(e) mandates that "[e]ach Government office shall-- (1) transmit to the Archivist, and make immediately available to the public, all *assassination records* that can be publicly disclosed" (emphasis added). Section 7(i)(2)(A) of the Act grants the Review Board the power to determine "whether a record constitutes an *assassination record*" (emphasis added). Section 7(j)(1)(A)& (B) authorizes the Review Board to "direct Government offices to . . . organize *assassination records*" and to "direct Government offices to transmit to the Archivist *assassination records*" (emphasis added).

⁹The JFK Act does not define "government records." We believe it would be especially unwise to construe an undefined term to have a significant limiting effect on the scope of the statute given Congress' intent to "enable the public to become fully informed about the history of the assassination" Sect. 2(a)(2). There are, of course, other sections of the Act that do reference "government records." See Sects. 4(a)(1) ("The Collection shall consist of record copies of all Government records relating to the assassination"); 7(b)(1) ("The President . . . shall appoint . . . 5

introductory provisions of statutes must be construed to limit the scope of a statute. Indeed, our understanding is that “when interpreting a statute all parts must be construed together without according undue importance to a single or isolated portion.” 2A Norman J. Singer, *Sutherland on Statutes and Statutory Construction* § 46.05 (5th ed. Rev. 1992). The declarations and findings provisions that you cite in your June 25 letter might well be interpreted not as terms of limitation, but as underscoring Congress' firm intention that all government records related to the assassination be made available to the public. The introductory section thus construed highlights a *sufficient* condition for the transfer of records to the Archives, but it does not impose a *necessary* precondition. In any case, as discussed on page 5 above, the Review Board would have the substantial latitude under *Chevron* to interpret the term “government record” in such a way as to preclude its being used to narrow the scope of the JFK Act.¹⁰

Second, the JFK Act expressly grants the Review Board jurisdiction over documents other than those owned by the Federal government -- a power that would be inconsistent with a reading of Section 2 that limited the Act's scope to “government records.” For example, the Act provides that “[n]o assassination record *created by a person or entity outside government* . . . shall be withheld, redacted,

citizens to serve as members of the Review Board to ensure and facilitate the review, transmission to the Archivist, and public disclosure of Government records related to the assassination”); and 9(c)(1) (“The Review Board shall direct that all assassination records be transmitted to the Archivist and disclosed to the public in the Collection in the absence of clear and convincing evidence that -- (A) a Government record is not an assassination record; or (B) a Government record or particular information within an assassination record qualifies for postponement of public disclosure under this Act.”) It is important to note that *all* of these sections are designed to ensure that *all* governmental assassination records are sent to the Archivist. *None* of the sections provides, directly or indirectly, that only “government records” should be transferred.

¹⁰Even if Section 2 were read to limit the Act's application solely to “government records,” the term might still be understood to be a mere restatement of the existing requirement that the records be in the “possession,” “custody,” or “control” of a government office. The Act's reliance on the terms “possession,” “custody,” and “control” to delineate its application to government records is evident in its definition of “government office” as “any office of the Federal Government that has *possession or control* of assassination records” Sect. 3(5) (emphasis added). The Act's reliance on these terms is further illustrated by Section 5(c)(1), which provides that “each government office shall review, identify and organize each assassination record in its *custody or possession*” (emphasis added).

postponed for public disclosure, or reclassified.” Sect. 5(a)(4) (emphasis added). The Act further provides that the Review Board may “request the Attorney General to subpoena private persons to compel testimony, records, and other information relevant to its responsibilities . . .” Sect. 7(j)(C)(iii). Moreover, the Review Board is authorized to “receive information from the public regarding the identification and public disclosure of assassination records” and to “hold hearings, administer oaths, and subpoena witnesses and documents.” Sects. 7(j)(1)(E) & (F). Accordingly, these provisions suggest that the Act encompasses all “assassination records” and should not be confined merely to records generated by or owned by the government.

Third, the sole Federal court that has considered the question ruled in a way that would be entirely inconsistent with assuming that the statute imposes a “government records” requirement. In *In re Assassination Records Review Board Subpoena to Harry F. Connick*, No. 96-0598 (E.D. La. June 25, 1996), the Department of Justice issued a subpoena to the District Attorney of New Orleans Parish on behalf of the Assassination Records Review Board pursuant to Section 7(j)(1)(C)(iii) of the JFK Act. The subpoena required him to produce records in his possession related to the investigation conducted by the former District Attorney, Jim Garrison, into the Kennedy assassination. The District Attorney asserted, both in his legal memoranda and in oral argument, that he need not comply with the subpoena because, in part, the scope of the JFK Act is limited to “Federal government records.” The District Attorney specifically argued that provisions in Section 2 (“Findings, declarations, and purposes”) of the Act were terms of limitation and that the Review Board’s powers did not extend to non-federal records. Although Judge Livaudais issued no substantive opinion, his order to the District Attorney to comply with the subpoena and provide the records to the Review Board necessarily rejected the “Federal government records” argument. *See* Order, June 25, 1996. (The District Attorney subsequently filed a Notice of Appeal with the Fifth Circuit on July 3, 1996.)

As articulated above, the terms “custody,” “possession,” and “control” may properly be used to refer to the control or physical holding of property and not necessarily to absolute control or original ownership. Indeed, the words “own” or “government ownership” are never used in the Act in the context of defining the term “government record” and should not be read into it. Moreover, we believe that the Zapruder film easily could be interpreted to be a government record under the JFK Act because it is a record related to the assassination that is in the possession, custody, or control of a government office (the Archives), regardless of actual ownership interests.

Part III: Preliminary Takings Analysis

David M. Cohen
July 24, 1996
Page 12

One final issue remains: whether the JFK Act effected a taking of the Zapruder film for which just compensation is due under the Fifth Amendment. We believe the Act, if construed as suggested above, might well have effected a taking of the Zapruder film unless the Review Board were to determine that a copy of the Zapruder film would be an acceptable substitute under its regulations. *See* 36 C.F.R. § 1400.6(c).

It is first important to recognize that takings legislation need not expressly divest the former owner of title nor vest title in the United States for a lawful taking to occur. *Short v. United States*, 50 F.3d 994, 1000 (Fed. Cir. 1995); *Nixon v. United States*, 978 F.2d 1269, 1284 (D.C. Cir. 1992). In fact, takings are permissible whenever

- (i) the taking is rationally related to a conceivable public purpose; *Hawaii Housing Authority v. Midkiff*, 467 U.S. 229, 241 (1984); *Nat'l Railroad Passenger Corp. v. Boston & Maine Corp.*, 503 U.S. 407, 422 (1991); and
- (ii) the former owner has the opportunity to recover just compensation; *United States v. Riverside Bayview Homes, Inc.*, 474 U.S. 121, 128-129 (1985); *United States v. Holmes*, 414 F.Supp. 831, 840 (D. Md. 1976).

The JFK Act would seem to accomplish both of these requirements. First, the intent of the JFK Act -- to collect, preserve and to make available to the public a full historical record regarding the assassination of President Kennedy -- is plainly a public purpose. This public purpose is furthered by the transmittal and disclosure provisions of the Act. Second, the Supreme Court has held that the presumptive ability of a property holder to file a post-takings suit against the United States under the Tucker Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1491, is a constitutionally adequate opportunity for just compensation. *United States v. Riverside Bayview Homes, Inc.*, 474 U.S. at 128. The LMH Company would have ample opportunity to recover compensation by initiating suit against the United States.

A takings analysis of the Zapruder film would be similar to a takings analysis of President Richard M. Nixon's presidential papers under the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act, 44 U.S.C. § 2111 note (1988) ("PRMPA"). In *Nixon v. United States*, the court found a taking had occurred because the statute: (a) required that the Federal Government physically possess President Nixon's property; (b) restricted President Nixon's right of access to the property; (c) restricted Mr. Nixon's right to exclude others from the property; and (d) restricted Mr. Nixon's right to dispose of the property. 978 F.2d at 1287. We believe the JFK Act would effect a taking of the Zapruder film

in the same manner.

First, both the JFK Act and the PRMPA provide that federal custody or physical possession of the affected property is sufficient to trigger the relevant act's provisions. The JFK Act requires each government office to transmit to the Archives for inclusion in the Collection all assassination records that can be disclosed publicly and all assassination records for which disclosure has been postponed. Sects. 5(e)(1) and (2). Similarly, the PRMRA provides that

[A]ny Federal employee in possession shall deliver, and the Archivist . . . shall receive, obtain, or retain, complete possession and control of all original tape recordings of conversations which were recorded or caused to be recorded by any officer or employee of the Federal government

Sect. 101(a).

Second, Section 4(d)(1) of the JFK Act similarly authorizes the Archives to preserve and to protect assassination records in the Collection and explains the restrictions on access of such records by the public. As the court stated in *Nixon*,

The test [for whether there is a taking] must be whether the access rights preserve for the former owner the essential economic use of the surrendered property. That is, has the former owner been deprived of a definable unit of economic interests?

Nixon, 978 F.2d at 1286. By placing the Zapruder film in the custody of the Archivist, the Act restricts the LMH Company's access to the film, and thereby restricts its bargaining power and economic use of the property.

Third, Sections 2(b)(2), 4(b), 5(a)(4), and 9(c)(1) of the Act all effectively restrict LMH Company's right to exclude others from the film. In particular, Section 5(a)(4) provides that "[n]o assassination record created by a person or entity outside government . . . shall be withheld, redacted, postponed, or reclassified." In other words, the Act requires that no assassination record created by a person or entity outside government be excluded from the JFK Collection. As the court noted in *Nixon*, "the right to exclude others is perhaps the quintessential property right." *Nixon*, 978 F.2d at 1286. The JFK Act would similarly create a situation where, in the language of the *Nixon* court, the LMH Company "retains no 'right' to exclude others from this property; and certainly not one capable of being called a property interest." *Nixon*, 978 F.2d at 1287.

David M. Cohen
July 24, 1996
Page 14

Finally, just as the court found it significant in *Nixon* that the PRMPA restricted Nixon's "right to dispose of the property" at issue, the JFK Act deprives the Zapruder family of the right to destroy the film. *Nixon*, 978 F.2d at 1287. The JFK Act prevents the destruction of property once included in the Collection: "No assassination record shall be destroyed, altered, or mutilated in any way." Section 5(a)(2). For these reasons, just as the PRMPA mandated a taking of President Nixon's property, we believe the JFK Act mandates a taking of the Zapruder film.

* * * *

The above analysis shows that our preliminary answer to the question posed on page 2 of this letter is that the Assassination Records Review Board has the authority to determine that the JFK Act may supersede prior agreements between the Archives and LMH Company with regard to the Zapruder film. We believe that the Review Board, as the agency charged with interpreting and implementing the JFK Act, would be entitled to great deference if it were to make such a determination. If the Review Board were to interpret the JFK Act in the manner discussed above, the Board would then have the authority to require the Archives to transfer the Zapruder film to the JFK Collection. *See* Sect. 7(j)(1)(B).

David M. Cohen
July 24, 1996
Page 15

I hope these comments will assist you in your thinking on these issues. Please call me with any additional thoughts you may have.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn
General Counsel

cc:

John R. Tunheim, Chair, Assassination Records Review Board
Henry F. Graff, Assassination Records Review Board
Kermit L. Hall, Assassination Records Review Board
William L. Joyce, Assassination Records Review Board
Anna K. Nelson, Assassination Records Review Board
David G. Marwell, Executive Director, Assassination Records Review Board
Elizabeth Pugh, General Counsel, National Archives and Records Administration
Miriam Nisbet, Esq., National Archives and Records Administration